

123. **How the Nitinats Got the Thunderbird and Lightning Snake**  
(Captain Bill)

There was a flood, it is said, when the salt water came up above the normal sea level. The tide kept rising until all the land was gone. The whole land was flooded. There was only one spot that was not underwater, the mountain called Ka:ka:piya:<sup>2</sup> where Xitlxitl'i'ʔi landed on the rocks. He had a daughter called Chi:ʔilim.<sup>3</sup> For a long time the water was high. The land was flooded for four days, and they were in a canoe, a big canoe. They stayed for quite a while at Ka:ka:piya:. While they were up there the girl called Chi:ʔilim got pregnant, and she did not have a husband there on the mountain. She was the only one who knew who the father was, the father of her child. She realized that the father of her baby was the supernatural being called Yaʔi:. She had a baby boy. Her baby got big. They were not in a hurry to go home. The child was a boy and was now christened with the name Ha:wilxim. The one who gave it the name was the father, the Yaʔi:. Now the boy had gotten big, growing very fast because he was supernatural. They went home to their house,<sup>4</sup> descending from the mountain called Ka:ka:piya:.

Ha:wilxim became a young man and began going after Gray whales, started whaling, getting the whales to come right onto the beach.<sup>5</sup> The Grays would stop at the beach where he was after them. He caught as many as five in a single day. He kept hunting in this way for a long time. The place was near his house from which he would watch the whales as they stopped there. Then he would go out. A child was born to Xitlxitl'i'ʔi [Ha:wilxim].<sup>6</sup> His baby was a girl, and he named her Chi:ʔilim also. Another child was born to him, a boy this time. He now had two children, a boy and a girl.

The boy grew up. Tla:tla:goksapshi:l<sup>7</sup> was his name. The father now told him that he had a mountain from the time of the flood, that he now owned the mountain Ka:ka:piya:. The youth received knowledge of it from what was said to him by his father. He did not tell his father that he was going to go up the mountain, that Tla:tla:goksapshi:l. Then he started walking, Tla:tla:goksapshi:l did, going towards the peak one whole day and arriving there in the evening. He now stayed there for four days on top of the mountain. Then at night it started raining. The youth went to sleep. At daybreak he saw there on the rocks an immense bird which had to be the Thunderbird. It must have landed during the night having flown to the rocks. Meanwhile the rain was still coming down. He went near to make sure of how it looked, what its head looked like. He just left it thus undisturbed on the rocks for fear that if it flew he would die, it was so big! The youth now headed home, coming out of the woods. He went to his house.

The sister of Tla:tla:goksapshi:l started menstruating. She

moved to the far end of the house behind a screen.<sup>8</sup> He put a design on the puberty right screen of the kind of bird he had seen, the Thunderbird. For eight days she remained there all alone.<sup>9</sup> At this time the girl saw that there was what is called a Hi'itl'ik, the Lightning Snake, giving birth to young. The one at puberty had a supernatural experience seeing the Hi'itl'ik there on the floor, a young lady giving birth.

The father, Xitlxitl'i'oi, made medicine of it. He received a name from it, Wa:ltilama'oq, and started making the Hi'itl'ik, the image of it, on the board. Also he made a representation of how its head is. He made a headmask just like my headmask, this copy of it.<sup>10</sup> Xitlxitl'i'oi designed it. It was Tla:tla:qoksapshi:l, the son, who started making this with his father on the middle of its chest: he designed a Thunderbird. He also started making a house. On the side of the house he made a design of what she saw. The girl menstruating at puberty saw it there, and they made a family privilege of it. Xitlxitl'i'oi started the Wolf Ritual dance in honour of Tla:tla:qoksapshi:l, had him do the Hi'itl'ik dance, and told about what the girl saw. It was the father who was telling this. She now received a name and was called Wa:ltilama'oq.<sup>11</sup>