
Version 8, told by Sam Williams

The Narrator

Sam Williams is another Southern Tutchone from Aishihik, a sororal nephew of Albert and Eddy Isaac, hence he too belongs to the *kaⁿdjlt* or Crow moiety. He is a mild-faced, slightly built, affable man, now in his mid-fifties. When I lived in Aishihik Village in 1962-63, he was a widower and was working as a regular employee of the small Department of Transport emergency air-strip about five miles away. When the village road was open in the fall and summer, he often drove his truck to the village for the weekends. At other times I saw him when I walked up to the airfield to get my mail. Sam had spent a year or more in the hospital recovering from tuberculosis, and he had learned to speak good English. He would have been an excellent informant if he had not had a full-time job, for he is interested in having the history of his people recorded.

The Story

This happened around Klukshu. Some women were out picking berries, and there was a pretty young girl, maybe she was a chief's daughter. You know, where the bear passes, he leaves droppings. Well, it's *duliⁿ* [tabu] to step over it, for everybody, not just girls. You must walk around it.

So this girl jumped over it and said, "Why do you leave that stuff around?"

After a while, after about half an hour, she upset her berries. So she had to stop to pick them up. [Sam had never heard of the coastal idea that it is tabu to pick up spilled berries.]

The other women went on ahead without her. And right there she saw a handsome, good-looking young man.

Sam was one of the first Indians to visit me in my cabin soon after I arrived at Aishihik, and the story about the girl who married the bear was the first story he told. He had come to pay a call on the evening of September 28, 1962, and had been discussing what he called 'superstitions' relating to various animals. However, he volunteered with emphasis that the bear was "really *duliⁿ*" [tabu] and that he would tell me why some time. A little later in the evening, he summoned courage to tell the story. He introduced it by saying that "It might sound funny, but it's the story," a phrase he also used several times when he was telling the tale.

Since this was his first visit, I recorded only a few phrases. The version below is as I wrote it down from memory, immediately after Sam's departure.

And he must have hypnotized her. He told her,

"Come with me!" And she did. That's the story.

He just seemed like a young man. She seemed to forget her family.

So they went together. And then in the night when they were sleeping, she woke up, and she could see that she was with a bear. That's the story. I guess he wanted her to know.

So she just had to stay with him. She didn't like to leave him. Sometimes he looked like a bear; sometimes he looked like a man.

Then, after a while, it was time to go to sleep for the winter. I guess it was late fall. The man said,

"Where shall we make our house?"

Appendix: The Story and the Narrators

The girl's brothers used to go hunting all of the time, and she knew where their trail was. So she said, "Let's put our house here." It was near where she knew her brothers would come.

So they went in and went to sleep. And—it's the story—he used to take out his teeth and hang them up. [Indicates teeth hanging on the wall behind him.] And towards spring the bear woke up and told his wife he wanted his teeth. He knew that her brothers were coming.

The girl said, "Oh don't go out there and hurt them!"

Then he said he had to go out, but he knew that he would be killed. And then he told his wife just how they were to fix him after he was dead, to put the skull up high—just what we do today. That's why we know. A. to Q. No, you don't have to face the skull any special way.

Then those brothers had some little dogs to help in the hunting. And they barked, and the bear came out. And the brothers killed him.

Then—I guess this happened before they had guns—the brothers used bows and arrows and spears. So the girl took the broken arrowheads and tied them together in a bundle and attached them to a little dog. She knew the dog would go back to her brothers.

Then her brothers knew she was up there.

And she told them, "Go tell my mother I'm up here. And tell her to bring me some clothes."

So her mother brought her some clothes, and they took her back home. They didn't take her right into camp, but they made her a place near it, about a hundred feet away, I guess. She was still kind of wild. She stayed there.

Then—this is kind of funny—but it's the story, she had two younger brothers. And they kept asking her to act as if she were a bear so they could

pretend to shoot at her. She didn't want to do it. They kept asking her mother to make her do it. She didn't want to, but they just kept after her.

So, after a while she did it. She went out on the hillside. And she has two little ones, you know.

And then—she can't help it. She just turned to a bear, and she killed all her brothers. It's the story. She just had to, because she had become a real bear.

And she went up in the hills then.