

How the Beaver Got His Tail

An Ojibwe Legend

Once upon a time there was a beaver that loved to brag about his tail. One day while taking a walk, the beaver stopped to talk to a bird. The beaver said to the bird, "Don't you love my fluffy tail?"

"Why, yes I do little beaver," said the bird.

"Don't you wish your feathers were as fluffy as my tail? Don't you wish your feathers were as strong as my tail? Don't you wish your feathers were just as beautiful as my tail?" the beaver asked.

"Why do you think so much of your tail, little beaver?" asked the bird. This made the beaver mad and he walked away.

After walking for a while, he stopped for a drink by the river and saw a muskrat. He walked to the muskrat and said, "Hello little muskrat. What do you think about my tail?"

"Well, it is very beautiful and big and fluffy," answered the muskrat. "Is it also a strong tail?"

"Why, yes it is," the beaver answered. "Do you wish you had a tail like mine?"

"I didn't say I wanted a tail like yours. I just asked if it was strong," the muskrat said with a disgusted voice.

The beaver quickly turned and began walking back to his home. He was angry because he felt that the animals were being rude to

him. He was very upset and decided to take out his anger by cutting down trees.

After cutting down a couple of trees, he came to a very large one. He knew that it would be a great challenge for him. So he went to it. But as he was cutting, he kept thinking about his tail. He didn't notice that he was cutting at a bad angle. Before he knew what was happening, the tree began to fall toward him.

He jumped to get out of the way, but he didn't jump fast enough. The huge tree fell on his beautiful tail! He tugged and pulled and finally dug away the earth to free himself.

When he finally pulled his tail from under the tree, he saw that it was flat. The beaver was very sad and started to cry. As he was crying he heard a voice. It was the Creator.

"Why are you crying?" asked the Creator.

"A tree has crushed my beautiful tail," the beaver cried. "Now no one will like me."

The Creator told him that a beaver is not liked for his tail but for his kindness and wisdom. He also told him how to use his flat tail. "Now your tail will help you swim rapidly," the Creator said. "And when you want to signal a message to a friend, all you have to do is slap your tail on the water."

Hearing this made the beaver happy again. When the animals saw his flattened tail they were shocked! But the beaver said, "It is better this way."

From that day on, the beaver never bragged about his tail, and all the animals liked him.

That's how the beaver got his flat tail.

How Beaver Got His Tail. <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/HowTheBeaverGotHisTail-Ojibwa.html>