

19. HOW RAVEN BROUGHT THE WATER

A First Nations Story

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Adapted for reader's theater from "How the Raven Got Fresh Water" in ***Myths and Legends of the Haida Indians of the Northwest: The Children of the Raven*** by Martine Jeanne Reid, illustrated by Haida artists, including Bill Reid, online at the [Internet Archive](#).

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PREVIEW: After the great flood, all the fresh water had become salty. How will Raven find water to drink? This is a story about how Raven found fresh water and brought it to the people.

GENRE: Folktales

CULTURE: Haida (Pacific Northwest)

THEMES: origins, tricksters

LENGTH: 11 minutes

READERS: 3

ROLES: Narrator, Raven, Wolf

NOTES: **spoilers; read afterwards** The story gives the Haida name of the wolf: he is called Godj. We also learn the name of Raven's home: Haida Gwaii, also known as the Queen Charlotte Islands, in what is now British Columbia. In other versions of

Raven's theft of water, the Raven's actions are even more tricky. In this version of the story, the contrast is between Wolf's good behavior as a host and Raven's bad behavior as a guest. The Raven did not set out to steal the water; he only wanted to quench his own thirst, and it is just by chance that the people also get the benefit of Raven being so greedy to quench his own thirst!

NARRATOR: Long ago, a great wave arose in the ocean and flooded over all the land. The salt water of the ocean was everywhere, and then, after the floodwater receded, there was no fresh water to drink. The people had no water, Raven had no water: no one had any water to drink.

RAVEN: I am so thirsty! [caw caw] I can't find fresh water to drink anywhere.

NARRATOR: And just to let you know how long ago this was, Raven in those days did not have feathers that were black. His feathers were white back then, as white as bone, as white as the clouds in the sky.

RAVEN: I hear you, Narrator! [caw caw] You are talking about clouds in the sky, but there are no clouds in the sky right now. No clouds, no rain, and no fresh water. If I don't find some fresh water to drink soon, I'm going to die!

NARRATOR: To find out where the water might be, Raven listened to what the people were saying, and he listened to what

the animals were saying. That's how Raven heard that Wolf had water, a spring of fresh water that flowed near his house far away to the north where the salt waters of the flood had not reached.

RAVEN: So that's where I'll go: I'll head north! [caw caw] North! All the way to the home of the Wolf!

NARRATOR: So Raven started flying north, far far away to the north, until he reached the home of the Wolf.

WOLF: Greetings to you, Raven!

RAVEN: Greetings to you, my good friend Wolf! I have come a long way...

WOLF: Yes, you have traveled very far indeed. Come here into my house, and let me offer you something to eat.

NARRATOR: As Wolf led Raven into his house, Raven coughed and said:

RAVEN: I'm not really hungry, dear Wolf [cough cough]. But I am thirsty. I really am very, very thirsty after my long journey.

WOLF: Oh, of course, Raven, I understand. Just a moment and let me go fetch you some water to drink.

NARRATOR: Wolf soon returned with a pot full of water.

WOLF: Be my guest, Raven; here is water for you to drink.

NARRATOR: Raven grabbed the pot, saying:

RAVEN: Thank you, Wolf, oh yes, thank you very much.

NARRATOR: Raven drank the entire pot of water down in one gulp.

WOLF: Well, you certainly were thirsty. I will bring you another pot of water.

NARRATOR: And so it went on for quite a while. Wolf brought one pot of water after another after another after another, and Raven drank them all, until finally Wolf collapsed with exhaustion and fell asleep.

RAVEN: [burp] Well, I think I have finally had enough water to drink. I'll be going now, Wolf...

NARRATOR: And it was only then that Raven noticed Wolf was fast asleep, lying right across the entrance to his house.

RAVEN: How rude of Wolf to fall asleep right there! I'm ready to go home... but how am I going to get out of here now?

NARRATOR: Then Raven looked up and saw the smokehole.

RAVEN: Of course! That's the way: I'll just fly out through the smokehole.

NARRATOR: So Raven flew up... slowly — he couldn't barely fly up off the ground because his body was heavy with so much water. Then Raven poked his beak out through the smokehole, and then he poked his head out through the smokehole. And then... Raven was stuck.

RAVEN: Hey, what's this? I can't ... can't ... I can't get through this hole. I'm stuck!

NARRATOR: That's right: Raven's body was so big now from all the water he had gulped down that he couldn't get out through the smokehole. He flapped his wings and squirmed, he pushed, he flapped his wings some more, but nothing worked. Raven was stuck right there in the smokehole!

RAVEN: [whispering] Shhhhhhhh... I hear you, Narrator. I know I'm stuck, but you don't have to be so loud about it. I really don't want to wake the Wolf.

NARRATOR: Well, I think it's too late to do anything about that, Raven. It looks like the Wolf is waking up.

WOLF: [yawning] What's all the ruckus? What's going on?

NARRATOR: And as the Wolf opened his eyes, he looked up and saw Raven's rear end sticking out of the smokehole in the roof of his house.

WOLF: Hey you, Raven! Do you think you can just fly up out through that smokehole? After you drank all my water? What kind

of a guest are you? You're a greedy, no-good guest, that's what you are! A rude and greedy no-good guest! And I'll show you what happens to no-good guests here in my house.

NARRATOR: Then Wolf began piling more wood on the fire. More wood. And more wood! And Wolf was picking the freshest greenest wood so that it would make lots of smoke. Lots and lots of smoke.

RAVEN: What are you doing down there, Wolf? [cough cough] What's all this smoke? [cough cough] I can't breathe up here, Wolf! Stop it!

WOLF: I'm giving you exactly what you deserve, Raven! I showed you good hospitality, but you do not know how to be a good guest!

RAVEN: You're right, Wolf! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Really, please, I'm choking up here [cough cough]. Please don't throw any more wood on the fire!

NARRATOR: But the more Raven protested, the more wood Wolf threw onto the fire. Raven flapped his wings and flapped and flapped some more, and then, at last, he finally broke through the smokehole and flew up and out into the sky.

RAVEN: Thank goodness! [cough cough] That smoke was going to choke me. I'm going to fly away from here now as fast as I can.

NARRATOR: And as Raven kept flying, he kept coughing, and each time he coughed, drops of the fresh water splashed down on

the land. Splash: there was a pond! Splash: there was a stream! Splash: there was a river! Splash: there was a lake! So as Raven flew and flew all the way home, the people down on the ground below found fresh water to drink in the ponds and streams and rivers and lakes that Raven created.

RAVEN: But wait a minute...

NARRATOR: What's wrong, Raven?

RAVEN: When I flap my wings... hey, look at that? Do you see that?

NARRATOR: What are you talking about Raven?

RAVEN: My feathers... look at my feathers! They're all black now! The smoke has turned my feathers black.

NARRATOR: Well, look at that: you're right, Raven! Your feathers are all black now. But you know what? Those black feathers suit you. You look good, Raven! Really good!

RAVEN: Do you think so? Let me go see!

NARRATOR: So Raven swooped down and took a look at his reflection in the clear waters of a new lake.

RAVEN: You know, I think you're right. These black feathers look really beautiful, if I do say so myself.

NARRATOR: So Raven danced and preened, admiring his new black feathers in the water of the new lake that he made. And that, my friends, is the story of how the people got fresh water to drink in their ponds and streams and rivers and lakes, and that is also the story of how Raven got his beautiful black feathers.

WOLF: And don't forget: that was my water he Raven was drinking! You better remember me too, people — remember me, the Wolf, when you drink that delicious fresh water!

NARRATOR: Yes, Wolf, you were a good host, and we thank both you and Raven for the water that we drink.

RAVEN: You're welcome! [caw caw] You're very welcome indeed!

NARRATOR: And we thank you, members of the audience, for listening to our little play today, and we hope you have enjoyed learning about just how it happened that Raven brought the water. long long so very long ago.