

May

SALMON

Tom Cleanso

Hedém mómtim yoonomenín, kayém yakkát'omatoy.

The river used to be like a lake, it did not flow.

Hac'e peením manayím lok'oyéem woololokó woontít'omatoy.

Two boys killed many flickerbirds.

Hac'e mî kakám osek'áa siyéet'omatoy p'anaanakám yee, han lehupaytít'omatoy.

Their maternal uncle made ornaments out of the orange-red feathers, and he put these on them.

Han mî kakám mómtiná wiimítt'omatoy.

Then their uncle threw them into the river.

Hac'e máyt'omatoy, han miyáan mayé kiyisím p'anaanákt'omatoy.

They became salmon, and that is why salmon's meat is red.

Han miyáan mîim mómtim yoonohó hoyyát'omatoy.

And that is why the river began to flow.

Hac'e mî kakám etatán kîipén, "Wenném ismapém maam beyí," hát'omatoy.

Their uncle watched them and was glad, "You have a good place to live now," he said.

Mîim miyém.

That's that.

HELPFUL VOCABULARY

May	‘Salmon’
Woololók	‘Flickerbird’
Kaká	‘Maternal uncle’ (i.e. ‘Mother’s brother’)
P’anaaná	‘Red / To be red’
Yoonó	‘To flow / To be flowing water’
-t’omatoy	This word-ending means that the event took place long ago and that the storyteller did not witness the event themselves.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why is salmon meat red? What were the two boys wearing that gave the meat its red color?

Why do you think the river began to flow when the uncle threw the boys into the water?

Did any words or phrases stand out to you?

BRAIN TEASERS

The word *lehupáy* means ‘to wear regalia’ and *lehupaytí* means ‘to cause or allow (someone else) to wear regalia’. The word *c’ii* means ‘to wear clothes’. What do you think the word *c’iití* means?

WORDS FOR ‘RIVER’

You will hear the river called *mómti* in this story, but in other stories you will hear that rivers are called *sew*. This is because these stories come from different storytellers, and different people have different words for ‘river’. For example, Tom Cleanso and his sister Pamela Adams call rivers by the word *mómti*, but Bill Joe and some other Nisenan speakers call rivers *sew*.

Do you know any other words like this, whether in Nisenan or English? Is there anything that you call by one name but your friends or relatives call by a different name?

ABOUT THIS STORY...

This story was told by Tom Cleanso, a.k.a. Blind Tom, to anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber in 1929. The SSBMI Language Department translated this story into Nisenan and adapted it for Huslá 2023.

If you have questions about the story, please contact language@ssband.org.