

Hiik'í

BIG SNAKE

William Joseph

Hoyyám k'awí Nisenáaním Hiik'í en, tukwoonohahát'om...

In the early days when an Indian saw Hiik'í (the Big Snake), he would always have a fit

... banak'ám wik'elí b'íte c'enón idáwt'om...

and would not wake up till daybreak when he would arrive,

... sedeydikím koolnáan simnáan sedéyt'om.

bloody from the nose and with a bleeding mouth.

Han miymením okomením k'awí koymóm dóot'om mihé.

A koymó (rattlesnake) would bite him the following summer.

Hac'e wenení motín, him manayí siyéet'om hipiwnáan lamkiskisná, hukítt'om.

They made him drink medicine, made a small house a little ways from the camp, and put him there.

Hac'e báəppayím kiysisím...

All sorts of animals,

... koymóm, pic'ak'ám, okopeypeyím, c'ayahapím, weenanám, palím...

rattlesnake, lizard, horned lizard, whipsnake, garter snake, racer snake,

... idadáwt'om mihé ismadí.

each came to where he was staying.

Hac'e payeltít'om wítteem payelní...

The Indians fed him with one kind of food,

... c'aykí payeltiménte, wítteem payelní payeltít'om.

they did not let him eat anything else but fed him with one kind of food.

Han wené motihahát'om.

They made him drink medicine regularly.

Han miyéw wenení yuc'úut'om mîm koymohé doomám k'îiné.

They washed the scar of the koymó (rattlesnake) bite with that medicine.

Han wadaac'é, bíite isiptít'om mihé.

They did not let him out until he had recovered.

Han huslát'om.

Then they had a Small Time.

Han payeltít'om mihé béəppayím payelihí.

They gave him all kinds of food.

Han husipín, helop'tít'om mihé bəhəpím wenení otatín.

They took him out and made him sweat with all kinds of medicine.

Han bíite huslán, payeltít'om béəppayím payelihí.

Then only they held a Small Time, and gave him all kinds of food.

Miyáatít'om koymóm dooc'é.

That is the way they did when the koymó (rattlesnake) bit.

Han koymóm dooc'é min,

If a koymó bites you,

... min tooyeemám – kopeetá, pandaká – c'aymisé méyt'om...

you must always give away to others what you were carrying – gun, bow, etc.,

... min omitmám koosá béəppáy méyt'om c'aymisé, moodá'omisín.

and the clothes you had on you must give away to others, to ward off evil from yourself.

Han miyáatimenín min ose'áa me'usán, yootaytatayéet'om.

If you don't do that but try to keep your valuables, you will have bad luck all the time.

Miyéet'om miyém...

That was that...

... hoyyám k'awí muk'utín bíik't'om mïim Hiik'í...

in the early days they were very much afraid of that Hiik'í (Big Snake),

... lok'k'éepayment'om aná Hiik'ím.

there were not very many Hiik'í.

Hac'e weté máydike yootaytíhí daak'án, han wəhəphahát'om.

But when Hiik'í wanted to give a man bad luck, it always appeared.

Hac'e máydikim en, yootáy't'om hank'eenopáy...

When a man saw that, he was unlucky all the time,

... miyaaná Nisenáaním bíik't'om miyakí.

that is why the Indians feared that kind.

Mïim mïim nisé hoyyá bíik'mám k'aam...

That is what we used to fear in the old days...

... beydím Wolémisém idawic'é, wek'awím miyém.

now after the White people have come, there are no more of those.

Mïim miyém, hoyyá emám k'aam.

That is that, that is what they used to see in the early days.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Hiik’í Big Snake

HELPFUL VOCABULARY

Koymó	‘Rattlesnake’
Doo	‘To bite’
Biik’	‘To fear’
Payeltí	‘To feed, to make someone eat’
Wené	‘Medicine’
-t’om	A word-ending that means the event happened a while ago.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you know any other stories about snakes?

Did any words or phrases stand out to you?

BRAIN TEASER

The word *payél* means ‘to eat’ and the word *payeltí* means ‘to feed (someone)’, or literally, ‘to cause (someone) to eat’. The word *mo* means ‘to drink’. What do you think the word *motí* means?

ABOUT THIS STORY...

This story was told by William Joseph, a.k.a Bill Joe, a Nisenan man from El Dorado County, to Hans J. Uldall in the 1930’s and adapted by the SSBMI Language Department for Huslá 2023.

Bill Joe never saw Hiik’í himself, but he said that he did see its slimy trail once when he was near Ione. He says that its trail was “as wide as a wagon road”!

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