

## THE LEGEND OF WASHKANABA - Camp Hahobas, Pacific Harbors Council, BSA

This is the legend of Washkanaba and Drum Beater Lake. All this is happened many years ago, at the time of the coming of the white man. It is true, it is a simple tale. It has changed little in the telling and re-telling, throughout the generations of the People.

In that time, the Lakes were called: Turtle, Pipe, and Drum Beater. They have not been changed by the hand of man, only given new names. Today, you know them as U-Lake, Alder/Aldrich Lake, and Robbins Lake. On a map, you would locate them on the high ground to the east, across the Sound from the little town that bears the name of Captain Hood, after one of the early day explorers.

The People were called simply, the People, and the lake, Drum Beater. This is their story:

Life was good then, they fished the Sound and the lakes. They tilled the soil in the open parks, the crops were bounteous, and game plentiful. In the summer they prepared for the season of cold, when hunger stalked the land. They dried fish, made jerky, pemmican, and stored vegetables and nuts. They prepared the clothing they would need and secured their lodges.

Winter for them became a happiness time, a time for telling the old legends, the teaching of youth, for courting, visiting, and dancing.

Their chief was called Washkanaba. He carried the pipe of friendship to all men. Any man could come among them, if he came in peace. He would offer the pipe, and if he accepted it, he became as one of them. If he was wounded, he would be healed. If hungry, he would be given food. When his needs were filled, he could stay or leave as he wished.

They had no weapons of war, only for the hunt. They sent forth no war parties, and because of this, they became known and respected among all the Tribes. No man lifted his hand against the People. Life was good then.

The lake was called Drum Beater. It was used by the People for the fresh clean water, and the fish it produced. It was completely encircled by their lodges. Today it is but a legend and lives only in the memory of the very old ones.

They tell how, in a time of trouble, the People would fast and pray. Then it was in the dusk of an evening, a mist would slowly cover the lake. The People would be in their lodges, all fires out, no lights. All was quiet, no birds sang, no creature moved. It was as if the whole world held its breath, waiting.

Their Chief would prepare himself. Lying flat across the back of his head, was one red feather, the mark of a leader. His braids hanging, the ends tied together at the back, with a strip of rabbit fur. He wore a simple, unadorned clout, and short deer skin moccasins. In his right hand he held his coup stick covered with markings, their meaning known only to him. In his left, the pipe, the stem held closed by his forearm.

He would leave his lodge and walk slowly to the south end of the lake. Here in the sand he would place his stick, and stand with the pipe held high in his two hands, offering it to his Gods.

It was then, you would hear the sound of the drum. At first, it was soft, then growing in loudness, as the rolling of thunder.

A canoe would appear, manned by six strange warriors dress in the same manner as Washkanaba. Leaving his coup stick in the sand, he would get in, and the canoe would back slowly and disappear in the mist. It was then, the sound of the drum would drop and be as the soft beating of a partridge wing.

All was quiet, all was waiting, no breath of air stirred, no sound, only the drum, soft as the beating of all their hearts, as they watched the stick of their Chief at the end of the lake.

Then, the sound of the drum grew louder, and once again the canoe with the strange warriors appeared. Their Chief stepped to the sand, found rubbing sticks, and started a fire. When its flames were high, he sat down with his stick at his side, and waited. The strange canoe backed slowly into the mist and disappeared. The drum beat grew softer and stopped. The mist started to lift, and was gone. All was as before, just the Chief by his fire.

There was movement. The People left their lodges and sat in a council circle around their leader. The sounds of the forest grew, the birds sang.

The People waited, and Washkanaba would light and pass his pipe. When it came back to him, he would lift it high to the Heavens, and then to Mother Earth. Then it was, that he would give his words of leadership.

Today, you walk this land, and it is a piece of beauty. The birds will be sing, and if you are attentive, you will see the creatures of the forest. There are other things. You will notice a scarred giant of a fallen tree, rocks that have been split by lightening and huge stumps that bear the blackness of fire. You will wonder.

It was the customs of these people to keep two runners at the base of the trail leading from the camp, down to the Sound. They would watch the movement of war parties and canoes on the waters and report to their Chief.

Thus, it was that one day, it was reported that a strange canoe with two wounded men in it had been beached by the watchers. They were brought into the camp, and there they were given one of the best lodges. The men who were healers visited them and soon they were recovering. They were white men, the first white men any of the People had ever seen.

In a little while, they were able to leave their lodge, and visit in the camp. Everywhere they went, they were made welcome, given the best of food and offered the pipe.

One day they discovered a rich cache of furs in the lodge beside them. It was the only wealth of the People. Once each year, it was taken to a trading post far to the North and bartered for the goods the People needed. Kettles, beads, blankets, axes, and many many things they were learning to rely on the white man for.

These were evil, greedy men. At once, their days were filled with scheming, devising ways to steal the furs. As each plan was considered, it was dropped as too risky.

Then one day, the way was given them. The People were invited to a feast in one of the neighboring camps. There would be dancing. The white men were invited too, but, they claimed to be too ill.

So it was, the camp was deserted, and the white men became busy robbing their host. They made many trips down the trail to the Sound. Here they selected one of the largest canoes, and loaded it with their plunder.

Far into the night they labored and on shouldering the last two loads, turned and saw the Chief. He stood transfixed with disbelief. One of the men dropped his load, and picking up a bow and arrow, shot the Chief in the heart. He fell to the earth.

Hurriedly, they made their way out of the clearing, and at its edge, one of them screamed, "Look!".

The old Chief was on his feet, one arm extended, fist clenched, in the sign of war, words rolled forth with the sound of thunder. "This shall be a bitter place. From now on, no white men shall find peace here. For them, all shall be desolation, fire, disease, and death." Then his body folded to his mother, the earth.

The breeze, that was gentle till now, picked up and increased to a gale, bending the trees, and lashing the men, who now were in panic, as they hurried to the canoe. Throwing their loads in, they turned to shove off, again one of them screamed.

There at the water's edge, stood the ghost of the Chief. His fist was again extended in the sign of war, his lips were moving, and although they could hear no sound, they knew he was pronouncing the curse of Washkanaba on them again.

They shoved off, fighting the heavy waters and wind. Slowly the canoe moved out into the middle of the Sound, there it was sucked into a whirlpool and disappeared from the face of the water.

The People, returning to their camp and finding the body of their Chief, went into mourning. They gave him a fitting burial, on the shore of the lake had loved.

They became as lost children, their beloved leader was gone and they wandered the face of the land. Nothing was as before. They moved away and fire visited the place. White men came and built saw mills, they burned down. Cattle and sheep grew sick and died. All creatures shunned the place. There was no happiness in the land.

Then, one day all this changed. Once again, there was the singing of the birds, bees hiving in the burned out trees, small creatures busy in the pursuits of their kind.

This once desolate place had become a Boy Scout Camp, our own Hahobas Reservation, and once again, there was happiness on the land, boys laughing, shouting, and singing. There was swimming in the lakes and the telling of stories and legends at the camp fires.

Then, it was that one evening at dusk, when all was quiet, the leaders saw the mist on the lake, and heard the beating of the drum. They saw the mist part, and the prow of a canoe appeared, and beached. From it stepped the ghost of the mighty Chief. He stood there facing them, his warriors waiting. All was quiet, all was waiting.

His arm extended, fist clenched in the sign of war. Slowly his forearm raised, the fingers straightened, the palm was forward in the sign of peace. His voice boomed forth: "Once again, this is a land of peace and happiness. I now remove my curse. It will be so, for as long as there is friendship here. But, I will watch, and this you will know when you hear the beat of the drum."

Stepping into the canoe, it slowly backed into the mist, and disappeared.

This is the legend of Camp Hahobas. There are those who claim to have heard the drum, you may hear it. When the mist is on the lake, and all is quiet, you will know that the mighty Chief Washkanaba is watching.

RELATED BY KURT KARLINSEY, MOUNT RAINIER COUNCIL  
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