



## Glooskap and the Giant Skunk

*Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) People - Canada & USA*

After the struggle with Izignapogos that freed the food for everyone, Groundhog warned Koluskap that he was not finished because half-stone man had some friends down below. Koluskap and Mikumwesu, the two brothers, started down the river in their canoe with Koluskap paddling. After a while Mikumwesu said, 'Let's go ashore because that partner of Izignapogos is down here somewhere. You know the one I mean? The Big Skunk who can shoot his spray across the ocean?' Koluskap replied, 'Yes, I know him (...).'

Mikumwesu went ashore and cut a long stick and took it to Koluskap in the canoe. 'Sharpen this stick,' instructed Mikumwesu. 'We'll use it to plug him up so he can't shoot.' Koluskap was reluctant to try that plan as he thought the giant skunk too dangerous. He suggested lighting his pipe so there would be a lot of smoke and that way, the giant skunk wouldn't be able to direct his spray. Then, while the smoke confused the skunk, Koluskap would jump in and plug him up.

They came around a bend to a narrow place in the river with cliffs on each side. Koluskap saw that the two brothers could not pass any further without risking the danger of the giant skunk because they couldn't see ahead clearly. Mikumwesu said, 'I'll start smoking and the smoke will rise up like fog.' The little brother took out his *pixnoggin*, a pouch made out of a whole fisher's skin, and put his special smoking mixture in his pipe. When the smoke was thick like a fog, they continued their journey through the narrows. Suddenly the Giant Skunk was before them ready to fire. But because of the smoke, Koluskap had time to shove the sharp stick in him and down went the skunk.

Mikumwesu asked, 'Why didn't you pierce him so as to kill him?' Koluskap replied that he hadn't wanted to kill the giant skunk. He wanted to keep him until he made him small enough that people might use him and not risk getting hurt with spray. 'From now on,' claimed Koluskap, 'the skunk will have just enough power in his spray to protect himself.'

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Adapted by Gwen Bear, Wolastoqiyik Executive Committee & New Brunswick Museum (2005).

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## Comments

Like the Passamaquoddy, of whom we have already written in the story 'Glooskap and the Great Wind-Bird,' the Wolastoqiyik also belong to the Algonquian linguistic stock and are also part of the confederation of Abenaki or Wabanaki tribes. All of them are native to the regions of New Brunswick and Quebec in Canada and Maine in the United States.

Wolastoqiyik means 'People of the Shining River,' referring to the stream that the settlers called Saint John River, on whose banks they lived for millennia.

As for Glooskap - who also appears in the above-mentioned Passamaquoddy story - he is a mythical character shared by all Abenaki peoples, although the legends vary widely from tribe to tribe. Glooskap is often described as a kind and gentle warrior who fights evil and has magical powers. Glooskap is not a god. He did not create the universe, nor will he one day come to judge mankind, let alone the Abenaki peoples. For the Abenaki, he is either just another man with supernatural powers or 'a spirit' (Jack, 1895, p. 194), trying to improve the created world to make it more habitable (Maine Folklore Center, nd).

According to the Abenaki, it was Tabaldak who created human beings, and both Glooskap and his twin brother, Mikumwesu, were created from the dust of his body. For the Wolastoqiyik,

Glooskap is still living. He is going to last as long as the world. They say that he is in the south end of the world. There were seven Indians

who went to see him. It took them seven years to get to him. They saw him living with his grandmother. (...) He is not an old-looking man. He appears to be about thirty years old. (Jack, 1895, p. 193)

An audio of this story in the original Wolastoqiyik language can also be found in the Gwen Bear reference (2005), which we have included here.

Thanks to M.C., a person from the L'nu (Mi'kmaq) People, who has offered us an invaluable help for including stories from Glooskap in this Collection. *Wela'lin*, M.

## Sources

Gwen Bear (2005). Koluskap and the Giant Skunk. *Koluskap: Stories from Wolastoqiyik*. Website belonging to the Wolastoqiyik Executive Committee & New Brunswick Museum. Available on <http://website.nbm-mnb.ca/Koluskap/English/Stories/story4.php>

Jack, E. (1895). Maliseet legends. *Journal of American Folklore*, 8(30), 193-208.

Maine Folklore Center (nd). Maliseet, NB, 'Kluskap and His Twin Brother'. *University of Maine*. <https://umaine.edu/folklife/what-we-do/programs-and-events/maine-song-and-story-sampler-map/places/maliseet-kluskap/>

## Associated text of the Earth Charter

Principle 15c: Avoid or eliminate to the full extent possible the taking or destruction of non-targeted species.

*Other passages that this story illustrates*

Principle 2b: Affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good.

Principle 15b: Protect wild animals from methods of hunting, trapping, and fishing that cause extreme, prolonged, or avoidable suffering.

