

THE GOSSIPING CLAM

This story comes from the Puget Sound Region of Western Washington and is told in different ways by different tribes.

A loooong time ago, clams had feet. You know those clams you find at the beach? Well they had feet. They would walk everywhere. And they would go everywhere. Everywhere you went there were clams around. You went to your house, there would be clams in front of the house and inside your house. You went into the mountains, there were clams in the mountains walking around. Clams were everywhere because they had feet. They walked everywhere. So, the clams as they walked everywhere, they watched the people. They were always watching people. Wherever you were at there would be little clams watching you. If you were getting ready to go to work that day, there would be little clams in your house watching you. If you were working during the day, they would be standing around watching you. You're getting ready for bed, there would be little clams watching you. They were everywhere and they're watching you all the time. And if that wasn't bad enough, the clams, at night when you were asleep, would get together and they would talk about you. They would talk about you and everything you had done that day. And if it didn't sound exciting enough, they would add a few little things that maybe didn't happen but made the story better. And so, they would gossip about you. Clams are gossiping all the time. Talking about people, watching people, studying people, making stories up about people. The clams were gossiping all the time.

One day Raven, that big black bird Raven was way out in the woods, and he was doing something really, really bad. I don't know what it was, but it must have been really bad because he was hiding. He didn't want anyone to see him. And when he was done doing this really bad thing, he turned around and there was a little clam looking at him. And Raven said, "Oh, excuse me. I didn't know you were there little clam but hey, hey promise me you won't tell anyone what you saw me doing. I don't want anyone to know about this." And the little clam said "I promise Raven. I won't tell anyone." Raven said "No. No. I'm really serious. I'm serious. Don't tell anyone. I don't want anyone to know about this. Promise me." And the little clam said "What kind of

clam do you think I am? Of course, I give you my word I won't tell anyone." But when that little clam got home that night, he told everyone. He told everyone what he saw Raven doing. He said "I couldn't believe it. In the middle of the forest in broad daylight he was doing this terrible, terrible thing. And then he tells me not to tell you, but I have to tell you because he told me not to tell you." And so that little clam told everyone what he saw Raven doing. And Raven was really angry. He spread his black wings across the earth, and he gathered up all the clams between his wings and he took them down to the beach. And he would take a clam and drop it on to the sand and put his foot on top of it and push it under the sand. And then he would do the same with another clam. Drop it on to the sand, put his foot on it and drive it under the sand. And so, he did this to all the clams. All the clam people he pushed under the sand, and he said to them "All right little clams, you like to gossip? Go ahead and gossip now. But every time you open your mouth because you live under the sand, every time you open your mouth water and sand will rush into your mouth. This is your punishment for being gossips. And so that is where the clam people are today, under the sand, on the beach. But do you think that stopped them from gossiping? Of course not. When you walk across a wet and muddy beach, you'll see little spurts of water coming from under the sand. Do you know who that is? That is the clam people. And they are still talking, they are still gossiping, and they are talking about you. And that is all.