

## BEAVER AND MOUSE

This is a story I learned from Raymond Moses, Sr., of the Tulalip people many, many years ago.

A long time ago there was Beaver. Now you know Beaver, right? Beaver is that little animal with brown fur and a flat tail and big teeth. Beaver lives a complicated life if you ask me. Because Beaver chews down a tree to make a dam. Beaver makes a dam to make a pond. Beaver makes a pond to build his house in. That is a lot of work just to make a house; to chew down a tree, to make a dam, to make a pond, so you can make your house. But that is Beaver. The other animal in the story is Little Field mouse. That little mouse that lives in the grass.

A long time ago, Beaver was walking through the woods looking at all the trees, when he saw, huh, the cutest thing he'd ever seen. He saw Little Field mouse. Oh, she was so cute. He looked at her and wished that he could talk with her, but she would never talk to him. He's just old beaver and she's such a beautiful field mouse. So, he would wander around the woods looking at her and he would hide around and peek at her and he wished he could talk with her. He went to his cousin Squirrel and asked, "Do you think I should talk with her?" And cousin Squirrel said, "Go ahead." So, Beaver worked up all his courage, and he went walking out of the woods heading towards Field Mouse and as he walked towards her all the animals could hear his heart beating really loud like a drum. He was so scared. He went up to her and said, "Hi Field Mouse." She looked up at him and she said "Hi." He was so happy she said something to him. He then blurted out "Will you marry me?" And she looked at him and she said "eek! No! You're too fat." He turned around and walked back into the woods crying and crying. She didn't like him, she said he was too fat. Oh, why did he talk to her. Oh, what could he do? He wandered the woods for days and days, feeling sad, crying and thinking what can I do? He thought he could go on diet, but that would be too much work. And then he remembered something. Cedar Tree. Cedar Tree would help him because Cedar Tree is what the native people call 'Long life maker, great gift giver.' From the cedar tree, people could get anything they need. Any material thing they need. They could get wood to make their houses. They could carve a canoe out of the trunk. They could take the soft inner bark of the tree, not the hard-outside bark but the soft inner bark and make their clothes from it. They can make baskets, they can make ropes, they can make nets, they can make boxes. They can make anything they need. They can even make baby diapers from this tree. Well Beaver knew this, and he knew Cedar Tree would help him.

So, he went up to Cedar Tree and tore off a big strip of bark. And then he tore that big strip into smaller strips. And then he wove those strips together. He wove them together until he made a big belt. A big belt just like a girdle. And he wrapped that big belt around him, and he pulled it really tight. Pulled it really tight and then he looked at himself and said "I don't look fat now. I look skinny. This belt makes me look skinny. Maybe she'll like me now." So, he came walking out of the woods heading toward Field Mouse again. She saw him coming and thought he looked a little better now. When he got up to her, he bent down to ask her the question and do you

know what happened? The belt snapped. It broke and it hit poor Field Mouse across the head. It knocked her out of the woods into the grass. She got up and she was wobbling around and staggering around. And that is why, when you see a field mouse, as it runs through the grass, it never runs in a straight line, it runs in a crooked line. And that is all.