

Transcript of the Oral Telling of the Basket Woman Story Told by Squtxulenuhw (George Seymour)

When I think of the basket woman, **Tth'oxélets** is her name, **xelets** is the old dead fish, they're still alive. So that tells me that that **xelets** was her favorite food. She's a woman, or sasquatch I guess you could say, a basket woman, that, uh, journeyed around the villages, watching for children that did not listen, or they were out after dark. So this particularly one is called **Tth'oxélets**.

Down Stz'uminus, the story is from Stzu'minus.

Summertime.

The tide was low, and that's where the playground was for the children, mainly because they were there most of the day and they were able to eat raw clams, even oysters. Or they'd make a fire and steam the clams open, or the oysters open and eat that. So... that was a playground during the day, and then they ate, they fed themselves.

So, time went on and the tide started coming in, so they moved their games up into the forest, hide and go seek or whatever. And the older children knew that they were supposed to be in before dark, have all the younger children in before dark. But they're having so much fun enjoying themselves playing hide and seek or whatever, they lost track of time and, next thing you know, it was too dark.

They tried to find their way back out of the forest, but all the trails lead to a dead end, then they couldn't find their way out of their forest.

And the younger children were whining and crying. The older children tried to keep them quiet, and they couldn't. They wouldn't listen because it was dark, and they were afraid of the dark.

"You have to keep quiet, because Tth'oxélets could hear you. She lives up the mountain. And if she hears, you she'll come and take us away."

And they told them, "You have to keep quiet, because Tth'oxélets could hear you. She lives up the mountain. And if she hears, you she'll come and take us away."

But the little children were so scared, they kept on getting louder and louder, and their whines or cries and...

* * *

Oh! I missed a spot I'm always missing this spot...

There was this, uh, young girl, she was crippled. And when the community would go harvesting, Sometimes they're gone for days or weeks. They had to leave this one young lady that, because she was crippled, she couldn't walk properly, and she had a hunchback.

So this, uh, young lady would go down the beach. Nice Day. And she'd be quietly crying to herself or feeling bad for herself because

she couldn't walk; she couldn't join the rest of the community in harvesting their food. And Tth'oxélets would come snooping around, and she'd always see this young girl down the beach.

One time she decided to go talk to the young lady. She says, "I'm Tth'oxélets. I live up the mountains. Don't be scared of me. I won't hurt you. I've come to ask you if you want to come to live with me and you will not be lonely anymore. I'll take care of you. You don't have to worry about food or anything. I'll take care of you. You don't have to worry."

And she said the right words to the young lady. Tth'oxélets said, "Can I name you Little Sister?"

And the young lady agreed, so Tth'oxélets called her Little Sister.

And sure enough, she took her up the mountain where she lived.

* * *

And we get back to the children again.

The children were crying, and the older kids couldn't tell, couldn't help, but you know, hearing the kids get louder and louder.

And sure enough Tth'oxélets up the mountain, hears the young children whining, and she says, "Ooh! Little children, playing in my forest after dark!"

So she loads her huge basket and makes sure it is oiled inside with the seal grease or whatever, so that kids couldn't climb out of there.

So she loads it on until she tells Little Sister, "I want you to build a huge bonfire because I'm going to dance before I feast." She says, "I hear some children crying in my forest."

After she loads her Giant basket on her back - two straps, shoulder straps and the head strap.

And, uh, she goes running down the mountainside. She was so huge the earth was shaking. Then as she gets closer, she starts to tiptoe. She could hear that she was so close to the children.

She looks at the fir trees and she rips bark off the fir tree because the trees were big then.

*She goes running
down the
mountain side.*

*She was so huge
the earth was
shaking.*

And the fir bark was easy to rip off for her, she just ripped it off and she went over to the kids and says, "Oh, my children. You must have been playing all day with not eating. I have some smoked fish here for you. I know you must be hungry so come, come, come. Come close."

Sure enough, the kids were hungry, so they all went close and she also took the pitch from the, uh, balsam trees, and she put the pitch, rubbed the pitch on the eyes of the children so they couldn't see where they were going and she loaded them all in her basket. They had no place to run because they couldn't see, so they stayed close and Tth'oxélets put them all in her basket.

Then she was happy going up the mountain there, walking fast, and she finally reaches home, up the mountains, and she tells Little Sister, "Oh, you have a nice fire going and I'm tired. I want to have a little rest."

And uh, before she fell asleep, she said,
“Oh, gather some drumsticks, gather some
more dry wood and put it on the fire.

So she unloads her giant basket and leans it
against a huge cedar tree and she kneels
down, and she flops down and starts
snoring instantly.

So...

She started snoring and, um, the Little sister
went over and helped the children out of
the giant basket and said, “You have to go
find two drumsticks. You're going to sing for
Tth'oxélets.”

And that's what they did. They found some
nice drumsticks that were clappers, loud
clappers.

And she says, “also find some sticks that are
about 8 feet long, 10 feet long.

And they ask then, “What are
we gonna use'm for?”

“You'll figure it out after.”

And sure enough, they were all
ready, so she snook them back
into the basket.

Sure enough, uh, Tth'oxélets
woke up. She stood up and
stretched her arms and she said, “Oh, good.
Get the children out of the basket. They're
going to sing that beautiful Stz'uminus song.
They're going to drum with those sticks and
I'm going to dance before I feast.”

So the kids all lined themselves around and
they started to sing the song. They started
off slowly and then Tth'oxélets says,

“Faster, faster! Harder, harder! Louder,
louder!”

So they start singing the song faster, faster,
louder, louder. And Tth'oxélets starts to
dance and then she starts to spin and then
she said, “Faster!”

And the faster she spun, the bigger the
flames were on the fire.

And then one little sister.

Was ready she signaled some of the kids
and some of the little kids went behind
Tth'oxélets and she went and pushed
Tth'oxélets and she landed in the fire.

And when she was in the fire, she goes,
“Help me help me! I'm burning, I'm
burning!”

And all the little kids grab their long stick
and they all held her into the fire.

And pretty soon, all the sparks
come flying out of the they fire.

* * *

What do you think those sparks
transformed into?

In different stories along the
coast, sometimes they're
beautiful birds, sometimes

they're bees. But in this case, they're
mosquitoes.

To this day, mosquitoes still come and take
blood from you. So that's all part of the
Tth'oxélets story.

Tth'oxélets once looked for children that
didn't listen.

*To this day,
mosquitoes still
come and take
blood from you. So
that's all part of the
Tth'oxélets story.*