

*Ki?asuk kyukyit hu qaktik Ni?taha?ana akiy Susap Pi?at*

*Ki?asuk kyukyit* - Good Day

*Hu qaktik* - My name is

*Ni?taha?ana*

*Akiy* - or

Joe Pierre - *Susap Pi?at*

*Ki?asuk kyukyit hu qaktik Ni?taha?ana akiy Susap Pi?at*

I am a member of the *Ktunaxa* Nation and today I would like to share with you. The *Ktunaxa* Creation Story or as some people call it “In the Beginning.” The *Ktunaxa* Creation Story takes place a long time ago. It takes place in a time when the animals ruled the world. It takes place a long time ago. And at this time the *Nipika*, Creator, *Nipika*, God. The *Nipika* sent out word to all the living beings of the world that he wanted them to come together in a meeting. He sent out word to all of the *Nasukin*, the chiefs of all of the living beings in the world that he wanted them to come together in a meeting because he had something important to tell them and he had something important that he wanted to ask them.

And so it was, all of the *Nasukin*, all of the chiefs of all of the living beings of the world came together in this meeting and when they were all together *Nipika* stood up in front of them and said, “The reason why I have gathered you here today is I have something important to tell you and I also have something important that I want to ask you. Soon, very, very soon there will be *?aq?tsmaqnik?* here on the earth. The *?aq?tsmaqnik?* are coming to the earth and they will be here very, very soon. *?aq?tsmaqnik?*, human beings, they will be here on the earth very soon. And the question that I have for you, the question that I have for each and every single one of you is I want to find out. I want to find out what it is that you will do for the human beings when they come to the earth. I want to know it is that you will offer to the human being when they come here to the earth.”

Well one of the first *Nasukin* to stand up was *Cupqa*, chief of the deer. *Cupqa* stood up and said, “I offer myself to the human beings. I offer my whole self to the human beings. I offer my flesh for food, my skin for clothing, my bones and my antlers for tools for the human beings, as long as they sing my song and say my prayer, I will always be there for them.” And so it went. The other *Nasukin* started to stand up. They started to take *Cupqa*’s lead. *Nupqu*, the bear. *Nupqu* stood up and said, “I offer myself to the human beings. I offer my whole self. I offer my flesh for food, my skin for clothing and for shelter, and if the human beings ever need help, spiritually, I will be there for them as long as they sing my song and say my prayer. I will always be there for them.”

And so it went. The *Nasukin*, the chiefs all standing up saying what they would do for the human beings. Some of the chiefs that stood up said that they would have nothing to do with the human beings, that they would try and stay away from the human beings as much as possible, that the human beings would hardly ever see them. They would hardly ever see each other. *Swa?*, the cougar. *Swa?* was one of these *Nasukin* that said that. But if the human beings ever need help spiritually, he would be there for them as long as they sing our song and say our prayer.

And so it went. One after another, the *Nasukin* standing up saying what they would do for the *?aq?tsmaqnik?*. Pretty soon the fish joined in and the birds joined in saying what they would do for the *?aq?tsmaqnik?*. And the plants, the plants started to stand up as well, because remember, all of the

living beings of the world were there, and so the plants started to stand up. *Ławiyat*, huckleberry.

*Ławiyat* stood up and said, “I offer myself to the human beings. I offer my whole self as food for the human beings as long as they sing my song and say my prayer, I will always be there for them.”

And so it went. One after another, the *Nasukin* standing up saying what they would do. Pretty soon, the trees joined in. They were standing up saying what they would do, offering themselves as building material, shelter, tools for the human beings, with that same messages – as long as the human beings sing our song and say our prayer, we will always be there for them. And the rocks, the rocks joined in as well. Because, remember, all of the living beings of the world were there. They were all there at this meeting and they all had that same message, as long as the *?aqtsmaqnik?*, human beings, sing our song, say our prayer, we will always be there for them.

Well as you can imagine, this meeting went on for a long time. There’s lots of living beings in the world and they were all there. And so this meeting, it took awhile. It went on for days, for weeks. Well at the same time that this meeting was happening, there were two sisters, two little birds, they were sisters. These two little birds, they decided to go fishing because they didn’t have to be at the meeting. They weren’t *Nasukin*. They weren’t chiefs. So these two little sisters, they decided to go fishing at a place known as *?aqanqami*. *?aqanqami*, it’s located on the Kootenay River. Today people call that place Bonner’s Ferry. *?aqanqami*, Bonner’s Ferry, Idaho on the Kootenay River. That’s where these two little sisters went fishing, and when they got to the river shore, the big sister said to the little sister, “Hey, you know what? You know what? I think that if I got a little further out into the river, just a little deeper out into the river, I bet you I could catch bigger fish.”

And so the big sister, she started to wade off into the river. The river was getting deeper and deeper on her as she waded out further and further. Little sister was still on the shore of the river saying, “No no, don’t go in the water! Don’t go in the water! The *Yawu?nik?*, *Yawu?nik?* might get you!”

Well, the *Yawu?nik?*, the *Yawu?nik?* was a giant water monster that lived in the Kootenay River and the Columbia River, because at this time, when this story happens, the Kootenay River and the Columbia River were joined together in one big huge water system and the *Yawu?nik?* plied these waters. The *Yawu?nik?* was a giant, a giant water monster. The *Yawu?nik?* had a giant appetite. *Yawu?nik?* would eat anything that came down to the water to drink. *Kitq’atti*, an elk. If *Kitq’atti* came down to the water to drink, *Yawu?nik?* would eat him. If *Nupqu* came down to the water to drink *Yawu?nik?* would eat him too. It didn’t matter how big or for that matter how small an animal. If *Ineuk*, if *Ineuk*, the smallest of small little animals, if the mouse came down to the water to drink, *Yawu?nik?* would eat him too.

And so the animals, they were scared of *Yawu?nik?*. You might say *Yawu?nik?* was a bit of a menace. “No, no, don’t go in the water, don’t go in the water! The *Yawu?nik?*, *Yawu?nik?* might get you,” said little sister. Big sister said, “Oh, it’s OK. I just want to get a little further out, just a little further out because I think if I did I think I could catch bigger fish.” Little sister said, “No, no! Don’t go in the water! Don’t go in the water! The *Yawu?nik?*! *Yawu?nik?*!”

Little sister was on the shore. She didn’t want her big sister in the water. She was scared of the *Yawu?nik?*. And so she decided, “I have to get my big sister out of the river!” And so she went into the river herself and just as she was about to grab her big sister to get her out of the water, the *Yawu?nik?* came up out of the river and swallowed them both. It swam away. Well these two sisters, they had a brother and their brother’s name was *Yamakpat*, little red-headed woodpecker. *Yamakpat*, he was their brother and he found out that his sisters had been swallowed up by the *Yawu?nik?*, and he

was sad. He was sad that his sisters had been swallowed up by the *Yawu?nik?*, but more so than that, more so than that he was mad. He was mad that the *Yawu?nik?* had swallowed his sisters and he decided that something must be done, something must be done about the *Yawu?nik?*. He said, “And I’m going to be the one to do it, but you know he might need some help. I know. I’ll ask *Natmuq̄in* the giant for help. Ya *Natmuq̄in* will help me.”

*Natmuq̄in* the giant, he was the chief of all the land animals. *Natmuq̄in* the giant, he was such a giant. He was so big that if *Natmuq̄in* stood upright he would hit his head on the ceiling of the sky and because of this *Natmuq̄in* travelled around on his hands and knees. *Natmuq̄in* the giant, the *Nasukin* of all the land animals. And so *Yamakpał* went to *Natmuq̄in* and told him the story, told him how his sisters had been swallowed up by the *Yawu?nik?* and how he wanted to do something about the *Yawu?nik?* and *Natmuq̄in* agreed. He said, “You know we should form a hunting party. We should hunt down that *Yawu?ni?k* and kill him. Ya, ya that’s a great idea, that’s a good idea.”

So word went out that a hunting party was being formed and one of the first animals to come along and join that hunting party was *Skinkū*. *Skinkū* the coyote said, “Can I join the hunting party, please, please? Look, look I brought my spear with me today. Could I join, could I join, please? Look, it’s a really good spear! Look it, look it. It’s a really good spear. Could I join? Can I come with you please?” “Sure *Skinkū*, you can join the hunting party. Why don’t you come along with us coyote?” So *Skinkū* joined the hunting party and a hunting party was formed and they got word. They heard that *Yawu?nik?* had been sighted up by *?akiskq?nuk*. *?akiskq?nuk* is the area up by Invermere, British Columbia today, on the Columbia River. And so they went up there and sure enough, *Yawu?nik?* was in the river. So they started to chase *Yawu?nik?* and *Yawu?nik?* started to swim towards the south as hard and as fast as he could towards the south in the Columbia River. *Yawu?nik?* kept swimming and he swam right into the Kootenay River because remember, at this time when this story happens, the Kootenay River and the Columbia River are joined together and so *Yawu?nik?* swims from the Columbia River right into the Kootenay River and he keeps swimming as hard and as fast as he can towards the south. There’s animals on both sides of the river chasing him. The hunting party are chasing him and *Yawu?nik?* is swimming towards the south and he’s in the Kootenay River. *Skinkū*, he’s running along the river bank. He’s not really paying attention too much. He’s kind of looking around at the sights and the sounds. He’s not paying attention to where he’s going when all of a sudden, *Skinqū* coyote slips and he falls into the river. “Oh no, I’m in the water! I’m in the river! I’m in the water! Help please! Get me out of here! Please, please get me out of here,” said *Skinqū*.

*Natmuq̄in* the giant reaches over and grabs a big handful of *wasa* and he reaches out towards *Skinqū* and he says, “Here *Skinqū*, grab on.” *Skinqū* grabs onto that *wasa* and he pulls him to shore. *Natmuq̄in* the giants looks down at his hands and he sees that he has a handful of *wasa* and so *Natmuq̄in* decides we should name this place *Wasa* so we can remember the time that we saved *Skinqū* out of the river using *wasa*. *Wasa*, the *Ktunaxa* word for the horsetail rush or reed. Horsetail. *Wasa*. *Natmuq̄in* named that place *Wasa* and today there is a place still known as *Wasa*, B.C.

And the chase continues. *Yawu?nik?* keeps swimming towards the south as hard and as fast as he can. They’re chasing along and now the hunting party, they’re stopped. They’re stopped by a small

little animal sitting on the side of the river. This small little animal says, “Hey, hey what are you guys doing? Where are you guys going? What are you guys doing?” They tell this animal what they are doing and he says, “Well can I join the hunting party? I’d really like to come with you guys.” And they say, “Sure *Mayuk*, you can join the hunting party. Come along with us *Mayuk*, we’d love to have you.” *Nałmuqēin* the giant decides we should name this place *Mayuk* so that we can remember where weasel joined the hunting party. And so *Nałmuqēin* names that place *Mayuk*. Today, there is still a place known as *Mayuk*. It’s about 15 minutes east outside of Cranbrook when you are travelling towards Fernie. *Mayuk*, its at the base of Baker Mountain. *Mayuk*, it’s still there. That’s where weasel joined the hunting party.

And so the chase continues. *Yawu?nikʷ* keeps swimming as hard and as fast as he can. He swims all the way down to *?aqswaq*. *?aqswaq*, today known as Libby down in Montana. And now the Kootenay River is flowing towards the west. It’s flowing through an area known as *Skinkuē ?amakis*. *Skinkuē ?amakis*, the land of the coyote down there in northwestern Montana and northern Idaho. The river flows past *?aqanqmi*, that place where those two sisters went fishing - Bonner’s Ferry, Idaho. And now the Kootenay River is flowing towards the north. It flows past *?æpu ?amakis*. *?æpu ?amakis*. That’s the land of the wolverine over there by *Yaqan Nu?kiy* which is the Creston area and *Yawu?nikʷ* is still swimming as hard and as fast as he can. He swims right into the Kootenay Lake and that hunting party is chasing him. The west arm of Kootenay Lake. We are now approaching the area known as *Mizqaqas ?amakis*, the land of the chickadee over there by *?akyamłup*, that place where you can see to the bottom of the water, it’s so clear. *?akyamłup*. Today, some people call that place Nelson and the Kootenay River flows into the Columbia River right close to *Kiksituk*, which is Castlegar. *Kiksituk*. *Yawu?nikʷ* turns when he enters the Columbia River and he starts to swim towards the north, swimming as hard and as fast as he can. And now the hunting party, they have to stop. They have to stop because they have come to a place known as *?akinka?nuk*. It’s a huge cliff right beside the Columbia River. This huge cliff and there’s a crack in the cliff and it’s believed that when you are travelling on the Columbia River, if you are travelling towards the north, when you get to *?akinka?nuk* you must stop, take out an arrow, aim towards that crack in the cliff and fire and if your aim is true, if you hit that crack then you can continue your journey – it will be safe. If you miss, maybe you’d better stop and wait for a few days – it won’t be safe. *?akinka?nuk*. Arrow rock. *?akinka?nuk*. Today we have the Arrow Lakes over there.

And *Yawu?nikʷ* keeps swimming towards the north as fast and as hard as he can and the hunting party is chasing him. He swims all the way up past *Ktunwakanmituk Mieʷqaqas*. Today that place is known as Revelstoke. Up around the big bend of the Columbia River and then back towards the south. He swims past *?aknuqłuq*, Golden and he keeps swimming towards the south, but *Yawu?nikʷ* does something now that the hunting party didn’t expect. *Yawu?nikʷ* just stops. He just stops swimming. He’s resting, resting in the water. He’s motionless, just resting in the water and the hunting party comes up and they see him there. *Skinkuē* says, “I’ve got my spear ready. Could I go get him, please, please? I’m ready to go. Can I go get him please? Look my spear! I’m ready to go, please.” Sure *Skinkuē*, you go get him.

So *Skinkuē*, coyote, starts to sneak up on *Yawu?nikʷ* and *Yawu?nikʷ* is lying there in the water resting, not moving. *Skinkuē* gets up really close right beside *Yawu?nikʷ*. He raises up his spear and just as he’s about to come down, *Yawu?nikʷ* notices him and he starts to swim. *Skinkuē* comes down

with his spear and catches him on the fin and a little trickle of blood comes out of *Yawu?nik*'s fin. And that little trickle of blood, it leaves the river and it flows up into the mountains. And that little trickle of blood turns into a creek. *Natmuq̄in* the giant decides we should name this place *Yaknusu?ki* so that we can remember this little trickle of blood that turned into this creek here. *Yaknusu?ki*. That creek today is a little hamlet of a town known as Brisco and at Brisco there's this creek that flows out of the mountains and into the Columbia River. That's *Yaknusu?ki* – the little trickle of blood that turned into that creek.

And *Yawu?nik* got away and he starts swimming towards the south as hard and as fast as he can and the hunting party, they continue chasing him and again, *Yawu?nik* swims as hard and as fast as he can towards the south. He leaves the Columbia River, swims right into the Kootenay River and he keeps swimming towards the south all the way down to *?aqswaq* which is Libby in Montana, turns towards the west and swims through *Skinkue ?amakis* the land of the coyote down in northwestern Montana, northern Idaho, past *?aq'anqmi* that place where those two sisters went fishing. Now the river is flowing towards the north through, *?æpu ?amakis* the land of the wolverine, past *Yaqaan Nu?kiy* which is Creston, into the Kootenay Lake, the west arm of the Kootenay Lake, *Mie'qaqas ?amakis* the land of the chickadee, past *?aqyam̄up* that place where you can see to the bottom of the water it's so clear, *Kik'situk*, Castlegar, where the Kootenay River flows into the Columbia River. *Yawu?nik* turns towards the north and swims as hard and as fast as he can all the way up past *Ktunwakanmituk Mie'qaqas* which is Revelstoke, up around the big bend of the Columbia and then back down towards the south, past *?aknuqtuk* which is Golden. *Yaknusu?ki*, that place where that blood turned into the creek, *?akiskq'nuk* the Invermere area and back into the Kootenay River, and again all the way back towards the south. And the hunting party, they just continued to chase him and *Yawu?nik* keeps swimming around and around in those two rivers all the way down towards the south through *Skinkue ?amakis*, the land of the coyote and then all the way back up to the north again past *Ktunwakanmituk Mie'qaqas* which is Revelstoke, and then up around the big bend and then back down towards the south.

Around and around *Yawu?nik* goes in the river swimming. And they just keep chasing him around and around in those two rivers for days, for weeks they chase *Yawu?nik*, until one day, the hunting party, they're chasing through *Mie'qaqas ?amakis*, the land of the chickadee, they're running through there when they're stopped. They're stopped by some laughter (laughter). They hear some laughter (laughter) and they stop. They're looking around. Where's that laughter coming from? (laughter) When finally, they notice, sitting up on the side of the mountain, *Kik'um*, the wise old spirit. *Kik'um*, sitting up on the side of the mountain laughing (laughter) and they stop and they say, "*Kik'um*, what are you laughing at?" And *Kik'um* says, "I'm laughing at you. I'm laughing at all of you, you hunting party. I've been sitting here on the side of this mountain now for days, for weeks. Every couple of days, you guys come running past here chasing that *Yawu?nik*. You're never going to catch him. He's too big, he's too strong. That's what I'm laughing at. *Natmuq̄in*, you giant, why don't you use your size and your strength? Cut across the mountains. Go to that place where the two rivers join together and use your size and strength. Topple over the mountain there and cut those two rivers off and the next time *Yawu?nik* comes swimming down from the north, you'll have him trapped.

"Hey, that's a good idea. That's a great idea. We should do that," they say. And so, *Natmuq̄in* cuts across the mountains to that place where the two rivers join together. The hunting

party continues chasing *Yawu?nik?* up towards the north. *Nałmuq̄ein* uses his size and his strength and he topples over those two mountains cutting those two rivers off from each other forming the Columbia Lake. Sure enough, just like *Kik'um* said, the next time *Yawu?nik?* comes swimming down from the north, he's trapped, trapped in the newly formed Columbia Lake. The honour, the honour of killing *Yawu?nik?* goes to *Yamakpał*. *Yamakpał*, the little red-headed woodpecker. He kills the *Yawu?nik?* and *Nałmuq̄ein* the giant starts to tear the *Yawu?nik?* apart, tearing him to pieces, giving out the meat to the animals so that they can eat. And then, *Nałmuq̄ein* the giant reaches down and he grabs up the ribs, bones of the *Yawu?nik?*, the ribs and he scatters them in different directions and the bones land and they turn into hoodoos. The hoodoos are the ribs, the bones of the *Yawu?nik?*. And then *Nałmuq̄ein* the giant reaches down and he grabs up the white swim bladder organ, the white swim bladder, and he crushes up that white swim bladder and he scatters it in all directions and he says this will be the white race of people. They will be large in numbers and they will be powerful. And then *Nałmuq̄ein* reaches down and he grabs up the kidney, the black kidney, and he scrunches up that black kidney and he scatters it in all directions. And *Nałmuq̄ein* says this will be the black race of people. They will be large in numbers and they too will be powerful. And then *Nałmuq̄ein* reaches down and he grabs up the roe, yellow eggs, the roe, and he scrunches up that yellow roe and he scatters it in all directions and he says this will be the yellow race of people. They will be large in numbers, they too will be powerful.

And then *Nałmuq̄ein* looks at his hands and he sees that his hands are covered in blood. so he reaches down. He picks up some grass and he wipes the blood off his hands with the grass and the blood and grass fall to where he is, right where he is and *Nałmuq̄ein* says, "This will be the red race of people. They will be small in numbers but they too will be powerful." And then they realize, they realize that they are the ones. They are the ones to fulfil *Nipika* prophecy of the *?aqłsmaknik* coming to the earth. It's because of them that the human beings will be on the earth soon. And they're happy, they're so happy that they could do this. They're so happy that they could fulfil *Nipika* prophecy that they start to celebrate. *Nałmuq̄ein* is so happy that he forgets himself and he stands upright and he hits his head on the ceiling of the sky and he falls over and he dies.

*Nałmuq̄ein* head goes down towards the south to a place known as *Tuhutnana*, now called Missoula, Montana. *Tuhutnana*. And his feet go north to *Yaktiki*, the Yellowhead Pass. *Yaktiki*. And his body, his body forms the Rocky Mountains and *Nipika* says to those people, to those *?aqłsmaknik* that were right here, says to those *?aqłsmaknik*, "You have just lost a giant of the water and a giant of the land. It is now your responsibility to look after the water, to look after the land." And the animals, the animals they tell that story to the *?aqłsmaknik*, to the human beings, and the human beings they tell that story to their children, and their grandchildren, and to their children, and to their grandchildren all through time until my grandmother, my grandfather, shared this story with me. And now today, I'm sharing this story with you.

*Hunaq'anaq'nini* in *Ktunaxa*. That means I nod my head to you.

*Hunaq'anaq'nini*. Thank you.

Thank you for letting me share this story with you today.

*Hunaq'anaq'nini*.