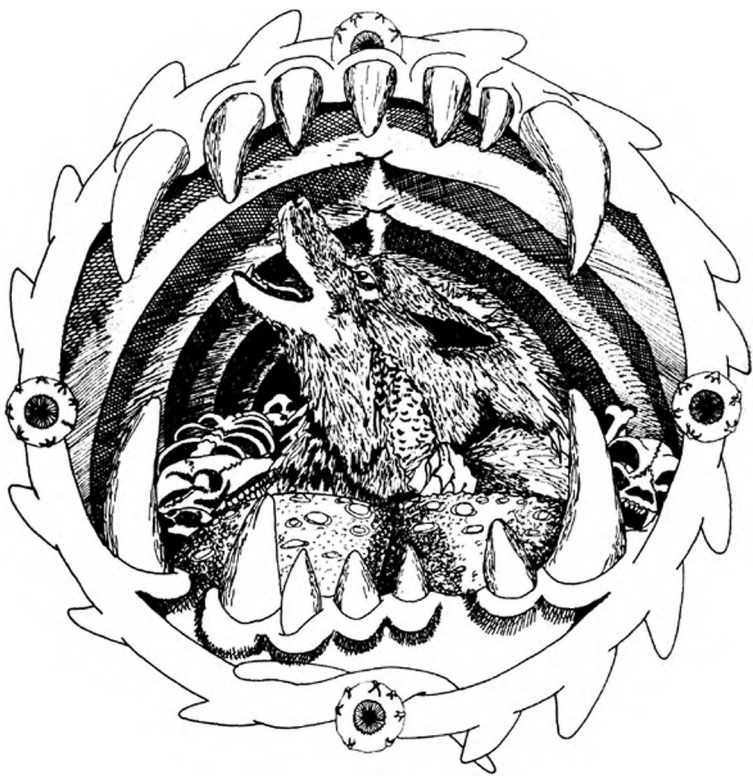


Coeur d' Alene



Prepared by Deward E. Walker Jr.

The Nez Perce Homeland and Their Neighbors



Coyote severs Monster's heart with his flint knife.



COYOTE AND MONSTERS

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COYOTE AND MONSTER

COYOTE WAS BUILDING a fish-ladder by tearing down the waterfall at Celilo, so that salmon could go upstream for the people to catch. He was busily engaged at this when someone shouted to him, "Why are you bothering with that? All the people are gone; the monster has done them in." "Well," said Coyote to himself "then I'll stop doing this, because I was doing it for the people, and now I'll go along too." From there he went along upstream, by the way of the Salmon River country. Going along he stepped on the leg of a meadowlark and broke it. The meadowlark in a temper shouted, "*Lima', lima', lima'*. What chance do you have of finding the people the way you are going along!" Coyote then asked, "My aunt! Please tell me about it. Afterward I will make you a leg of brushwood." So the meadowlark told him, "All the people have already been swallowed by the monster." Coyote then replied, "Yes, that is where I, too, am going."

From there he traveled on. Along the way he took a good bath, saying to himself, "Lest I make myself repulsive to his taste," and then he dressed himself all up: "Lest he will vomit me up or spit me out." Then he tied himself with [very long ropes] to three mountains. From there he came along up and over ridges. Suddenly, behold, he saw a great head. He quickly hid himself in the grass and gazed at it. Never before in his life had he seen anything like it; never such a large thing—away off somewhere melting into the horizon was its gigantic body.

Coyote shouted to him, "Oh Monster, we are going to inhale each other!" The big eyes of the monster roved, looking all over for Coyote but did not find him because Coyote's body was painted with clay to achieve a perfect protective coloring in the grass. Coyote had on his back a pack consisting of five stone knives, some pure pitch, and a flint fire-making set. Presently Coyote shook the grass to and fro and shouted again, "Monster! We are going to inhale each

(Recited by *Wáyi'ítptu*, originally published in Phinney, 1934. See also "Itswewitsix, The Kamiah Monster" in Spinden, 1908.)

other." Suddenly the monster saw the swaying grass and replied, "Oh you Coyote, you swallow me first then; you inhale first." So Coyote tried. Powerfully and noisily he drew in his breath, but the great monster just swayed and quivered. Then Coyote said, "Now you inhale me, for you have already swallowed all the people, so swallow me too lest I become lonely."

The monster inhaled like a mighty wind, which carried Coyote along just like that; but as Coyote went he left in his wake great camas roots and great serviceberries, saying, "Here the people will find them and will be glad, for only a short time away is the coming of the human race." He almost got caught on one of the ropes, but he quickly cut it with his knife.

Thus he dashed right into the monster's mouth. From there he walked down the throat of the monster. Along the way he saw bones scattered about and he thought to himself, "It is to be seen that many people have been dying." As he went along he saw some boys and he said to them, "Where is his heart? Come along and show me!" Then, as they were all going along, the bear rushed out furiously at him. "So!" Coyote said to him, "You make yourself ferocious only to me," and he kicked the bear on the nose. As they continued, the rattlesnake bristled at him in fury, "So! Only toward me you are vicious—we are nothing but dung." Then he kicked the rattlesnake on the head and flattened it. Going on he met the brown bear who greeted him, "I see he [the monster] selected you for the last. So! I'd like to see you save your people [derogatory diatribe]."

All along the people hailed Coyote and stopped him. He told the boys, "Pick up some wood." His erstwhile friend Fox hailed him from the side, "Such a dangerous fellow [the monster], what are you going to do to him?" "So!" replied Coyote. "You too hurry along and look for wood."

Presently Coyote arrived at the heart and he cut off slabs of fat and threw them to the people. "Imagine you being hungry under such conditions! Grease your mouths with this." And Coyote started a fire with his flint and shortly smoke appeared from the monster's nose, ears, eyes, and anus. The monster then said, "Oh you, Coyote, that's why I was afraid of you. Oh you, Coyote, let me cast you out." And Coyote replied, "Yes, and later let it be said, 'He who was cast out is officiating in the distribution of salmon.'" "Well then, go out through the nose." Coyote replied, "And will not they say the same?" And the monster said, "Well then, go out through the ears," to which Coyote replied, "And let it be said, 'Here is ear-wax officiating in the distribution of food.'" "*Hn, hn, hn!* Oh you, Coyote! This is why I feared you; then go out through the anus." And Coyote replied, "And let people say, 'Feces are officiating in the distribution of food.'" His fire was still burning near the heart and the monster began to writhe in pain. Coyote began cutting away on the heart, and very shortly he broke the stone knife. Immediately he took another and in a short time this one also

broke and Coyote said to all the people, "Gather up all the bones and carry them to the eyes, ears, mouth, and anus; pile them up and when he falls dead kick all the bones outside." Then with another knife he began cutting away at the heart. The third knife he broke and the fourth, leaving only one. He told the people, "All right, get yourselves ready because as soon as he falls dead each one will go out of the opening most convenient. Take the old women and old men close to the openings so that they may get out easily."

The heart hung by only a very small piece of muscle and Coyote was cutting away on it with his last stone knife. The monster's heart was still barely hanging when Coyote's last knife broke; Coyote threw himself on the heart and hung on, just barely tearing it loose with his hands. In his death convulsions the monster opened all the openings of his body and the people kicked the bones outside and went out. Coyote, too, went out. The monster fell dead and the anus began to close. But the muskrat was still inside. Just as the anus closed he squeezed out, barely getting his body through. But alas! his tail was caught; he pulled and it was bare when he pulled it out; all the tail hair had been peeled right off. Coyote scolded him, "Now what were you doing; you had to think up something to do at the last moment. You're always behind in everything."

Then he told the people, "Gather up all the bones and arrange them well." They did this, whereupon Coyote added, "Now we are going to carve the monster." Coyote then smeared blood on his hands, sprinkled this blood on the bones, and suddenly there came to life again all those who had died while inside the monster. They carved the great monster and Coyote began dealing out portions of the body to various parts of the country all over the land: toward the sunrise, toward the sunset, toward the warmth, toward the cold, and by that act destining and forenaming the various peoples—Coeur d'Alene, Cayuse, Pend Oreilles, Flathead, Blackfeet, Crow, Sioux, and all the others. He consumed the entire body of the monster in this distribution to various lands far and wide. Nothing more remained of the great monster.

Fox came up and said to Coyote, "What is the meaning of this, Coyote? You have distributed all of the body to faraway lands but have given yourself nothing for this immediate locality." "Well," snorted Coyote, "and did you tell me that before? Why didn't you tell me that a while ago before it was too late? I was engrossed to the exclusion of thinking. You should have told me that in the first place." And he turned to the people and said, "Bring me some water with which to wash my hands." They brought him water and he washed his hands and now with the bloody washwater he sprinkled the local regions saying, "You may be little people but you will be powerful. Even though you will be little people because I have deprived you, nevertheless you will be very, very, manly. Only a short time away is the coming of the human race."