



THE LEGEND OF CALLING LAKE

A long time ago each Indian tribe had a guardian spirit. If this tribe was a very good tribe the guardian spirit would appear to one of the people to offer advice or warning of danger. One tribe that settled on the lake was especially favoured by the spirits; its women were beautiful and its men were brave and strong. The guardian spirit was very proud of this band and boasted to the other gods that no evil could enter into their hearts.

One wicked spirit became jealous and decided to coax the people into wicked ways. This spiteful spirit could change himself into a dreadful monster, half fish and half beast. The tribe's guardian spirit appeared in a dream to the chief to warn him of the dangers of this evil spirit and to warn his people to be on guard. All the warriors and their squaws vowed to be vigilant against this voice of evil.

Their vow was not easy to keep. At first the bad spirit tried to coax them from their ways of goodness by appearing as a gay young chief and whispering secrets into their dreams. When he was ignored he became viscous and appeared as the hideous monster breathing fire. His huge scabby tail could throw a dozen warriors over at once. And the people began to wonder if it would not be safer to break their vow.

Now the chief had a beautiful daughter who was distressed about the plight of her people. One night she looked out at the stars twinkling in the sky and the path across the lake made by the moon. It seemed to be showing her the way. Early in the morning she dressed in her finest robes, brushed her long black braids from her hair and clasped them with a cardinal's wing feather. As she made her way to the shore the monster flopped out of the forest with a mighty rumble and a roar. The princess seemed unconcerned and launched her canoe, the dreadful monster following close behind.

Just as the evil spirit was about to overtake the canoe a mountain of black smoke appeared above them. Lightning flashed, thunder rolled and the storm broke in a fury that the Indians had never seen before. The frail canoe was dashed to bits and the fiery monster sank between two huge waves never to be seen again.

After that fateful day the listener may hear the deep rumble of the evil spirit's voice rising from the centre of the lake. He is calling the tribes to his lair at the bottom of the lake. And that is why the people never cross the lake but paddle around the edge to stay out of harm's way. And it is in this way that they honour the sacrifice of the beautiful Indian princess.



The Cree name for Calling Lake is "Kito-Sakahekan".