

# RACCOON LEARNS A LESSON

As retold by Elder: Margaret Labillois and Luke Simon

This is a story of how raccoon first got those circles around his eyes and tail.

At one time, there were two blind men who lived in a village. They were unhappy because they could not see and they could not help themselves. So they sat on a log. That is where they decided they were going to stay. Glooscap found them there one day. He said, "What is wrong?" They said, "Nobody wants us around. We can't take care of ourselves and we can't help anybody else, so we are just going to stay here in the woods until we die". Glooscap made a wigwam for them. Then he gave them a rope and said, "Take this rope down to the river. Tie one end to a tree and tie the other end to your pail. When you want to drink, just throw the pail into the water and pull it back in".

Now raccoon saw what was going on with the two men. "I am going to have some fun with these two men," he said. When one of the men went for water at the edge of the river, he took the pail and threw it in the water. Raccoon was very quiet and he sneaked down to the river and moved the pail over to the sand. When the blind man pulled the rope, there was no water in his pail, only sand. When he went back to his friend, he said, "It seems that our river has gone dry. There is only sand there. There is no water". But the other man didn't believe him. He said, "I think you are just too lazy. You probably didn't go for water at all. You just pretended to go for water". But the other man said, "No, I'm telling you the truth".

By this time, Raccoon had come back and put the pail back in the water. When the second blind man went down to the river, he came back with water. He was angry. "See, I have brought water. You are just lazy. You just didn't want to go for water," he said. The men started to fight. Raccoon noticed that they were cooking supper. There were four pieces of meat in the pot. Then, Raccoon stole two pieces of the meat and went and hid himself. When the first man went to the pot, he took out two pieces of meat, and began to eat. When the second man went to serve himself, there was no meat left for him. Once again, he became very angry. "It is bad enough how you are lazy and you don't want to get water, but now you even steal my supper. There is no meat here" he said. "I only took two pieces of meat. There should still be two pieces of meat left", the other man said. So raccoon got the men to fight while he sat back and laughed at them.

Glooscap came along and asked them: "Why are you fighting?" "Oh", said the second man, "He is so lazy that he doesn't want to go for water. He said there was no water, but when I went down to the river, there was lots of water. Not only that, but he took my supper. I have nothing to eat".

Glooscap looked around. He saw raccoon rolling around on the ground and laughing. Glooscap knew then, what was going on. Glooscap went to the camp where the fire was and he took out a coal. He took the coal and marked a black circle around raccoon's eyes. He said, "This is for the two pieces of meat you stole from the two blind men. You will always have that mark to show you are a thief. You will be known as a thief wherever you go".

Next, Glooscap took the coal and drew four rings around raccoon's tail. "This is for the times you made the men fight. And you will remember, because how I have marked you will stay with you, wherever you go". That is why even to this day, raccoon has these marks. He looks like a bandit.