

Native American Legends

As-Ai-Yahal

A Tillamook Legend

As-ai-yahal, the god, lived far up in the country. A long time ago he traveled all over the world. He came down the river and arrived at Natahts. There he gathered clams and mussels. He made a fire and roasted them. When he opened them; he found two animals in each shell. After he had roasted them he began to eat and soon had enough. That made him angry and he said, "Henceforth there shall be only one animal in each shell."

The god came to Tillamook Bay and then went up the river. He had to cross it far up because he had no canoe and the river was deep. He met a number of women who were digging roots. He asked, "What are you doing there?" They replied, "We are digging roots." He said, "I do not like that." He took the roots away and sent them to Clatsop. Ever since that time there have been no roots at Tillamook while at Clatsop they are very plentiful.

He went on and came to a river full of salmon which were clapping their fins together. He caught one of them, threw it ashore, stepped on it, flattening it. It became a flounder. Ever since then flounders have been plentiful at Tillamook while there have been no salmon there.

As-ai-yahal traveled on and came to a house in which he saw people lying around the fire. He asked, "What is the matter? Are you sick?" "No," they replied, "we are starving. East Wind wants to kill us. The river, sea, and beach are frozen over and we cannot get any food."

Then he said, "Can't you make East Wind stop blowing so you can secure food?" He went out of the house and far up the river, which was frozen over. It was so slippery he could hardly stand. He went up the river to meet East Wind and to conquer him. Before he came to the house of East Wind, he took up some pieces of ice which he threw into the river, saying, "Henceforth it shall not be as cold as it is now. Winter shall be a little cold but not very much so. You shall become herring." The ice at once became herring and swam down the river.

As-ai-yahal went on until he reached the house of East Wind. He entered and whistled. He was trembling with cold, but did not go near the fire. He said, "I am so warm I

cannot go near the fire." Then he told East Wind he came from a house where they were drying herring.

East Wind said, "Don't say so. It is winter now. There will be no herring for a long time to come."

As-ai-yahal replied, "Don't you believe me? There are plenty of herring outside." He took an icicle which he warmed at the fire. "Look how quickly it boils," he said to East Wind as the ice melted. He made East Wind believe that the melting ice was a herring.

Then East Wind ceased to blow, the ice began to melt, and the people had plenty of food. Until then, it had been winter all the year; now we have both summer and winter.