

## **Creation Legend**

(Lower Columbia River/Coast)

Long, long ago, when Old Man South Wind was traveling north, he met an old woman that was a giant.

"Will you give me some food?" asked South Wind. "I am very hungry."

"I have no food," answered the giantess, "but here is a net. You can catch some fish for yourself if you wish."

So Old Man South Wind dragged the net down to the ocean and with it caught a little whale. Taking out his knife, he was about to cut the whale and take out the blubber.

But the old giantess cried out, "Do not cut it with a knife, and do not cut it crossways. Take a sharp shell and split it down the back."

But South Wind did not take to heart what the old woman was saying.

He cut the fish crossways with his knife and began to cut off some blubber. He was startled to see the fish change into a huge bird. It was so big that when it flew into the air, it hid the sun, and the noise of its wings shook the earth. It was Thunderbird.

Thunderbird flew to the north and lit on the top of Saddle Mountain (in Clatsop homelands), near the mouth of the Columbia River. There it laid a nest full of eggs. The old giantess followed the bird until she found its nest. She broke one egg, but it was not good. So she threw it down the mountainside. Before the egg reached the valley, it became an Indian.

The old giantess broke another egg, and it too was no good. The giantess continued breaking the eggs until she had broken them, all but none was found to be good. She threw all of the eggs down the mountainside and each all of the eggs became a tribe.

When Thunderbird came back and found its eggs gone, it went to South Wind. Together they tried to find the old giantess, to get revenge on her. But they never found her, although they traveled north together every year.

That is how the tribes of NW Oregon and SW Washington (Wahkiaicum, Whillipa, Cathlamet, Chinook, Clatsop, Nehalem, Tillamook, Nestucca and Siletz) were created. And that is why Indians never cut the first salmon across the

**back. They know that if they should cut the fish the wrong way, the salmon would cease to run. Always, even to this day, they slit the first salmon down the back, lengthwise.**