

The Story of the Maple Tree

Told by Bob Red Hawk
Transcribed and translated into Lenape by Margret Lenfest
Edited by Louise St. Amour

Many, many moons ago one of the most beautiful trees around was the maple. And its roots reached deep into the earth and its branches reached high in the heavens. But at one time, a large group of bugs crawled into the maple's bark. And it was itching the maple. It was driving the maple tree crazy. Cause even though the maple tree had many branches and shoots and roots it could not bend down and reach all parts of itself. So it called out to all its friends in the animal kingdom. It called out and said "Can someone please give me some relieve from all this itching." So the beaver said "Well maple tree I can probably do it, but if I start chewing on your bark it'll probably kill you. So that would not help you that much." And then the little mouse said "Maple tree I can dig down into your roots and get my brothers the voles and the moles and the gophers but we'll end up starting to kill your roots and that will kill you." So then the bear said "Well maple tree I have these nice big claws I could start clawing at your bark but that will probably shred you up." So then they are all trying to think. Finally one of the birds was flying by and it was a flicker. And the flicker said "Well maple tree I have a cousin. How about I get all these guys to come and their beaks are sharp and they can dig in you but they won't hurt you." So they called all of his woodpecker friends and they flew over and started pecking at the tree and got all the bugs out of him. The tree was so happy. And everything was going along nicely and all of a sudden for a couple of years there was very little rain. It got very dry and all of the animals were getting very thirsty. The creeks and rivers had all dried up and they did not know where to go. They were all bemoaning the fact and the maple tree heard them. And the maple tree said "You know the animals helped me the time I was suffering from all those bugs biting me I have an idea." So he called to his friend the flicker again. And said "Flicker you helped me in my time of need I want to help you. Call up your woodpecker buddies again." So they call the woodpecker buddies. And the maple tree said "Now I want you to peck deep into my bark and then wait for a second and soon some of my sap will run out and you can slake your thirst by drinking my sap." So the woodpeckers tried it. And when they did the sap flowed from the maple tree. And that gift saved everybody until the next rain came and they were able to drink from the creeks again. And it was from that gift from the maple to the animals that man learned how to make maple syrup and how to tap those maple trees when the sap runs. Maple syrup was precious because man could make something sweet especially in the winter time time when there were not berries to pick and no sweet things to eat. That was the time when we really appreciated the gift of the maple tree.

Lomewe	ahpu	ansikemes.	Welesu.
<i>long ago</i>	<i>it exists</i>	<i>maple tree</i>	<i>she is beautiful</i>
Wechephika	mexitkweyok	hakink	ok
<i>her roots</i>	<i>they are deep</i>	<i>in the ground</i>	<i>and</i>
wetuhona	hateyo	hukweyunk	mushhakunk.
<i>her branches</i>	<i>they exist</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>in the sky</i>

Shek kweten xaheli muxwesak pemuxsuwak wehokesemink.
but once/one time many bugs they crawled into her bark

Na na ansikemes kshipsun.
then the maple tree she has an itch- sub.

Nek muxwesak nachihku na ansikemes.
those (anim) bugs they bother her the maple tree

Na ansikemes wulhatuna xeli tuhona ok chephika
the maple tree she has them (inanim) many branches and roots

shek ala kwetenemen wemi tuhwepi.
but she cannot she touches it all her body

Na ansikemes pechimaok aesesak.
the maple tree she calls them to her animals

Luwe, "Ksi, awèn mili hnakewsewakan.
she said please someone give me aid

Sakomalsi." Na tamakwe luwe, "Ansikemes, kewinkwichelmel,
I am uncomfortable The beaver he said maple tree I like to help you

shek sheshontamenane khokes konaet knihelel.
but if I chew it your bark perhaps I kill you

ntala kewichelmel." Ok na pukwestet luwen,
I cannot I help you And then little mouse he said-sub.

"Ansikemes nkaski olhe kechephikank
Maple tree I can (I) dig a hole in your roots

ok newichemkuk nexisemesak nek xapxuweyòk
and They help me my brothers the (pl, anim) moles

shek xu nepolitunen kechephikema, ok ktankelch."
but will we destroy them your roots and you will die

Na maxkw luwen,
then bear he said-sub.

"Ansikemes nulhatuna xinkhwikahsha.
Maple tree I have them big claws

Nkaski keshewipxkonenel shek khokes xu pikat."
I can I scratch your back but your bark will it is torn up

Na nteheyo. Xantki ulikwen pe.
then they think- sub finally a flicker he comes

Ok na ulikwen luwe, "Ansikemes nulhalaok naxansak
And the flicker he said maple tree I have them cousins

Xu yu tali mpeshuwaok. Kineyok welukonewoo
will here I bring them they are sharp their beaks

shek xu takuu keshinalkuk."
but will not they hurt you

Pweshewaok wemi witisak
he brought them all his friends

ok kenthuwak ansikemesink ok alemiyok
and they flew onto the maple tree and they began

muhkuwoo wemi nek muxwesak. Na hitukw winkhatenamu.
they eat them all those bugs the tree she is happy

Wemi keku welet.

everything it is good

Salàxki kahapan ok nek aesesak katusemuwak.

Suddenly there is a drought and the animals they are thirsty.

Nel sipuwa kaxkteyo ok nek aesesak

The rivers they are dry and the animals

ku uwatuweneyo tani eyok a.

they do not know it where they go should.

Wemi nel aesesak mwentamuwak ok na ansikemes pwentaok.

All the animals they moan and the maple tree she hears them.

Ok na ansikemes litehe,

And the maple tree she thinks

“Nek aesesak newichemkuk enta amexahuelintama.

the animals they helped me when I suffered-conj

Na ansikemes lapi pechimao na ulikwen.

The maple tree again she called him to her the flicker

Ok luwe “Ulikwen kewichemi ok yukwe kwichemel.

And she said flicker you helped me and now I help you

Mawen kitisak nek kwehkwesak.”

gather them up (anim) your friends the woodpeckers

Nek kwehkwesaka maeheleyok.

the woodpeckers they assembled

Ok na ansikemes luwe, “Yukwe kolhehemo nehokesink

And the maple tree said now you all dig a hole into my bark

ok kpetuneyo ok xuniti nehmukem ktepehele

and you all wait for it and soon my blood it flows out

ok kemeneneyo.”

And you all drink it

Nek kwehkwesak kwechilahtuneyo. Ok mweneneyo.

The woodpeckers they try it And they drink it.

Ok na ansikemes wichemaok. Matanake sukelan

And the maple tree she helps them after a while it rains

ok kaski meneyok sipuwank lapi.

and can they drink at the rivers again.

Owiye lenuwàk noxalawoo nek aesesak ok wtelituneyo.

Later men they watch them the animals and they do it

Ahpashèke ne sepi shukel.

it is precious the (inan) maple sugar

Lenuwak yukwe kaski wulhatuneyo shukëli mehemichink luwanink.

men now can they have it-sub sweet (adj) food in the winter