HOW BEAVER GOT HIS FLAT TAIL

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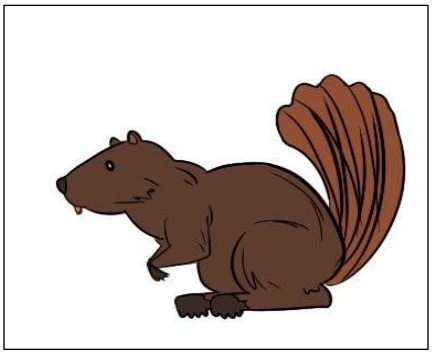
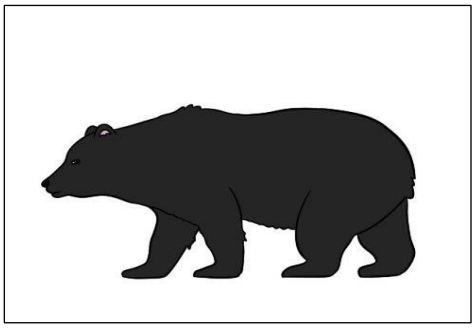
Traveled, told and adapted from a family story

Before Humans walked on the Earth, all of the animals could talk to each other and they all got along with one another.



A long time ago, before humans walked on this Earth, Beaver, who we call ***tchina,*** looked very different than he does today. Beaver's tail was huge and fluffy. Beaver would dance around flipping his beautiful tail in the air in front of all his friends.

Beaver just loved his tail. He was always dancing and prancing about showing off his tail to everyone. Beaver came to Black Bear, who we call ***pelel.*** "Hey Black Bear", said Beaver, "don't you wish you had a tail as big and fluffy as mine?" as he swished his tail in front of Black Bear and Bear's stubby little tail.

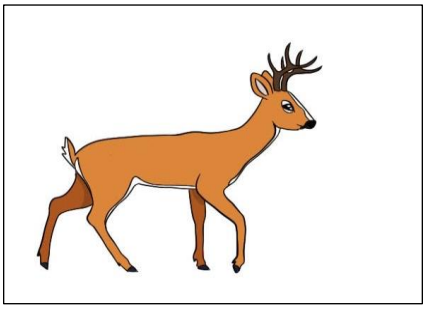


Black Bear said, "I don't need a big, fluffy tail. I am the strongest animal in the forest. And, I'm the decision maker. When there is a problem, all the other animals come to me for help." Bear said, "My tail is just fine for me.

"Hhmph", said Beaver as he wiggled his tail and walked away. Bear called after him, "Beaver, you better be careful bragging about your tail. Something bad might happen."

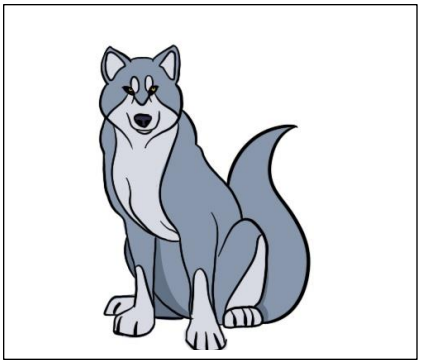
Beaver came to White Tail Deer, who we call ***xwutsxwuu.*** "Hey Deer," said Beaver, "don't you just wish you had a tail as big and fluffy and as beautiful as mine?"

White Tail Deer has a tail that is diamond shaped and not large. Deer replied, "Beaver, I don't need a big, fluffy tail. Even though my tail is not big, it is very important. Whenever danger is about I just flip my tail up in the air and everyone knows to run. I don't have to even say a word to warn others."



Hhmph", said Beaver as he wiggled his tail and walked away. White Tail Deer called after him, "Beaver, you better be careful bragging about your tail. Something bad might happen."

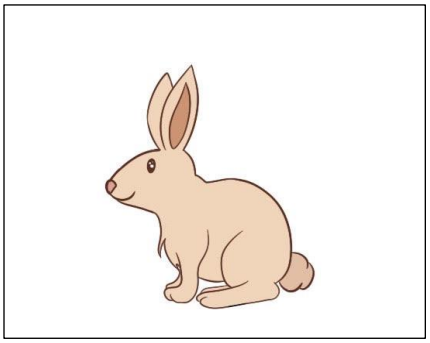
Next Beaver happened upon Wolf, who we call ***dliimek***. "Hey Wolf," said Beaver, "don't you wish you had a tail as big and fluffy as mine?"



"What?" said Wolf, "I do have a huge and fluffy tail and, unlike your useless tail, Beaver, my tail is very useful. When it is cold out, I can curl up and put my nose into my tail and it keeps me from breathing cold air into my lungs." Wolf turned around to show Beaver his very beautiful tail.

"Hhmph", said Beaver as he wiggled his tail, "but you cannot flip your tail up into the air like I can!" and walked away. Wolf called after him, "You shouldn't brag about your tail. Something bad might happen."

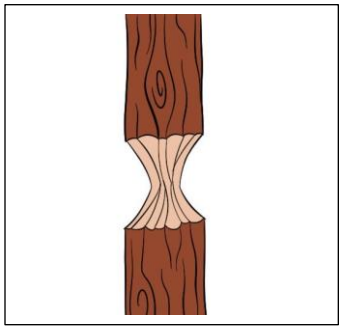
Beaver was scampering around, dancing along the path, and flipping his tail up in the air. He came to Bunny Rabbit, who we call ***chaẋwchaẋ***.



Little Bunny said, "Beaver, my tail is very soft and furry. When you say things like that to me, it hurts my feelings. My soft tail fits me perfectly." Beaver didn't seem to care that he had hurt Rabbit's feelings.

"Hhmph", said Beaver as he wiggled his tail, "but your tail is just so small" and walked away. Bunny Rabbit called after him, "Beaver, you better be careful bragging about your tail. Something bad might happen."

One day Beaver was chewing down a tree. He was working very hard and concentrating on his task when all of a sudden Beaver feels like someone is watching him. He glances over his shoulder and sees all of his friends watching him. Oh, thinks Beaver to himself, all of my friends are watching my tail and admiring it. Beaver turns around and says to his friends, "I know you are all just admiring my tail and wishing you had such a big, fluffy, beautiful tail."



"No," says Bear, "we saw that you were busy and we wanted to wait until you weren't busy to see if you wanted to play with all of us."

As Beaver was dancing about in front of everyone, showing off his tail, the wind began to blow. As the wind blew, it made the trees sway. The tree that Beaver had been chewing on was not very sturdy due to being almost chewed through. As the wind blew, it caused the tree to snap and fall down: Right on Beaver's tail!

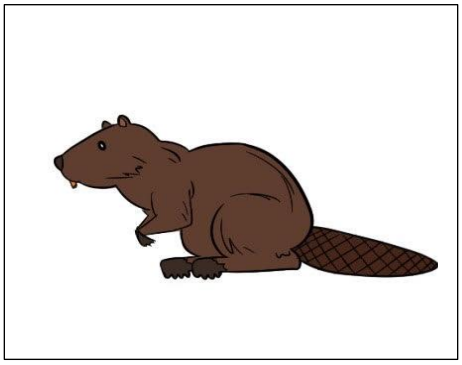
“Ow, Ow,” said Beaver. “Help me; get this tree off my tail.” Everyone ran over and Bear assessed the situation.

“Beaver,” Bear said, “I’m afraid we are going to have to cut your tail off.” “NO, NO, NO,” said Beaver, “think of something else.” Bear thought for a bit and said that he had a plan to help Beaver. Bear told Deer and Wolf to get on one side of the tree and he and Rabbit would be on the other side and they would all work together to lift the tree. Bear told Beaver, “When I say ‘now’ pull your tail out from under the tree.”

“One, two, three, lift and NOW,” said Bear as they all lifted the tree. But, Beaver’s tail was stuck down in the mud and he could not move. The other animals could not hold the tree up any longer and dropped the tree right back down on Beaver’s tail.

“Ow! Ow!” yelled Beaver. “That really hurt.” Bear looked back at Beaver’s tail and again told Beaver, “We are going to have to cut your tail off.” Beaver was so distressed and told the animals that would not work and to think of something else.

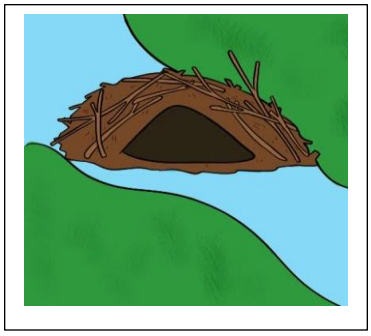
All the animals talked about it and came up with another plan. Bear told Bunny and Wolf to get in front of Beaver and that he and Deer would lift the tree up just a little bit and Wolf and Rabbit could grab Beaver’s feet and pull him out from under the tree. Everyone got into place. “One, two, three, NOW”. Bear and Deer lifted the tree just a slight bit and Rabbit and Wolf grabbed Beaver and pulled him out from under the tree. Bear and Deer dropped the heavy tree.



Beaver covered his eyes for a moment and then glanced back at his tail. He was devastated: his tail was no longer big and fluffy and beautiful. It was flat and dirty and hairless and had marks from the tree bark imprinted on it. And, his tail was throbbing. Beaver could not flip his tail into the air, nor scamper about. So, he had to drag himself down to the creek. He was thinking he could wash the mud off pf his tail and soothe it in the cold water and it would heal and regrow hair. Plus, the cold water would help his tail stop throbbing.

In the water, Beaver found that his tail was not useless. It was beneficial. It floated and he could use his tail as a rudder and steer himself around. He could also use it as a propeller to make himself go faster. As Beaver was enjoying his tail in the water, he swam over to the bank and told all his friends he was now going to live in the water. “Wait!” said Bear. “You cannot live in the water. You are not a fish and you cannot breathe in the water.”

Beaver explained that he was going to build a house that was in the water, but not underwater. The house would be dry inside. Beaver took to building his beautiful house. His tail was so useful. He could swim around easily and carry mud on his tail to help build his house. He used his tail to flatten the mud inside on the floor of his house.



After Beaver got his house all done, he swam over to the bank and called, “Hey friends, come here and play in my house.” The animals all ran down to the bank. Bear explained that the animals could not all go into the water to play in Beaver’s house because they could not breathe under the water. Beaver assured the animals that they could come to his house. They only had to plug their noses and swim underwater and come up inside the house. The animals said no and Beaver swam off.

A few days later, Beaver swam back to the bank and called, “Hey friends—come here. Party at my house!” All the animals ran down to the bank again and explained, again, that they could not go into the water. Again, Beaver told them to plug their noses and swim underwater and into the house.

“No,” said Bear, “if you want to play with all of us, you are going to need to come up on land.” Beaver was dejected and said, “I can’t come up on land because my tail is so heavy I cannot scamper about and play.” Bear reassured Beaver that his flat tail did not matter. Bear told Beaver that their friendship was not about his tail being fluffy; that they liked him however he was--fluffy or flat tail. Beaver just swam away.

As the animals all walked away, they decided that they would not run to the creek bank next time Beaver called out. They would just let Beaver come up onto the land to play with them.

Another few days later Beaver swam to the shore and hollered for his friends to come and play. No one came. Beaver then shouted, “Come on—it’s important.” No one came to the bank and Beaver makes a decision that he does not need these friends. He will simply swim up the creek to find some new friends.

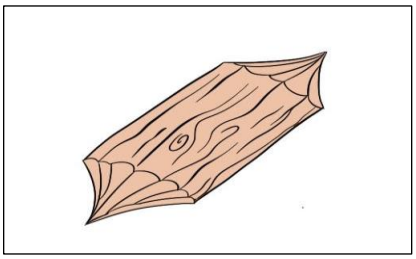
Beaver began swimming up the creek for quite a long way looking for other friends. As he is swimming along, Beaver becomes afraid: he hears and smells something very frightening. FIRE: Beaver hears the crackling of a fire and smells the smoke. Fire, which we say ***hemelt,*** is very scary to all the animals in the forest and Beaver became very worried about his friends. Beaver turns around quickly and swims as fast as he can back down the creek to find his friends. He swims to the bank and excitedly shouts, “Hey Friends, come here”.

No one comes. Beaver is very worried and again shouts, “It’s important! Really, really important.” No one comes. Beaver wants his friends to know they should run and shouts out, “FIRE, FIRE, FIRE! It’s a FIRE!” Still, no one comes. Beaver thinks his friends do not believe him.

As Beaver is trying to figure out what to do to warn his friends, he starts swimming in circles. He becomes so agitated, he slaps his tail upon the water. None of his friends have ever heard this sound before and they all ran down to the creek to see what was happening. There they saw Beaver swimming in circles, slapping his tail on the water. The animals had no idea what was happening and asked Beaver what he was doing.

Beaver was so glad to see his friends. He told them that a fire was coming and that all the animals should come into his house to escape the fire. The animals all thought this was a joke made up by Beaver to trick them into going in the water and his house.

"Wait," says Bear, "your house is made of wood and wood burns in a fire."



Beaver explains that the wood his house is made of is special: that all the bark had been taken off his wood. That all the oil is in the bark and oil makes the wood burn better. With all the bark off, the wood will not burn as well. He also explains that with the bark off, the wood will soak up the water and will not burn. The wood becomes full of water and water logged.

While all the animals are discussing Beaver's house wood, they stop. They can now smell and hear the fire. And, they know they cannot outrun the fire.

"Quickly," says Beaver, "come into my house." One by one, the animals dive into the water, plugging their noses and swimming into Beaver's house. Just as Beaver swims into his house, the fire swept over the top of Beaver's house. Even though Beaver's house wood was singed by the fire, it did not burn and all the animals were saved.

And, that is how Beaver's flat tail saved everyone.