

"Why the Kalispels have so many mosquitoes !"

A long time ago, Mosquito and his three brothers lived with their grandmother along the edge of the Pend Oreille River. The brothers always went hunting but they never ate any of the meat, only the blood which was kept in the paunch of a deer. Every night after dinner, grandmother would tell Mosquito to throw the left-over deer bones into the river. Late one night, Mosquito was taking the bones down to the river when he heard voices in the dark. "Kill the Mosquito, kill him!" Then someone else said, "Don't kill him now, or you will scare his brothers away." Mosquito started running as fast as he could back to the teppee. He came in all out of breath, and his grandmother asked him, "What's the matter?" He said, "I saw something." The brothers said, "What did you see?" He said, "Someone said, 'Kill the mosquito.'" They said, "You're lying. You are only hearing your own breath, that is what you are scared about. Eat some blood soup with us." But he was too frightened to eat.

After eating blood the brothers and the grandmother slept. But Mosquito went out of the teppee into the sweathouse. When it was very late, he heard burning sounds and saw that the teppee was in flames. He was sad. He heard the bodies of his brothers and his grandmother explode one after another in the fire.

After a while, the "Na-ah-see-ke", or outlaws, who burned the camp said: Mosquito is missing, he must have gone to the sweathouse. Break off a branch of the thornbush and swing it around in the sweathouse. We'll kill him too!"

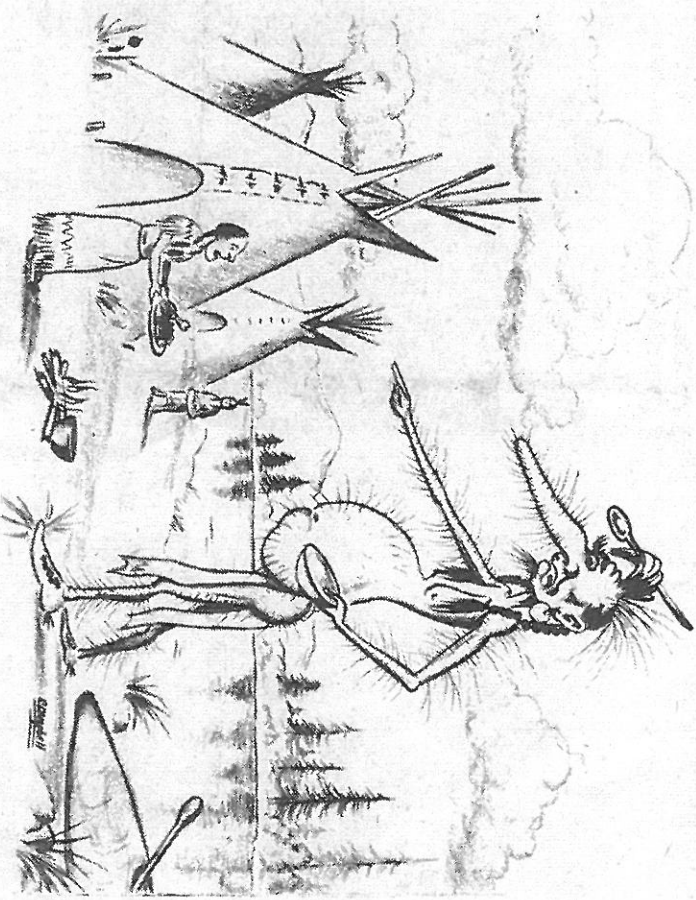
Inside the sweathouse, Mosquito took some red paint and mixed it with spittle in the little spoon that he carried in a braid on his forehead. Every time the thorn branch passed him he smeared it with the red paint. When the outlaws took it out they said, "It's stained with blood. Now we have killed them all." So they left.

When it became light, Mosquito went

to the teppee. He saw the bones of his brothers and his grandmother and cried. He was all alone. He had nothing to eat, no home, no blanket. One whole day he did nothing but weep. He was very, very sad. Then he decided to kill everyone that he met to gain revenge for the death of his brothers.

Mosquito had a long spear and

as he came down the river, they said to themselves, "How can we pacify him so he will not kill any of us?" When they saw him coming they brought out all their food and cooked up a big meal and invited Mosquito to eat with them. "Oh, come and have some serviceberries with us, come and have some cooked camas with us, come and have some deer stew



everytime he saw a person's footprints, he would jab his spear into the footprint, and that person would die, no matter where he was.

Mosquito had a small canoe and he would travel up and down the river singing a song of sadness: "We lele tu him kakasitch." This song was about how he was lonesome for his brothers, and that is why he was taking revenge on other people. All the people in the camps along the river were very frightened of Mosquito and they did not know how to get rid of him. When they heard his song

with us." "No," said Mosquito, "I do not like any of those foods." So Mosquito turned down all the different kinds of food that they offered to him, and kept on terrorizing all the camps that he visited up and down the river. Mosquito would still stick his long spear into the footprints of people so that they would die.

Finally, in one camp, the people were so afraid of Mosquito that they all came together in the longhouse and listened to an old medicine man who told them how they could get rid of Mosquito. The next

time Mosquito came down the river singing his song, they brought out a big bowl of warm blood and they cried out to him, "Mosquito, come and have some warm blood soup with us." "Oh yes," he said, "that is what I like, warm blood." And he came into their camp and sat down and drank the blood soup with them. He drank, and drank, and drank, and his belly swelled up and got bigger, and bigger. Then he put a little bit of blood in his little spoon and put it back in the braid on his forehead. Finally, when he finished, he broke his dishes, and kicked the broken crockery all over. Then the old medicine man put him to sleep. As soon as he was asleep, the medicine man told the young boys to get out and push Mosquito's canoe out into the river and then to gather a lot of pine needles and throw them into the river. As soon as they did this, the medicine man woke up Mosquito and told him, "Oh, your canoe is floating away, the young boys pushed it into the river." Mosquito got up and ran down to the river and started to swim out to get his canoe. While he was swimming, all the pine needles floated down in the current and surrounded Mosquito. While he was trying to push the pine needles away, one of them punctured his side, and his stomach burst open with all the blood that he had been drinking. As the blood flew all over, swarms of small mosquitoes flew out and headed for the cottonwoods along the bank. Then the mosquitoes were told, "Go, don't be mankillers any more. You can bite people, and drink their blood, but you cannot kill them. And when they slap you, you will die. So remember, don't kill people!"

This happened in the slough of the Pend Oreille River at the end of the Usk Bridge. And that is why today there are so many mosquitoes along that part of the river.

This legend is a composite of details as told by Alice Ignace, Mitch Michael, and Lucy Bohm; as well as from a book of Coeur d'Alene legends from Dorothy Nicodemus.