

Aboriginal Education
Student Services
Winslow Centre
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MINK & GRANNY

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Retold by E. Tesla Adams

Illustrator: B. Dick

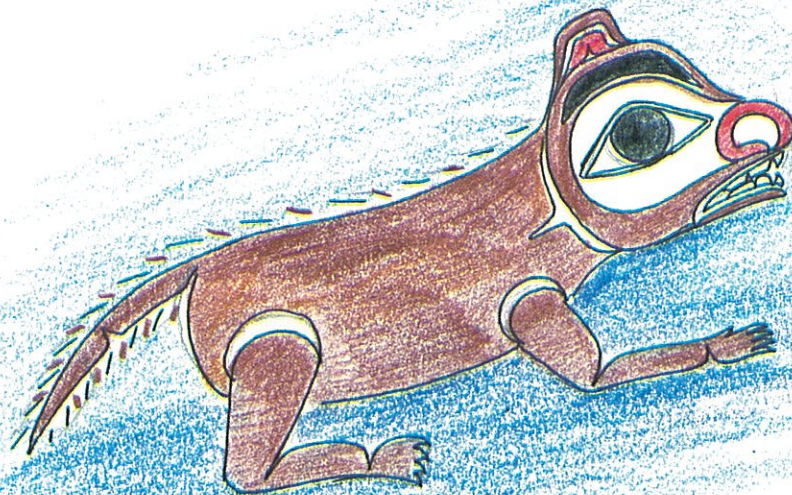
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MINK & GRANNY

Through Mink, we learn about right and wrong, what is funny and what is not. Mink reminds all of us what happens when we forget our manners or our common sense. Mink's adventures will continue to be told as long as there are children, young and old, who can learn from them

The retelling of this story would not have been possible without Sue Pielle and Betty Wilson, whose dedicated work with the Sliammon language and culture has been invaluable to us all. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Aboriginal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education for their funding in producing this story. Special thanks to the Elders - the storytellers - of Sliammon, Klahoose and Homalco, who continue the tradition of handing these stories down from grandparents to grandchildren, from parents to children, from sibling to sibling, from the older to the younger.

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R.R. #2
Powell River B.C.
V8A 4Z3



When Mink was a little boy, he lived with his Chi chia - his grandmother - in their very beautiful, little house by the sea. She was a very patient, kindly woman and they loved each other very much.

Mink also had a Kook pah - a grandfather - but he lived far to the North. Kook pah lived so far away in fact that Mink had never seen or met him.

Mink was very curious about Kook pah. Every day, he would bother his Chi chia, asking when they might go up North and visit him. Chi chia would say, "You know Mink, it is very hard for me to pack up all the things we would need. We would have to bring paddles and a bailer, fishing gear, sleeping mats - and lots of extras too."



Mink wanted so badly to see his Kook pah that he kept promising Chi chia that if she packed everything up, he would carry it down to the beach and load it onto the canoe himself!

Chi chia could not walk very well and did not really want to make the journey, but Mink kept asking everyday and eventually he persuaded her.

Chi chia finally said, "Okay, Mink. This is what we are going to do. We can go, but only if you promise to help me get ready." Mink nodded his head happily. Of course he would help.



"I am going to put all of our clothes in these baskets and you put them under the seats of the canoe. And I will put all of our dried meat and smoked salmon into these bentwood boxes and you put them along the sides of the canoe. And take these skins full of water and put them in the stern of the canoe."

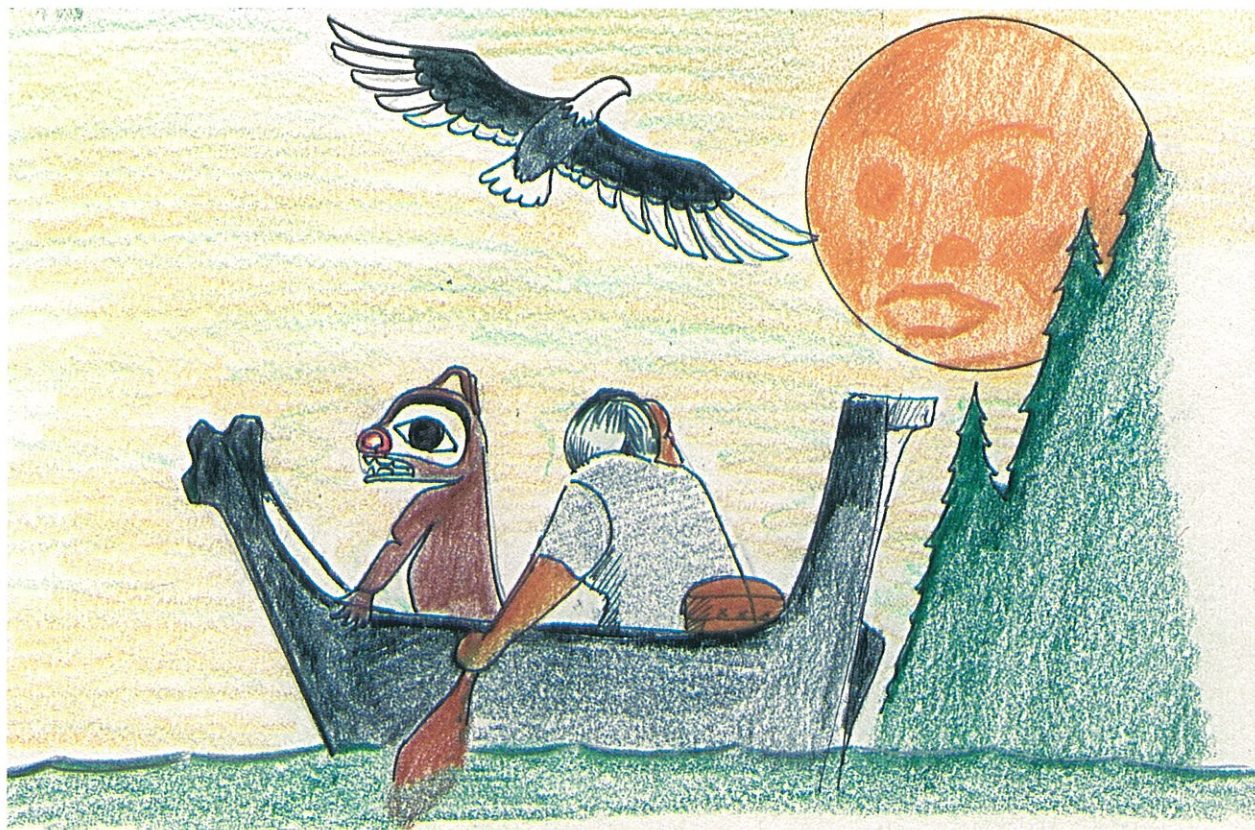
Mink was so excited that he was running back and forth between the house and boat, carrying all the many boxes and bags. It took him a very long time to carry everything down and arrange it in the canoe. He was so tired from all the lifting and carrying that he almost fell asleep in his supper. Then he went to bed early without arguing.

Early the next morning, Chi chia gently shook Mink awake. "It is time," she said. Today was the day they would begin their journey to Kook pah's home up North.

Mink leapt out of bed, which he almost never did. He quickly washed up, dressed and had some bannock and salmon to eat. Then Mink helped his Chi chia down to the boat.

Mink could not wait to get to the North! Every point they came around, he would say, "Chi chia, is this where Kook pah lives?" Chi chia would say, "No Mink, it is going to be a long time yet before we arrive. We are going to have to sleep many nights before we get there."

Mink sat back and looked around. There was ocean everywhere, as far as the eye could see. Pretty soon though, a great many seagulls spied a school of herring and descended onto Chi chia's canoe. They dove noisily into the water, hoping for a mouthful of herring.





Where there are herring, there are salmon. Mink was just thinking about getting his fishing line when he saw a family of seals hunting nearby. Seals like salmon too. A sea otter, wondering what all the commotion was about, floated by with her twin babies on her belly. Mink liked all the company!

Just then, a huge killer whale breached in the distance and everyone disappeared. Seals and salmon and herring do not like killer whale's big, hungry mouth. Only an eagle was left flying overhead.

After travelling for many days, Mink was getting bored.

Just when Mink thought he could not stand it any more, they came around a long point and there, up on a hill, was a house all made of cedar. Mink somehow knew that that was his grandfather standing in the doorway of the house. They were there!

Mink started shaking with excitement and jumped up and down, almost upsetting the canoe. He hollered at his Chi chia and pointed and waved at his Kook pah. Chi chia just nodded her head. Mink picked up his paddle, which he had not used the entire trip, and started to paddle as fast as he could.

When they got to the beach, Mink jumped off and up the hill he went, leaving his poor old grandmother to unload the canoe by herself.

Kook pah was surprised but very glad to see Mink, his little grandson, running up the beach towards him.

Mink gave Kook pah a great big hug, which Kook pah warmly returned.





Like all children, Mink was very curious. He wondered what was inside his grandfather's house. He pulled his Kook pah inside with him to see what was there.

When Mink's eyes got used to the darkness, he saw three boxes over against the wall.

The first box was very tall and wide. It was covered with beautiful carvings and tiny clam shells on its sides and cover. Abalone shell inlays gleamed all along its rim and edges.

The second box was a little smaller than the first and had glitter on it that twinkled like tiny stars at night. It was very interesting looking, but was not as pretty as the big one.

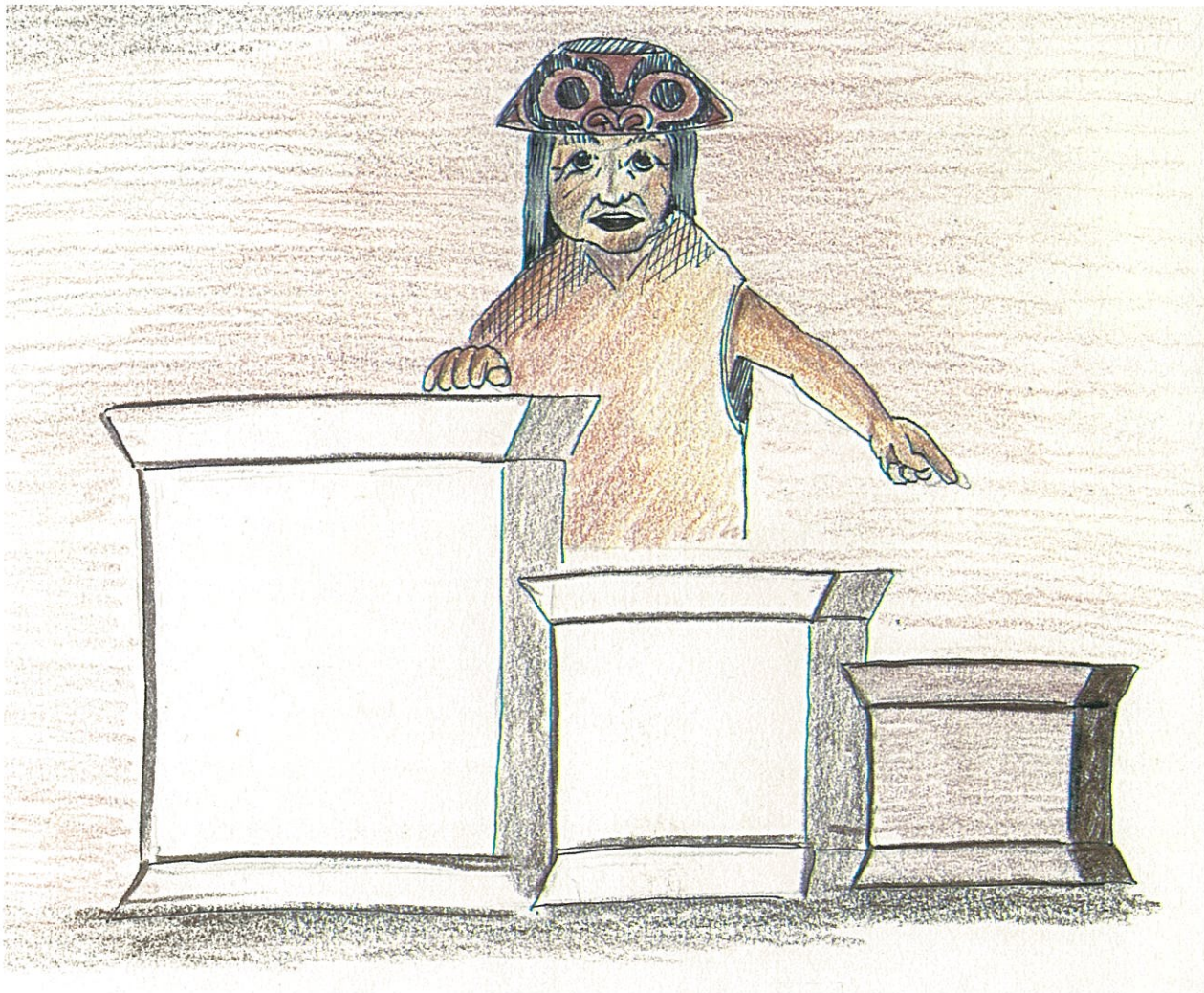
The smallest box had no carvings on it at all. It was a plain cedar box.

Mink's eyes became big.

"Are those beautiful boxes yours, Kook pah? What are they for? Can I play with them, pleee-ase, Kook pah?" he asked.

Kook pah, who had a soft spot for his grandson, said, "Mink, because I love you so much, I will give you that little box over there and every single thing that is in it, if that is what you want."

Mink looked at his Kook pah, then threw himself onto the floor in a terrible tantrum. He twisted his face all up and tried to squeeze big tears out of his eyes. "But I want that big box in the corner!"





Kook pah was concerned. He said, "No Mink, I do not think you would want that one. It is not for you. I tell you what. I will give you that middle sized box and everything that is in it."

Mink's eyes flashed. He most certainly did not want the middle sized box either. He started to stamp his feet very hard and whined, "No, no, no, Kook pah! I do not want that one! I want the great big box in the corner! I want that one to take home!"

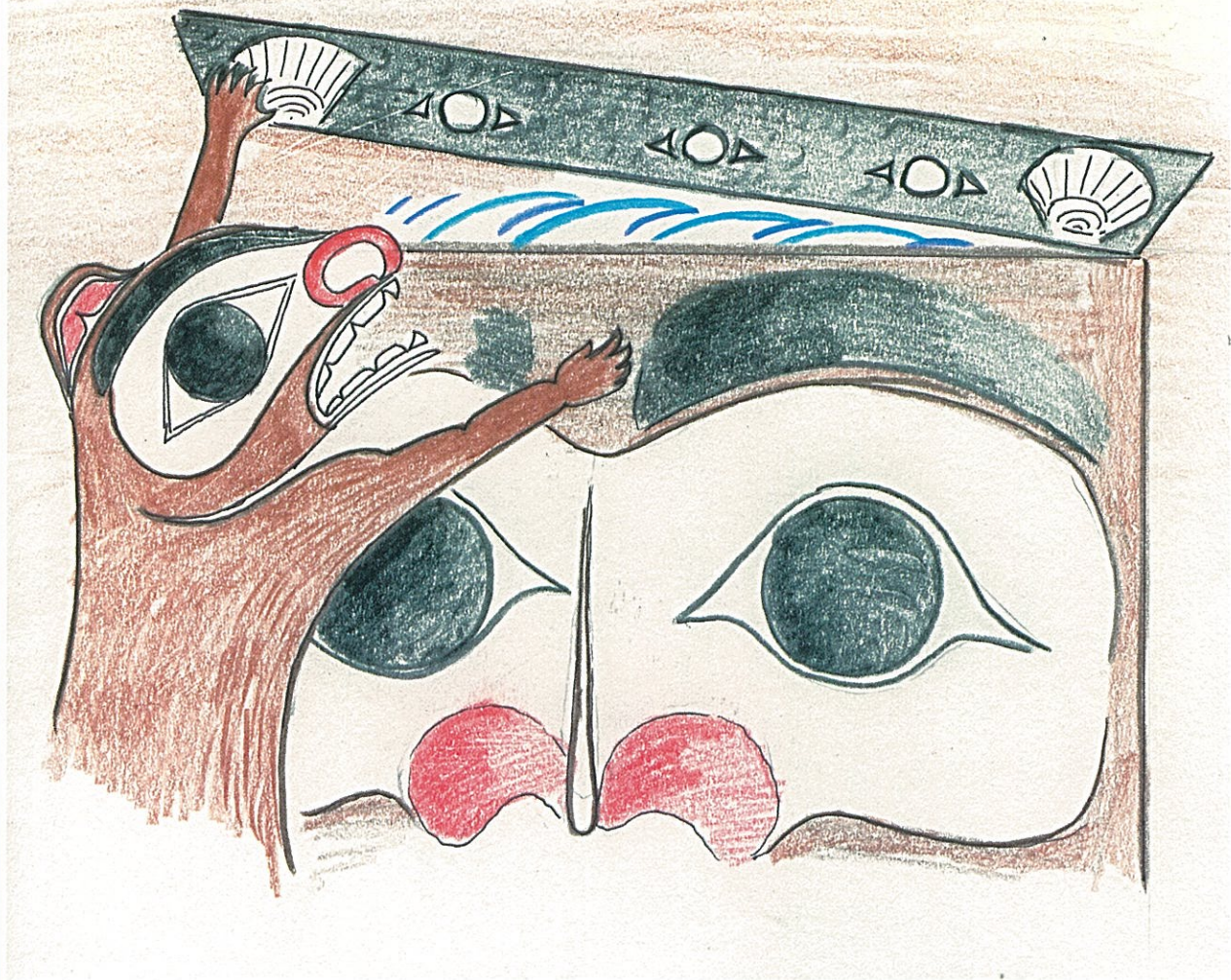
Just at that moment, Chi chia walked into the house, carrying a heavy load of baskets. Kook pah looked at her. He did not know what to do with Mink!

"I want that big box, Kook pah, and I won't have anything else!" demanded Mink.

Chi chia had seen the determined look on Mink's face many times before. She did not say anything. She just walked back outside and down to the beach. She was quite disgusted with how Mink was acting, but did not say anything.

After she left, Kook pah said, "Okay Mink. Here is what I am going to do. I will give you that great big box in the corner, but you have to promise me something. You can only open it up a little and peek inside."

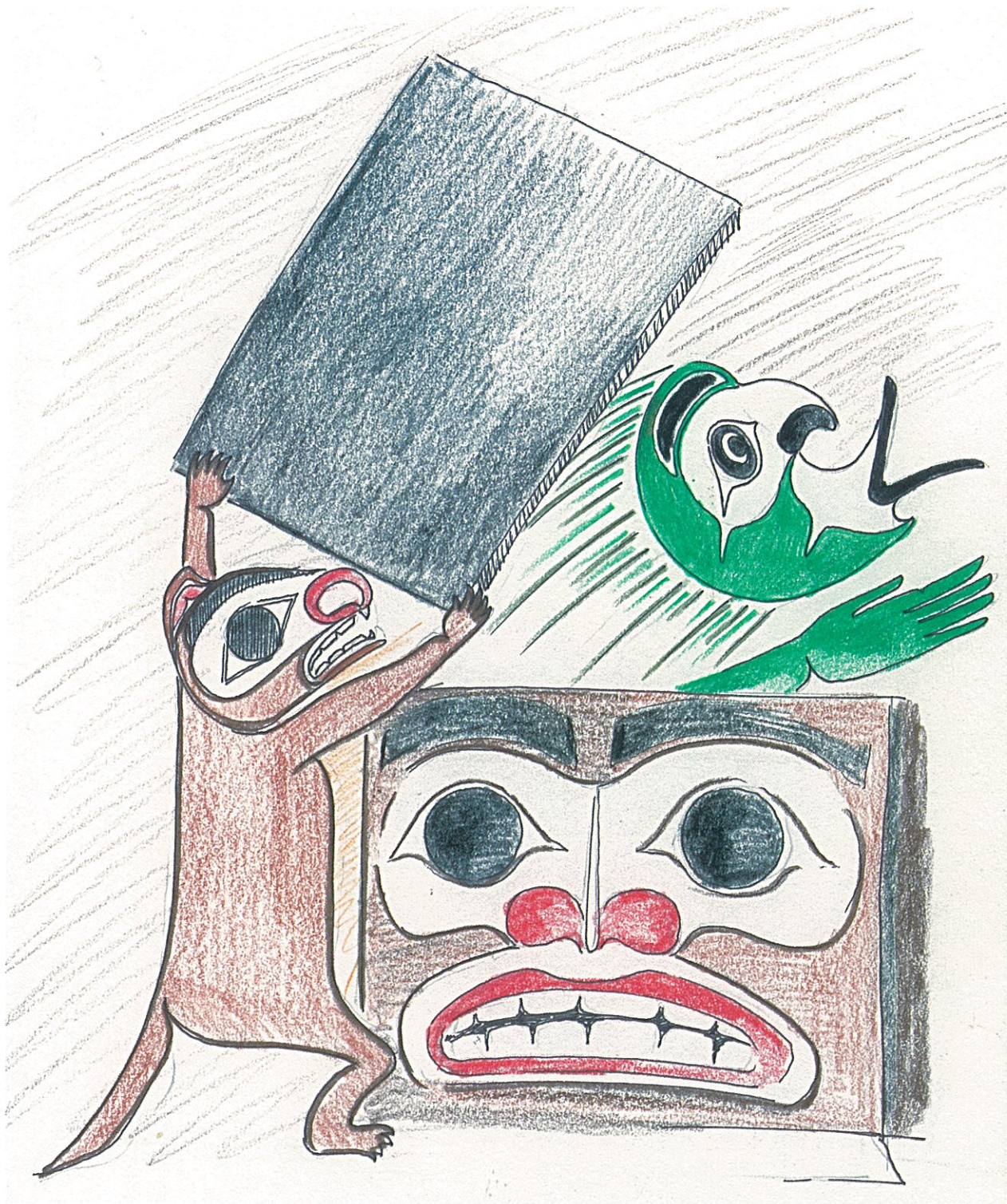




Mink became so excited, he started to jump up and down. He bounced over to the shiny, beautiful box.

Kook pah tried to remind Mink, "Remember, just open it up a little bit now."

But Mink was too excited to listen. He did not hear. He just threw the box open and out came the West Wind!





West wind had been trapped in the box for so long that he came out howling. He blew Mink straight up into the air and all around the house, bumping him into the walls and the ceiling and the floor.

West Wind whipped the entire house into a frenzy!



Mink did not know what hit him. Before he could collect his wits, the door of the house flew open and out he went, tumbling down the hill toward the beach. Kook pah's furniture, Chi chia's baggage, food, dust and lots of other things caught up by West Wind bounced along behind him.

Chi chia was busy anchoring the boat. She had her back turned to Kook Pah's cabin and what was happening.

Along came Mink, rolling down the beach in the West Wind's frenzy.

Suddenly, Mink was blown half into the boat and Chi chia was blown half out of it!

Poor Chi chia! She had one arm and one leg hanging out of the canoe as it was blown offshore. Mink was managing no better. He was scrambling to hang on to something, banging into the food boxes and baskets full of clothes.

Down the straits they were blown, all of their belongings tumbling along beside them.

Kook pah just stood on the beach - he could do nothing.



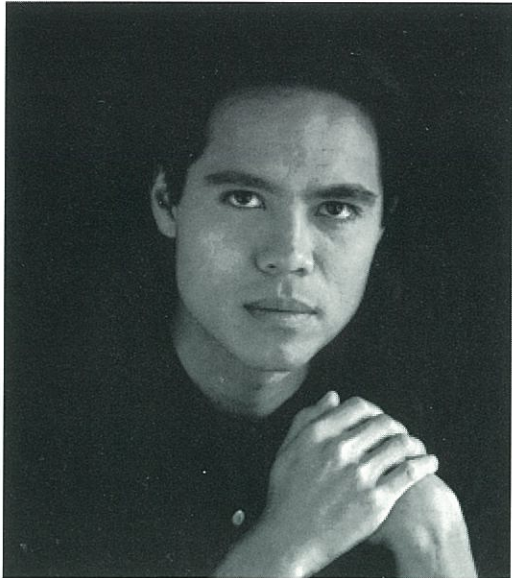
By the time they were able to get hold of themselves, Mink and Chi chia were back home on the beach, almost dead. The West Wind had blown their clothes, food, baskets and boxes away!

Chi chia looked at Mink and just shook her head.

Many of the villagers, having heard the howling of the West Wind, walked down to the beach because they were curious about what was going on. There were Mink and Chi chia lying on the beach with their empty canoe.

Chi chia had been quiet for long enough. "Mink," she said, "look what has happened! You should never be too greedy but accept what people give you."

Everyone watched as Chi chia and Mink stumbled home. Mink did his best to help Chi chia walk up to their house. He felt very embarrassed about what had happened during their trip to see Kook pah in the North.



E. Tesla Adams:

Sliammon writer and actor, his other writing credits include the audio tour of the First Peoples Gallery at the Royal B.C. Museum and the stageplays SNAPSHOTS, DIRTY DOG RIVER and SON OF RAVEN.



Sue Pielle
Thap Wut

Storyteller, teacher
Mrs. Pielle has been sharing and teaching for many years. We will always be grateful for her dedication to our community.