

# May

## SALMON

Hedém mómtim yoonomenín, kayém yakkát'omatoy.

*The river used to be like a lake, it did not flow.*

Hac'e peením manayím lok'oyéem woolokó woontít'omatoy.

*Two boys killed many flickerbirds.*

Hac'e mi kakám osek'áa siyéet'omatoy p'anaanakám yee, han lehupaytít'omatoy.

*Their maternal uncle made ornaments out of the orange-red feathers, and he put these on them.*

Han mi kakám mómtiná wiimítt'omatoy.

*Then their uncle threw them into the river.*

Hac'e máyt'omatoy, han miyáan mayé kiyisím p'anaanákt'omatoy.

*They became salmon, and that is why salmon's meat is red.*

Han miyáan miim mómtim yoonohó hoyyát'omatoy.

*And that is why the river began to flow.*

Hac'e mi kakám etatán kiipén, "Wenném ismapém maam beyí," hát'omatoy.

*Their uncle watched them and was glad, "You have a good place to live now," he said.*

Miim miyém.

*That's that.*

## HELPFUL VOCABULARY

May	‘Salmon’
Woololók	‘Flickerbird’
Kaká	‘Maternal uncle’ (i.e. ‘mother’s brother’)
P’anaanak-	‘Red / to be red’
Yoono-	‘To flow / to be flowing water’
-t’omatoy	This word-ending means that the event took place long ago and that the storyteller did not witness the event themselves.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What were the two boys wearing when they transformed that gave May’s meat its red color? Why do you think the river began to flow when the uncle threw the boys into the water?

## BRAIN TEASERS

The word *lehupay-* means ‘to wear regalia’ and *lehupayti-* means ‘to cause or allow (someone else) to wear regalia’. The word *c’ii-* means ‘to wear clothes’. What do you think *c’iiti-* means?

## WORDS FOR ‘RIVER’

You heard the river called *mómti* in this story but may have heard rivers called *sew* in others. Some Nisenan speakers have different words for ‘river’. For example, Tom Cleanso and his sister, SSBMI Matriarch Pamela Adams, call rivers *mómti*, while Bill Joe and some other Nisenan speakers call rivers *sew*. Is there anything that you call by one name but hear other people call by a different name? (For example, what some people call ‘soda’ others call ‘pop’).

## ABOUT THIS STORY...

This story was told by Tom Cleanso, a.k.a. Blind Tom, to anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber in 1929 in English. The SSBMI Language Department translated the story back into Nisenan.

If you have questions about the story, please contact [language@ssband.org](mailto:language@ssband.org).