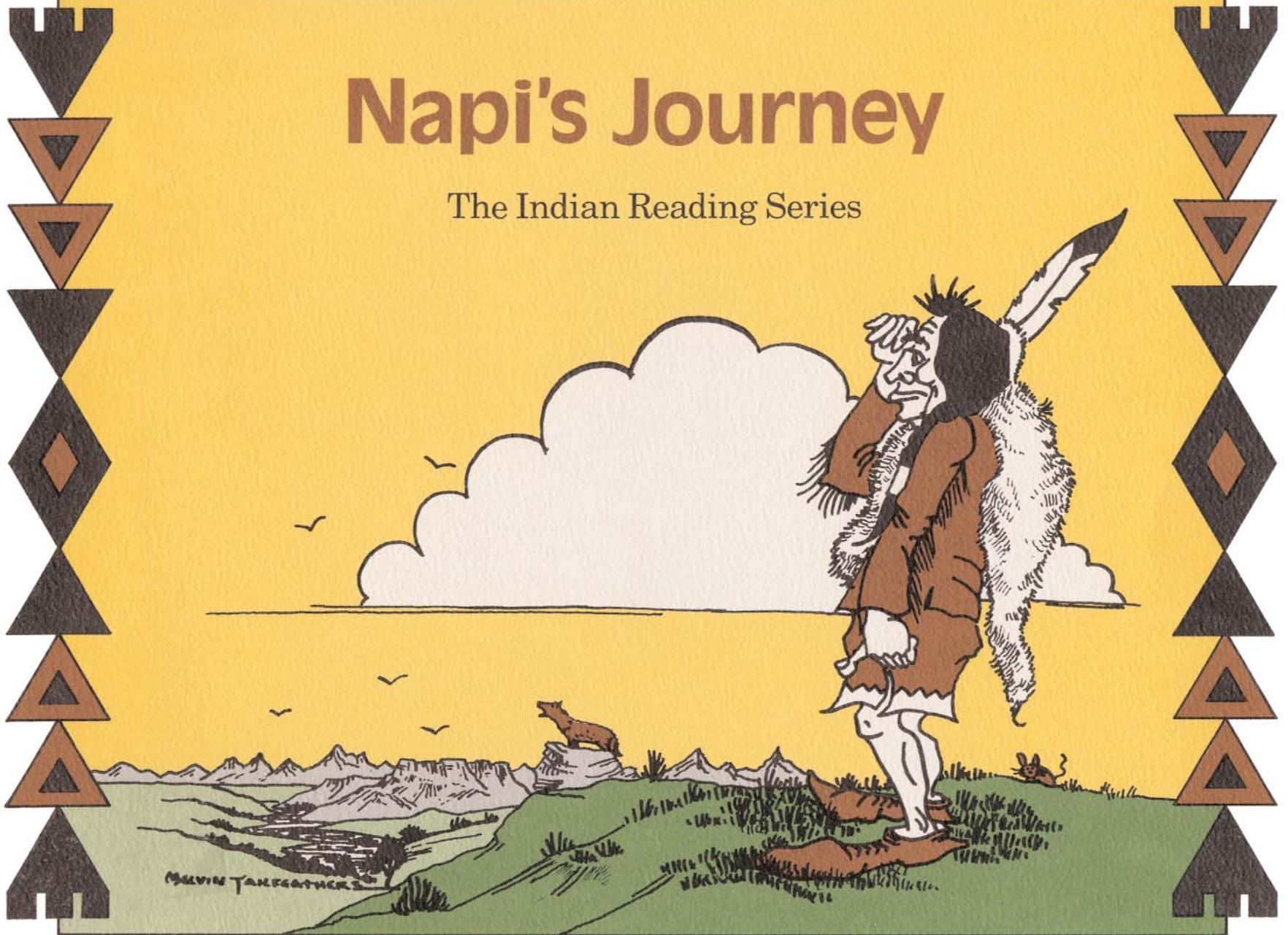


# Napi's Journey

The Indian Reading Series



MELVIN TANFATHERS

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**THE INDIAN READING SERIES:**  
Stories and Legends of the Northwest

## **Napi's Journey**

Series IV

Developed by the Blackfeet Indians

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**Napi is a legendary figure in the Blackfeet Indian culture. He can do anything and anything can happen to him. There are a great number of stories about him passed from generation to generation.**

**The following story is just one of the many stories told. Many times there are several versions. Some things have been added and other things left out.**

**Napi's Journey is an example of an Indian way of telling stories. It could be an example of many incidents or situations throughout a life time. It is not necessary to tell these stories in a certain order of the time in which they happened. Very often only one of the incidents of Napi's Journey may be told, perhaps for enjoyment or to emphasize a certain lesson about life.**

**Much of the information in this story has been shared by Joseph Old Chief and arranged by the authors. Many thanks to Joseph Old Chief who is one of the elders on our reservation and knows a great deal about our culture. Our stories could not be carried on and enjoyed by others if it weren't for our elder people, whom we appreciate very much.**

**This is a comic type story, yet it brings one close to the world of nature.**

**Napi (naw-pee) like saw-see**



One hot summer day, Napi was walking around. It was so hot, beads of sweat were dropping from Napi's body. His face was burning as with a fever. He didn't have any moccasins. His feet were hurting and were blistering. He looked over yonder and saw a hill. He said, "I think I'll go over there and look around."



While Napi was sitting on the hill, he saw another hill. Smoke was coming out of that hill. "I think I'll go over to that hill and see if I can get some moccasins."

After Napi got to the hill, he noticed there was a spring of water. Yellow smoke began to come out. He put his hurting feet into the springs and began to cool them off. He started to cry. Looking toward the yellow smoke, he said, "Could you help me out and give me some moccasins?" Right where he was sitting, just ahead of him, another colored smoke came out and it was blue. After Napi got through crying, he looked around. To his amazement, another colored smoke appeared, which was red.



MELVIN TAILFEATHERS



Napi closed his eyes. He had a feeling something was put in front of him. He opened his eyes and looked around. He saw a pair of moccasins in front of him. They were beaded with yellow, blue, and red beads. Napi was afraid the colored beads were going to be erased off his moccasins. He started to make marks across the beads and the beads began to shine.



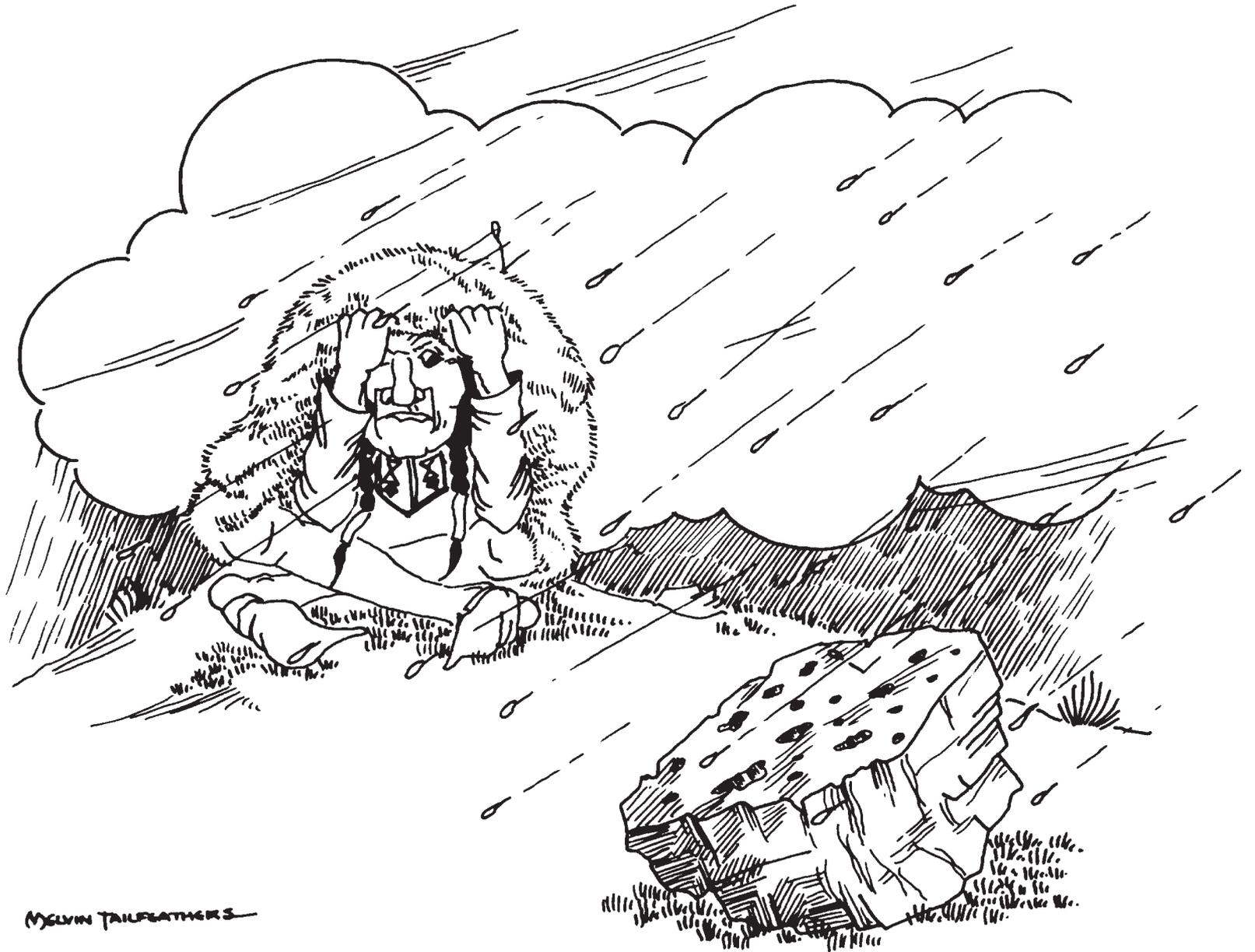
Napi tried on his moccasins. They were too small and he got mad. He jumped up in a rage. The first rock he came to, he kicked it and then he kicked another rock. Napi said, "This is the way you are going to look!" That is why some rocks look like they have little holes in them. Other rocks are different colors and some rocks shine. That's some of Napi's beads.

Napi's foot was hurting even worse because he kicked the rocks. This made him even more angry. He kicked the red rock as hard as he could. This made the red rock very angry. The red rock said, "Brother, nobody kicks me."

The red rock started to chase Napi. It rolled after him faster and faster. Napi ran a long ways. His feet were hurting. He was getting tired and hot. He told the rock, "Brother, if you quit chasing me, I'll give you my buffalo robe." Napi jerked off his buffalo robe and threw it on the rock. The rock stopped by him.



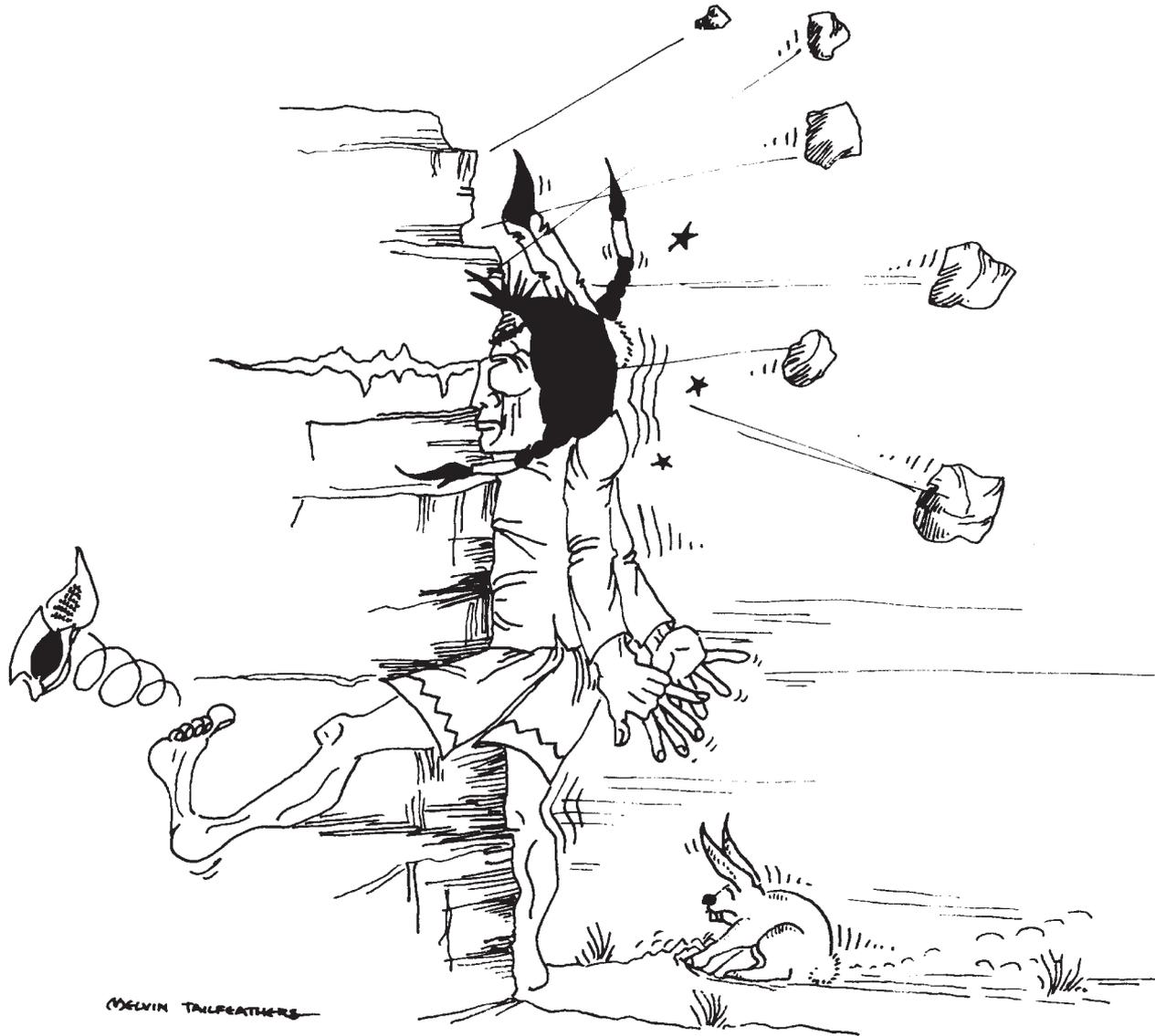
Napi was so tired and hot, he went and sat on a little hill to rest. While Napi was resting, he didn't notice, but clouds began to form in the sky. Suddenly it began to rain. He thought to himself, "I think I'll just go get my robe from my brother, the rock, because I'm going to get all wet." He didn't care about the rock. He jerked the buffalo robe so quickly, the rock turned upside down. He put the buffalo robe on. After the rain and hailstorm was over, the rock had little holes all over the bottom of it. That's why when you turn a rock over, you will often see little holes in the bottom of the rock.



MELVIN TAILFEATHERS



The rock told Napi, "You took your buffalo robe back, and now I'm going to chase you." Napi gave the buffalo robe back to the rock. He took off and the rock started to chase him. The rock had medicine. The rock began to get bigger and bigger, and heavier and heavier. It rolled faster and faster. As Napi was running, he was looking back at the rock.



Napi was getting dreadfully tired, and much more frightened. He was really running fast. As he was still running and looking back, he ran into a cliff. The whole cliff fell down on Napi.



MELVIN PAULREATHERS

Napi was underneath the cliffs. He began to crawl toward the top. He poked his head out of the pile of cliffs. He asked his brother the rock, "Let's quit now brother?" So the rock agreed. Now when you go around and see different rocks and they are sitting deep in the ground, that's where Napi left his brother, the rock.



MELVIN TAILFEATHERS

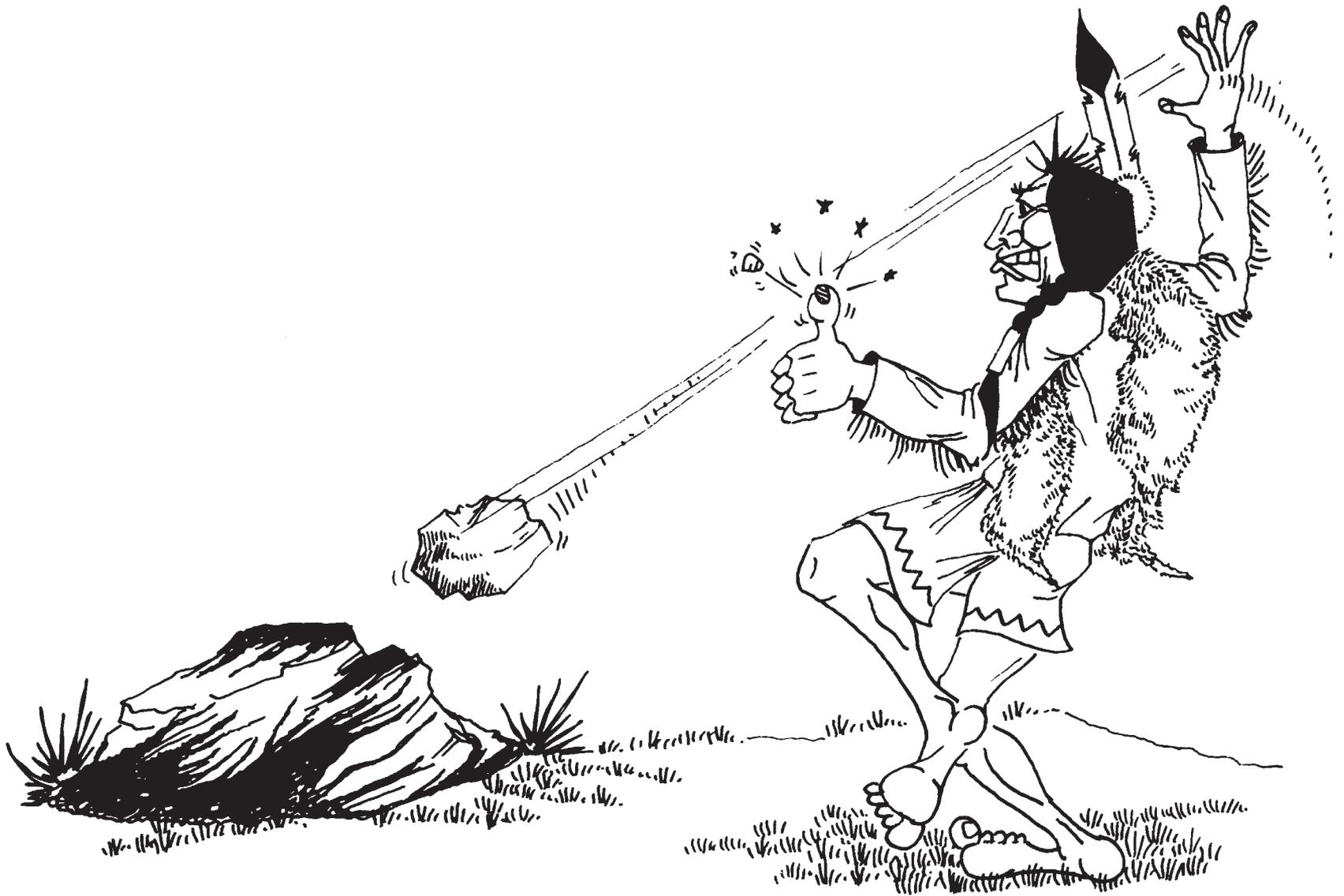
Napi crawled out from under the cliffs. He stood there. One side of his hair was unbraided and some of his hair was missing. He began to brush himself off. The white clay from the cliffs was all over him. That's why we have to brush ourselves off now when we get things on us. Napi caused that by running into the cliff.

Napi went far away. He discovered he didn't have all his hair. He got lonesome. He didn't have any clothes, just his breech cloth. He thought, "I'm going back to my brother, the rock, and see if I can get my hair back." While he was going back, he met the rock that had magic medicine. He said, "Brother rock, have mercy on me so I can have good luck again." Napi said, "My brother rock if you have mercy on me and give me my robe and clothes back, I'll have mercy on you. I'll give you luck that in your future time, you are going to shine." Napi told the rock, "You are going to change your looks. From now on when it rains and clears up and the sunshine hits you, you are going to be different colors." That's why some rocks shine now. The rock had mercy and gave him the buffalo robe and his clothes back.



MELVIN TAILFEATHERS

Napi went to another rock and asked the rock if he could have his hair back. The rock gave Napi most of his hair back. But some of Napi's hair was stuck on the rock. That's why some rocks look like they have hair on them. When the rock was giving his hair back to Napi, he got mad at the rock. Napi picked up a small rock and was going to hit the other rock. When he threw, he missed and hit his thumb. He knocked his thumbnail off. That's why when you hit your fingernails hard, they come off. This is the result of some of Napi's works.



MELVIN TAILFEATHERS

Napi was walking and saw his brother the coyote. The coyote said to Napi, "Could you help me out? I can't see." Napi was in a bad mood. He took some dirt and rubbed it in the coyotes eyes. That's why we get sore eyes now. Napi left the coyote and started to walk away. The coyote started to sing an Indian song. That song really pierced Napi's ears. He couldn't keep walking. He had to turn around and go back and clean the coyote's eyes out.



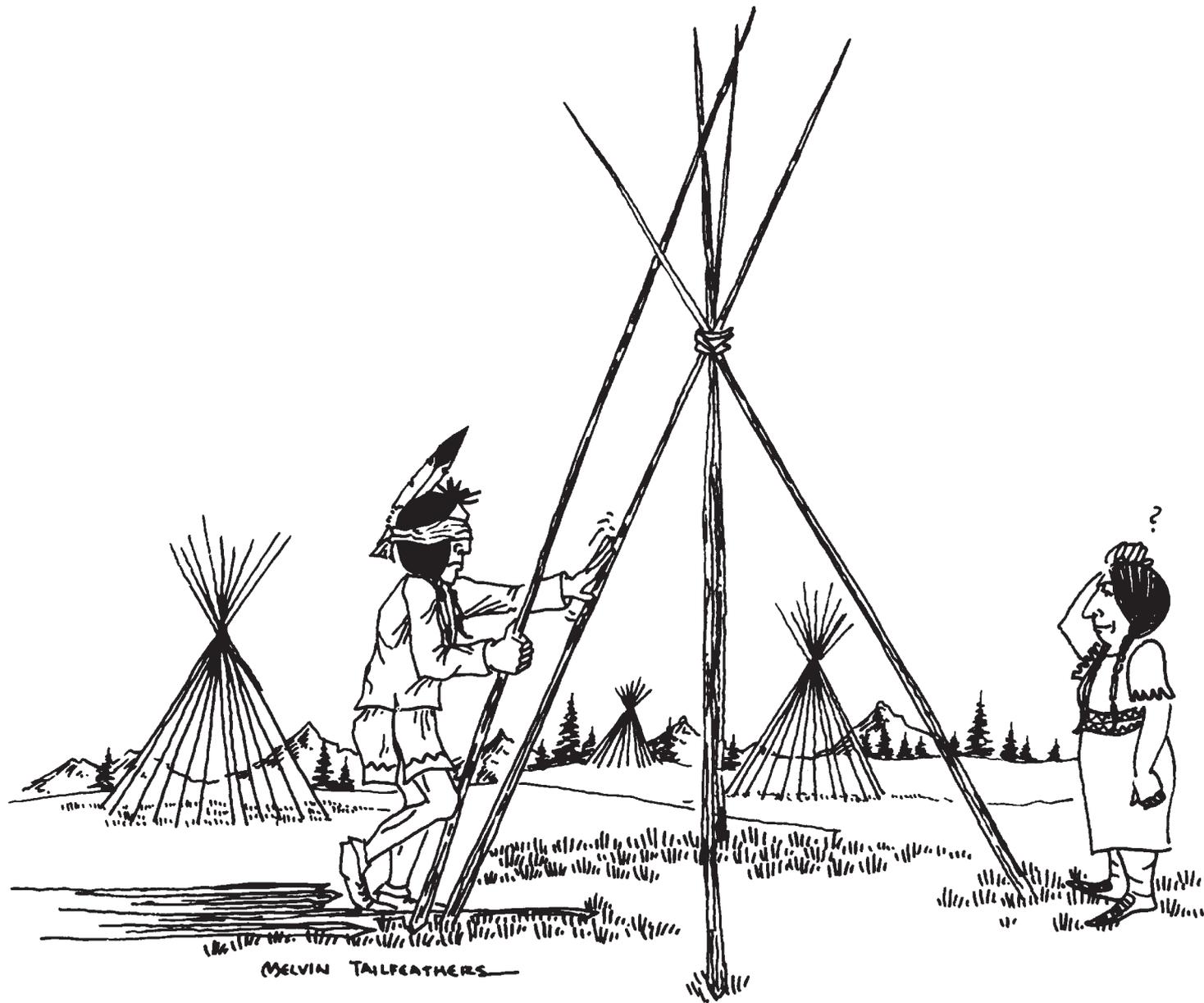


After Napi cleaned the coyote's eyes out, he started to walk away again, then the coyote chased Napi and scratched his eyes out. Now sometimes people throw things in our eyes. Napi caused this. Napi went blind, but he kept walking. The coyote continued to follow him. The coyote followed Napi wherever he went.



Napi didn't want anyone to see his eyes. He tied a blindfold over his eyes. The blindfold was made from soft deer hide. While he was still walking, he met a woman. He asked the woman to marry him. She agreed and they got married.

The woman told Napi, "Put up a tepee." Napi went to get tepee poles. He would put poles up and then go get some more poles. He would lose the ones he already put up. He had several sets of tepee poles assembled in different places. She said, "How come you have so many tepees put up?" Napi told her, "I put a lot of tepees up, so you can choose the one you want." But Napi was blind and he kept losing his poles. He didn't want to tell his wife he was blind.



MELVIN TAILFEATHERS



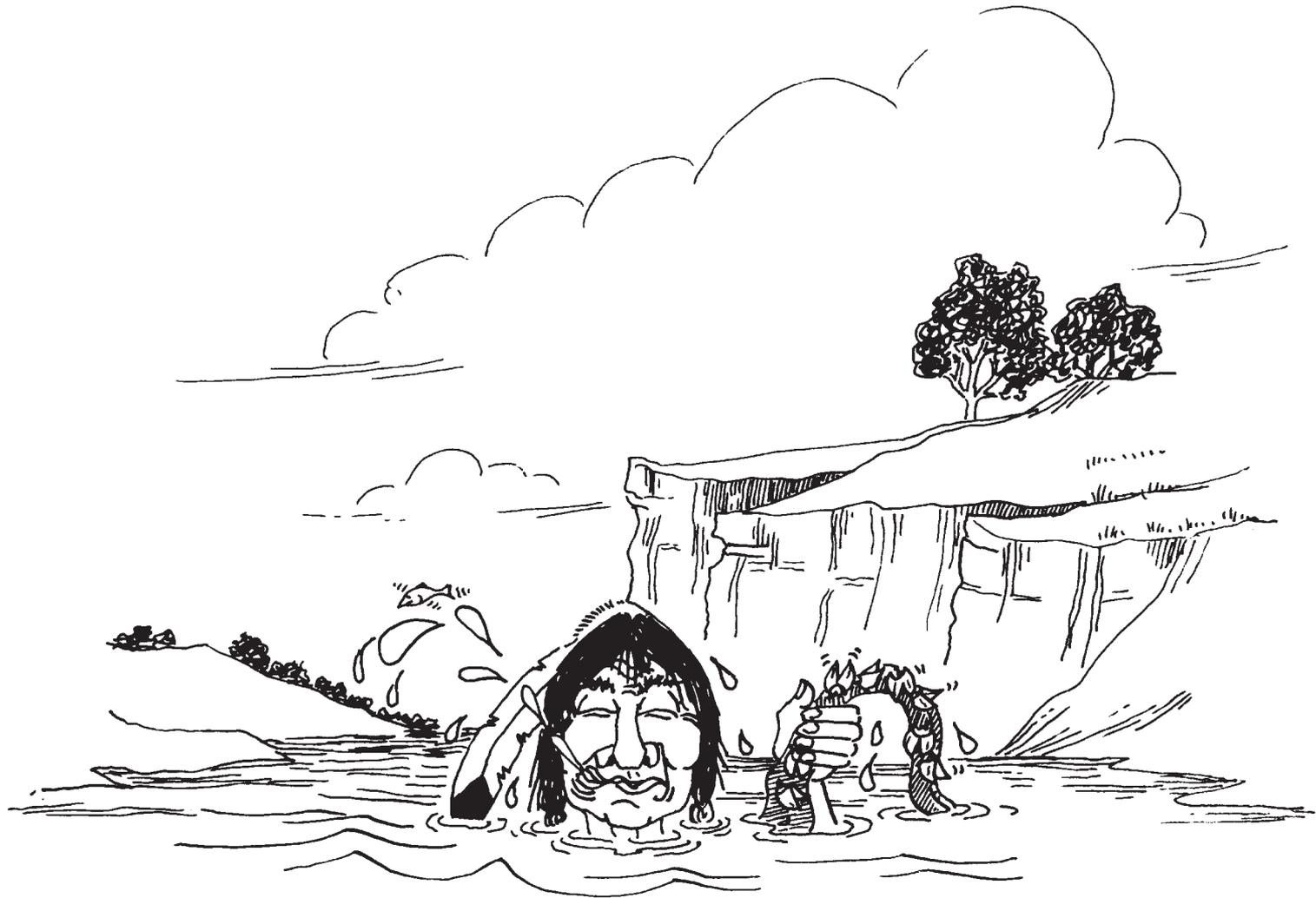
Napi told his wife, "I'm going to make a belt out of deer hooves so I can hear you wherever you go." He put the belt on his wife. He then told his wife, "Look on my head." While his wife was looking on his head, Napi fell asleep. His wife wondered why he was wearing that blindfold. She took the blindfold off. After she knew her husband didn't have any eyes, she became afraid of him. She leaped up, dropped Napi's head, and ran away.



Napi woke up when his head crashed to the ground. He jumped up, felt around for his blindfold, and began to chase his wife. She was wearing the hoof belt. That's how Napi knew where she was going.



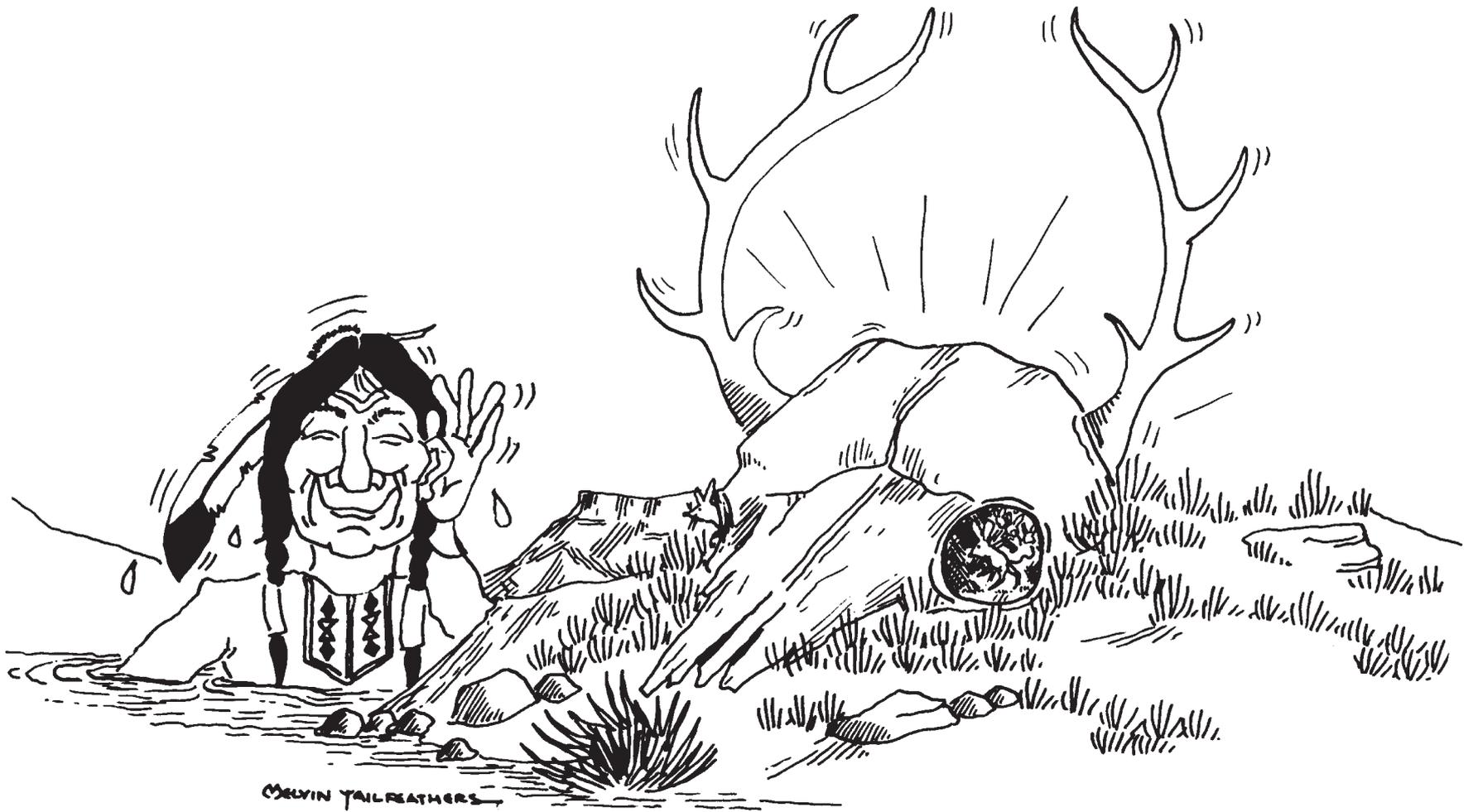
His wife was getting very tired. But Napi was right behind her. She didn't know what to do. She kept running. Her belt was making a lot of noise. She decided to take her belt off so she untied it. She ran straight toward some cliffs where a swift river was flowing in the bottom. She threw the belt over the cliff.

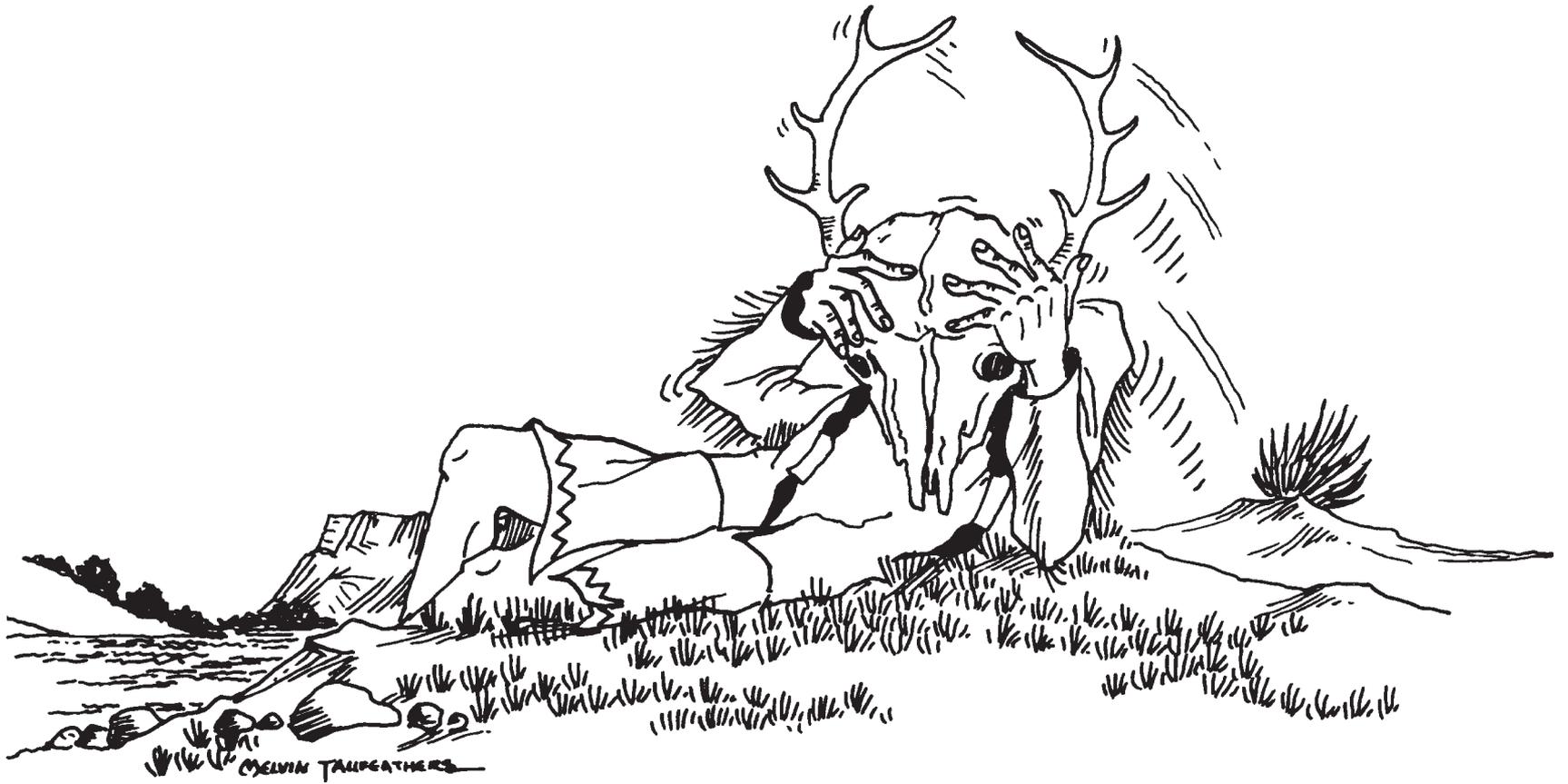


MELVIN TAILFEATHERS

Napi thought his wife was still running. He kept running, and he ran right over the cliffs. He fell down in to the water beside the hoof belt. He felt around for his wife, but he found only the hoof belt. He began to float down the river.

As Napi was floating, he heard some noise along the river. It was some mice playing and dancing inside an elk head. Napi managed to pull himself out of the water. He went and stuck his head inside the elk head. He said, "My brother, let me be like you and dance." The mice said, "You can't be like us because we don't sleep. We dance all night."



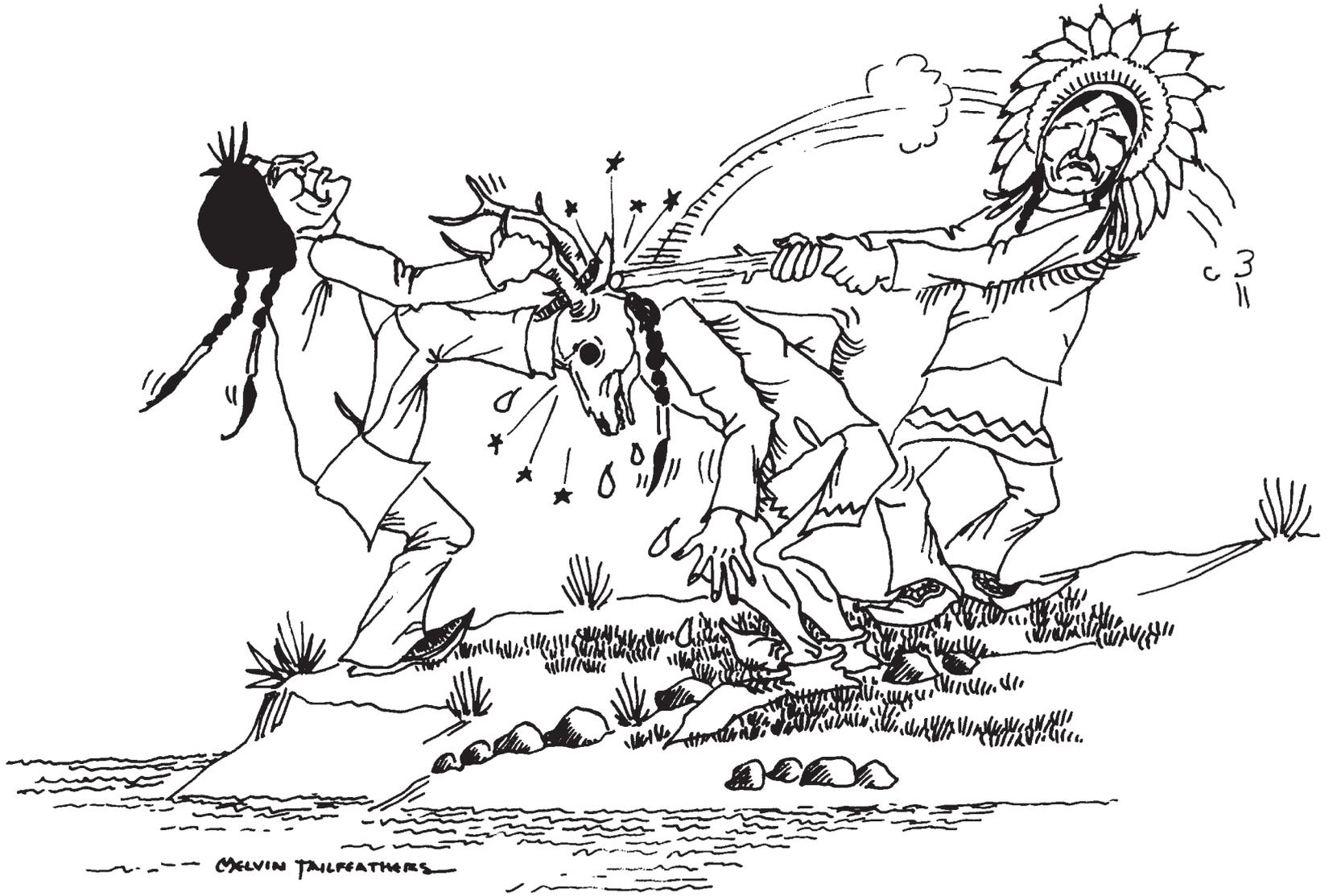


After Napi fell asleep, all the mice just left him. His head was still inside the elk's head. When Napi woke up, he felt his head. He had an elk head with horns.



Napi didn't go very far, and he fell into the river again. He began to float down the river. He didn't float very far when he came to the place where some old ladies were by the river. They looked up and said, "Here comes a bull elk. Let's get out of here! He might hook us!" They were so scared, they ran all the way back to camp. They told the men, "There is an elk swimming down the river!"

The men rushed to the river. They found the elk hung up on the river bank. They pulled him out. They started pounding on the elk head trying to break it up. They finally pulled the head off. Then to their surprise, they recognized Napi. The men took the elk head. That's why people use elk heads to hang hats and other things on. They hang the elk heads and horns up as decorations.



MELVIN TAILFATHERS

The men invited Napi to their camp. They told Napi they were going to have an Indian dance. They wanted him as the leader. The old ladies were getting the fat and dry meat ready. They were cutting the fat and dry meat in thin layers and hanging it up to dry. Napi was really hungry. Napi and all the men were getting their headdresses and other things ready for the dance. Some used eagle feathers and some used porcupine hair. Napi had an idea for his headdress. While he was working, he made an eagle feather the shape of a sword. It was really sharp.



The dance was ready to start. Napi began to sing an Indian song. He started to lead the dance. He made all the men close their eyes while they danced.

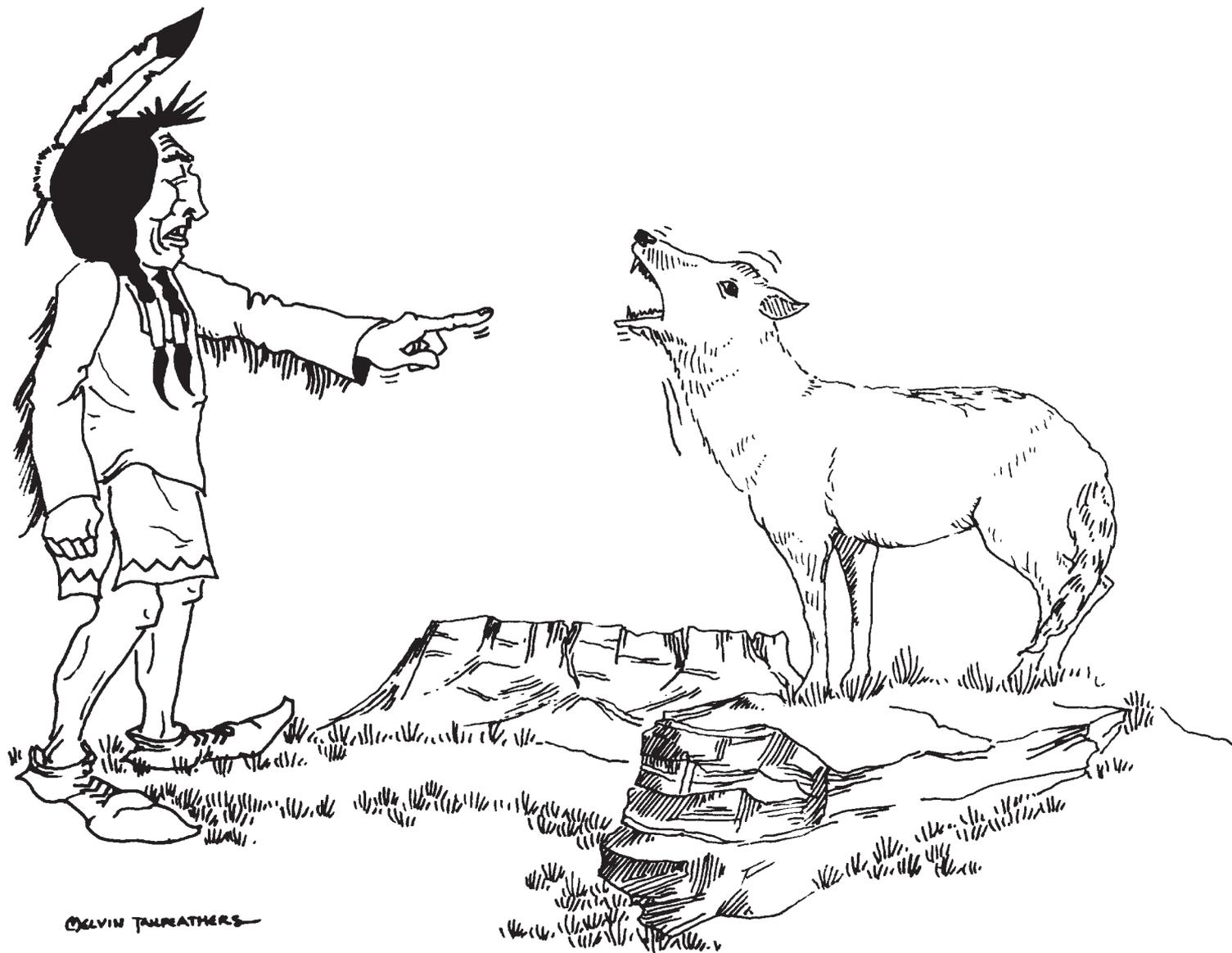


MELVIN TAILFEATHERS

Napi danced close to where the fat and dry meat was hanging. Each time he would go by, he would stab the fat with his feather that looked like a sword. The grease would run down his feather and into his mouth. After Napi had all the grease out of the fat, he quit dancing. He was so full, he was almost ready to burst. He told the other dancers they could open their eyes and quit dancing. The dance was all over. Everyone was happy. Now when you hang fat up, it becomes dry. Napi caused that by his dance and his feather. Now Napi was all through. He left the people and went on walking.



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Napi met the coyote again. He told the coyote, "My brother you are going to have the prettiest voice." That's why the coyote has a pretty voice when he howls. He left the coyote.



Next, Napi met a mountain lion. The mountain lion asked, “Brother Napi, will you help me so I can be the biggest animal?” Napi wouldn’t answer him because Napi was mad at the mountain lion. The mountain lion kept asking him. Napi got tired of him and turned around. He took the mountain lion and smashed his face up against a stone. That’s why mountain lions have a short stubby face now.



MEVIN TAILFEATHERS

He got some dirt and rubbed it around the mountain lions nose and tail. The mountain lion still didn't give up on being the biggest animal. He still followed Napi. Napi got mad again. He stretched his tail and his legs. That's why the mountain lion looks like he does now.



Napi came to the big wolf. Napi said, "Oh brother can I borrow your eyes?" He pulled the eyes out of the wolf. Napi cheated the wolf. He just stole the wolf's eyes. He didn't give them back. He was so glad to have eyes again. He rushed on.

Napi saw some raining birds along the way. He went over to them to see what they were doing. He watched for awhile. Finally, Napi asked, "Raining Birds, will you teach me to do what you are doing?" The raining birds eyes would come out and they would go back in. Napi would make his eyes go out and then come back. Napi kept on trying this. Each time his eyes would go a little farther. Napi was laughing and the raining birds were laughing. He did this once more and he lost his eyes again. They stuck in a tree and Napi couldn't find the tree. That's why some people lose their eyesight. Also, that is how trees got eyes or knots; from Napi leaving his eyes in the tree. Napi got too careless.



MELVIN TAILFEATHERS

Napi started walking again. He met the blind wolf. He said, "Brother, you can't see and I can't see. We are going to get our eyesight back. I'm going to give you some eyes." They continued walking. They met the fox. Napi asked the fox, "Can I have your eyes?" The fox gave Napi his eyes. Then the fox was sitting there on a little hill with no eyes. Napi told the fox that he would give him stone eyes. Napi gave the fox stone eyes. That's why there are different colored eyes today, green, blue, red, and brown.



MELVIN TAILFEATHERS



Booklets available in the Level IV sequence are listed below. Numbers refer to the Planned Sequence of use in the *Teacher's Manual*. Materials developed by these tribes and others in the Northwest are included in the Levels I, II and III sequences.

1. *Warm Springs Animal Stories*  
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs  
Reservation of Oregon
2. *Snail Women at Sq<sup>3</sup>a'le*  
The Suquamish Tribe of the Port Madison  
Reservation
3. *Blue Jay – Star Child/Basket Woman*  
Muckleshoot Tribe
4. *Assiniboine Woman Making Grease*  
Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation
5. *Coyote*  
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs  
Reservation of Oregon
6. *How the Summer Season Came*  
Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Belknap  
Reservation
7. *Little Weasel's Dream*  
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead  
Reservation
8. *Fort Hall Stories*  
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall  
Reservation
9. *The Bear Teepee*  
Northern Cheyenne Tribe
10. *Sioux Stories and Legends*  
Sioux Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation
11. *Kootenai Stories*  
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead  
Reservation
12. *Chief Mountain's Medicine*  
Gros Ventre Tribe from the Fort Belknap  
Reservation
13. *Coyote the Trickster*  
Burns Paiute Reservation
14. *Running Free*  
Shoalwater Bay
15. *Salish Coyote Stories*  
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead  
Reservation
16. *Coyote and the Cowboys*  
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall  
Reservation
17. *Napi's Journey*  
Blackfeet Tribe
18. *Warm Springs Stories*  
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs  
Reservation of Oregon
19. *Teepee Making*  
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead  
Reservation
20. *Baskets and Canoes*  
Skokomish Tribe
21. *Warrior People*  
Blackfeet Tribe



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