

# SCABBY BEAR

(Ft. Peck)



Assiniboine Stories

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(Ft. Peck)

A long time ago, there was a big encampment of Indians. Among them was a little boy who was so covered with sores that he was named Scabby Bear. When Scabby Bear became a teenage boy, he fell in love with the Chief's daughter. The Chief had two daughters. Scabby Bear wanted to marry the oldest daughter, but she would have nothing to do with him. She said, "Who wants to marry you? You're nothing but a scabby boy! No wonder they call you Scabby Bear."

The youngest daughter said, "I'll marry him," and she did. As time went on, Scabby Bear did a lot of hunting. He killed a lot of game for his parents and his in-laws. One morning he and his wife went for a walk and came to a big hill. Scabby Bear told his wife he was going over the hill and didn't want her to follow him. He climbed the hill and was gone for a long time.

After awhile his wife became worried. She thought wild animals, like a pack of wolves, might have killed him, since there were many timber wolves in the area. She was about to go look for him when he returned. She didn't recognize him because all his sores had disappeared. He was a nice looking man. She stared at him as he approached her and she started backing away. Only when he spoke did she recognize him. She grabbed him and hugged and kissed him. When they returned to camp, his in-laws didn't recognize him either. They wondered from where this man had come. They asked their daughter where her husband had gone. She laughed and said, "This is him."

He told them all what had happened. In the old days different people were given powers by the Great Spirit. They could do unbelievable things because of these powers. Scabby Bear used such powers to take all the sores from his body and turn himself into a handsome man.

The oldest daughter of the Chief now wanted to marry him. She tried to get him away from her sister. He reminded her that she had not wanted to marry him when he was covered with sores. "You hated me and would have nothing to do with me. Now that all my sores are gone you want to marry me. I would never marry you."

She became angry and left. She walked around crying. While she was crying a mole appeared to her. The mole said, "Granddaughter, what is the matter?"

She said, "Long ago, there was a young man who wanted to marry me, but he had so many sores that he was ugly and I did not want to marry him. My sister married him and they lived happily for a good many years. One day when they went for a walk, he left her and went over a hill and was gone for a long time. When he came back, his sores were all gone and he was nice looking. Now I want

to marry him and he told me no! That is why I'm downhearted and crying."

The mole said, "Granddaughter, do you know where he always sits in the morning and evening?" She pointed to a hill where he went every morning and evening, looking for buffalo.

The mole said to this young woman, "We'll fix him for not marrying you. Never mind, granddaughter, leave it up to us." She stopped crying and went back to camp.

Early one morning, the young man went up the hill to look for buffalo again. When he sat down, he fell through the ground and landed in a deep hole. The mole had gotten other moles together, and they had made a big tunnel under where he was going to sit. He had not seen it. He was gone all day. His wife began to worry. He had never been gone that long before.

The same day Scabby Bear disappeared, the camp was moving to an area with more game. When the people moved, the young woman remained to wait for her husband. It grew dark and still the parents and the young woman waited. They stayed there that night. The next day they searched all over for him but did not see him anywhere. They decided a timber wolf must have gotten him. Finally they left to follow the rest of the camp westward.

Four days passed before they caught up to the encampment. The young woman mourned for her husband, as did her parents and his parents. They were brokenhearted. They were sure the wolves must have eaten him.

A big pack of wolves came to the place where the encampment had been. The wolves searched for anything they could eat. As the wolves searched, a young wolf pup left the pack and ran around, playing by himself. The pup climbed the hill where the young man had sat. When he saw the hole, the pup walked up and looked. He saw a man lying the hole. The pup ran and told his mother and asked her to come so he could show her.

She said, "No, there's nobody around here. How could there be a man around here?" Finally he coaxed her to the hill where she looked down and saw a man about 20 feet down. The man was pretty weak. He couldn't even call out.

The mother wolf yelled to the leader of the wolves, "There is a man down in a hole and he is alive." The rest of the wolves came running. They looked down and saw that the weak man was barely able to move. He was just skin and bones.

The leader said, "Let's get him out of there." They all got busy because they thought they would have a good meal.

They all dug together. When they finally got to him, one of the young wolves said, "Now can we have a feast?"

The leader said, "No, let us ask the pup that found this man what he wants to do. It's up to him to decide whether we should kill and eat him or let him live."

"I want to keep him. I want him to live. I want him to be my brother," the pup said. The leader agreed and said they should get him out of there and make him a place to stay. They pulled him out of the hole and took him down to the river where there was plenty of water and brush. The wolves made a small shelter for him. The bigger wolves went out hunting and got deer. They brought it back and

put it in front of him but he was so weak he could not eat. The young wolf's mother bit the meat into shreds so the man could chew it. That is the way they fed him every day.

This went on and on until one day he was strong enough to do some cooking. As he had been taught, Scabby Bear used green rawhide for the cooking pot. He dug a hole in the ground and put the hide in the hole to form a pot. Meat and water were placed in the pot. Stones heated in a fire were added to boil the meat.

This went on for over a month until the man was strong enough to make himself a bow and arrows. He used sinew from the deer for his bow string. He was strong enough now so that he could get out and do the hunting for the wolves. He liked them very much and was grateful to them for their care of him. He killed bigger game for them, such as buffalo and moose.

After two weeks the wolf leader told the man, "Your wife and your parents are still mourning for you. They are about a four-day walk from here. Follow the setting sun and you will find where they are living. It is not time for you to go yet but I will tell you when it is. You are not quite well or strong enough for that long walk."

Scabby Bear lived with the wolves and they were all very happy. He continued to hunt and they had plenty to eat. As time passed, the young wolf pup grew. He was pretty big and liked his brother very well. As they played together, the man grew stronger from the exercise. After one full moon the young wolf pup said, "My brother, I think it is time for you to go now. Nobody has told me but I feel that it is time you should be leaving. Don't be afraid, I will always be near you. Anytime you need help, call on me. If needed, I'll get the rest of the wolf pack to help me."

Four days later the wolf leader told Scabby Bear it was time to leave. They would follow along in case some bears or other wild animals tried to attack him. The wolf leader said he should stay close to the timberline because a timber wolf does not like to go out on the prairie too much. "We'll be there to help you. You had better take plenty of food so you won't have to stop."

The man made a lot of dried meat into pemmican. He made enough pemmican to last for four days. He made a water bag out of the bag inside the buffalo that encased the entrails.

"Tomorrow at daybreak you must leave. I'm sorry that you have to go but don't worry. We will always be around in case you run into trouble. If you need help, don't be afraid to call on us. We are willing to help you. You are our only friend. The rest of the people are our enemies," the wolf leader said.

The next morning just before daylight, the man woke. Remembering it was time to leave, he looked around. All the wolves were gone. He knew, however, they must be near. In addition, he had his bow and arrows with him in case he ran into anything that might attack him. He was ready to shoot. He ate breakfast, got his pack, took his pemmican and water bag and started westward.

He walked until the sun was almost overhead. Feeling hungry, he sat down, ate his lunch and rested for awhile. Then he continued west. He stayed close to the

timberline and constantly looked around for wild animals that might attack him. He kept walking until after sunset. That night he fell right to sleep. He slept so soundly that when the wolf pack came to see how he was getting along, he didn't even know they were there. They didn't want to wake him. They slept beside him until just before sunrise.

Just when it was getting daylight the man woke up, had a meal and set out again. He wondered where the wolf pack was and if they had left him for good, but he remembered what the leader had told him. He continued walking for three days.

On the fourth evening of his journey, as he was preparing to sleep, he heard something sneak through the brush toward him. He strung his bow and prepared to defend himself. It was the wolves. The leader said, "Grandson, we have come because tomorrow you reach the camp. It is just over this high hill. In the morning you will see the camp below. I'm going to give you some orders. Remember your sister-in-law. She wanted you to die. She wanted you to starve. She got the moles to dig a big tunnel underneath where you always sat. That is why you broke through the earth and fell into the deep hole. Now, if it wasn't for brother wolf finding you, you would have been dead. You were lucky.

For what we have done for you, you are going to have to give us your sister-in-law. We will kill her and eat her. She must pay for what she has done. There is no one who should kill another person. There's a great punishment when somebody kills another person. That is one of the laws of the Great Spirit."

Scabby Bear said, "All right, Grandfather, I will do what you ask."

The wolf leader said, "You are going to have to wait awhile. I will tell you when to give us your sister-in-law. You can go to bed now. Sleep and in the morning you will be on your own. Each night we have been protecting you while you slept. We guarded you because you must pay back your sister-in-law for what she has done. Give her to us. We will feast on her." When Scabby Bear went to sleep, he was thinking pretty hard, wondering if he should do what the wolf leader had asked him. He went to sleep thinking about it.

When he woke up at daylight, the wolf pack was there. They didn't leave this time. "Well, Grandson, did you have a good night's sleep?" the wolf leader asked.

"Yes, I slept well," Scabby Bear answered.

"When you finish eating Grandson, go to your people's camp. They are going to be surprised to see you, especially your sister-in-law. Don't mention anything about how you got out of the hole or what has happened to you. Don't tell anybody anything. I will tell you when it is time to tell them. Remember these things that I have told you, Grandson, because I am only telling you this once. Go now."

Scabby Bear packed, and soon he climbed the high hill. He got on top of the hill and looked down. He saw the big encampment of people below. He started slowly down the hill. He recognized his tepee and went to it. His parents were just eating breakfast when he rapped on the tepee pole. The father and mother listened. He rapped again and the man got up and went to the door. His father yelled, "Come in! Come in! Son, we are glad you are back. We thought you were dead." Scabby Bear went in, kissed his mother and sat down.

“Where have you been?” they asked him.

“Oh, it’s a long story,” he said. I’ve been on a long journey. I got carried away and walked too far, I guess. When I came back, everyone was gone.” That’s all he told his parents. “Well, I’m going to go to my wife.”

He went to where she was camped with her parents.

He rapped on the tepee poles. They all listened to see who it was. The father got up and when he stepped outside, his son-in-law was standing there. He was so thrilled, he grabbed him and hugged him, “Come in! Come in!” he said, “Just in time to eat.” When Scabby Bear went in, his sister-in-law looked up and almost fainted. She knew what she had done.

He sat down beside his wife. She really cried and hugged him. She was so glad that he was back. She told him she thought he had died. She had stayed behind one whole day but he did not return. Finally, they had moved camp too. “Where did you go?” she asked.

“It’s a long story,” he said. “I got carried away and went too far from camp. It got dark so I slept. I thought there was no use traveling at night. I waited until daytime. The next day, I got to chasing some buffalo and that took me farther away. When I did get back to camp,” he said, “everybody was gone. I didn’t know which way you had gone, so I’ve just been roaming around. I just happened to find the encampment but I was scared. I thought it might be an enemy camp.”

About two weeks later Scabby Bear went hunting. He could hear a wolf howl, and he recognized his grandfather’s voice. He imitated his grandfather. Soon the wolf came running, “Well, Grandson, he said, I am glad that you have listened to what I have told you and you know how to make the call. It is time that you give us your sister-in-law. Tomorrow before daylight, come over that big high hill you see over there. You’re going to kill some buffalo. Of course, we will help you. You will kill many. Then you will go back and tell your wife and your sister-in-law to come out and help you skin them.”

Scabby Bear said, “All right, Grandfather. I remember what you told me.” He went back. He told his wife he was going hunting in the morning. When Scabby Bear got up to go hunting, his wife got up, too. She asked if he wanted her to go with him but he said no. “When I sneak up to a buffalo,” he said, “I don’t want anyone around. Yesterday when I was out, I saw some buffalo coming this way. I figure they will be close to camp by now. That is why I want to go alone.”

When he got over the ridge, the wolf pack was lying there waiting for him. They went down the ridge and surrounded a herd of buffalo. There were about ten to fifteen buffalo in the herd. They killed them all. As Scabby Bear was leaving, the wolf leader said, “Grandson, remember what I said. We are going over the hill to wait for you. You have to holler, ‘Grandfather! This is what you wanted! Here she is! She is all yours!’”

Scabby Bear went back to camp and told his wife and sister-in-law to help with the buffalo. They returned with him and started skinning. He told his sister-in-law, “There are about four of them over the hill. You can have all of them for yourself. You can skin them.” She agreed and left.

Scabby Bear waited for awhile and when he thought it was time, he yelled, "Grandfather! Come on! I have what you want." The wolf pack knew the signal and went to get the girl. They killed and hid her.

When Scabby Bear's wife wanted to know where her sister was, he told her what really happened. She didn't mourn for her sister at all when she heard the whole story. They returned to camp. Scabby Bear told his father-in-law what had happened. "Your daughter wanted to marry me but I didn't want to marry her. I reminded her of the time long ago when I wanted to marry her, but she didn't want to marry me because of my sores. She got the moles to dig a tunnel underneath me. They left me to starve. A wolf pack saved my life. They took care of me, nursed me till I was strong and protected me on my return journey. Your eldest daughter will not return. She must pay for what she has done. The wolves have taken care of her punishment."

Her parents agreed that she had had a great punishment coming to her. From that day on, they all lived happily.