

THE STORY OF MAHTAHIS

Story by Esther Homovich
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At the Delaware Nation Complex

There was a village in the east coast. They didn't say Pennsylvania, but they said east coast, somewhere maybe around there or New Jersey, I don't know where exactly. She [the woman who told this story to Esther] said there were these guys went hunting, hunting for game. Said they had hard time finding game, and this Mahtahis, he'd go along. He wouldn't kill anything. Finally he didn't go, he just stayed with the womenfolks. And he had kinfolks there, and he was a good guy. He wasn't ornery. He'd mind. When the time to get wood or water he'd get it.

One day the men came in. There was excitement away from that village. That man said they found a piece of bone of that monster that been killing people. I guess it was a prehistoric monster, and they found his bones, and they burned it. And this wise man said, "All right, whoever finds that piece of bone, make a good wish." And they had little clay spoon, and put that bone in there and smoke it, and [he said] "while it's smoking, burning, and you make a good wish for yourself. Either be a hunting expedition that you could kill game, or live a long life, or if you have children so they won't be sickly, and you get to live a long life." Oh, he named different things for his good.

And they told this Mahtahis. I guess he didn't think nothing. And then [to] this Mahtahis, he [the wise man] finally said, "The sun is moving. There just a few of you that didn't find any. You guys that's found some bones and made your wishes, you move away from there. These guys got to move them coals around so they go find that bone that's burning, and get it.

After while his friend told him [Mahtahis], "I told you rake around real good with that stick." And he said he found that long stick and he shoved that stick into that clay spoon, and he said, "I found one." "Okay," that wise man said, "put the tobacco in there and burn it. Now make a good wish, a good one." And his friend told him, "You'd better make a wish where we could hunt around, and you kill lot of game, and you gonna surprise people."

They didn't think what he was going to say, they never thought. And here he went and he said, "Yeah, I got one wish. I always been wishing . . ." And they all listened, "I wonder what was his wish?", cause he was kind of scabby. "All right, say your wish now before that burns up." He [Mahtahis] said, "I often wish for a wife and I never did have no wife." Of all things, and he wish for that. He said, "I want women to fight over me till I die." See, he shouldn't have said that! Boy, howdy! That was enough if he said "I want a wife," and he said he wanted them women to fight over him till he died.

"Well, okay, that's your wish." And they threw that bone back in there and it was burning. And then there was two more guys and they found bones, they were getting through, and before these last two got through, well, they said, "Hey, that commotion at the village, and a lot of excitement. Maybe that monster's over there, the one we been burning, it might be over there." He said, "You go and see now." And them guys run over there, they thought it was that monster killing the womenfolks. Here the women kill that Mahtahis. They tore him up. Pull his arm off, and the head, every which part. Some of them had some parts of him. "This is mine!"