



LIĞ^wILDAĀ^w RESEARCH CENTRE



We are continuing regular newsletter updates to share exciting history from the Archives with the community. Some of you know these stories but others do not, so it is a pleasure to introduce the sixth edition of: **Tales from the Vault.**



Figure 1 Moon and Trees, painting from the old Tsa Kwa Luten lodge.

The Moon Man

THIS LIĞ^wILDAĀ^w STORY WAS TOLD TO FRANZ BOAS AND PUBLISHED IN 1895,
THE ORIGINAL TELLER IS NOT KNOWN.

Once there was famine in a village and all the supplies had been exhausted except for a box of dried fish spawn. The people lived on fern roots which they gathered laboriously in the forest and on which they survived wretchedly. A man and his wife had two sons whom they left at home while they went into the forest. They had strictly forbidden them to touch the fish spawn.

One day, when the parents were out, a man entered the house and said to the boys, 'why don't you eat the fish spawn; there's a whole box of it there.' The boys replied, "No, we must not touch them; our parents have forbidden it." "Never mind," said the man, "just take as much as you want."



Figure 2 "Full moon" drawing by Cecil Dawson, 1985.

Thereupon one of the boys was almost willing to do what the stranger had said, but the other boy warned him and said, "Our mother will beat us when she comes back and sees that we have taken fish spawn." So, the stranger disclosed his identity as the Moon Man and said, "Henceforth when you want to have food ask me for it. I will replace a hundredfold the eggs you take from your parents." Thereupon the boys ate up all the fish spawn and the stranger went away.

The parents returned in a short while and when the mother discovered that the fish spawn was gone she beat her children. They didn't say anything, but at midnight, when everybody was asleep, they went outside, looked up to the moon and said,

"Oh, make us happy, you've promised it to us."

When they had invoked the Moon Man like this four times, countless herring and all sorts of fish came swimming. They caught them, filled their cloaks, and carried them to their parents' house. There they dropped the fish at their mother's feet and said

"Look, you were angry with us and punished us because we had eaten your fish spawn. This is how we repay you!"

So, she was glad and had them tell her where they obtained the fish, and soon all the people knew that they were rich. They came from everywhere to buy fish for bread, cloaks and skins.

In this way the boys' father became a great chief.