



LIĞWILDAŦ RESEARCH CENTRE

We are continuing regular newsletter updates to share exciting history from the Archives with the communities. Some of you may be familiar with this story, but others are not, so it is my pleasure to introduce V.3, Edition three; **Tales from the Vault.**

Qanēqē?lak^w and Ŧatē?cən

This story comes from the Qô'm?ênoxu [Qomēnox^w], a Clan of the Lê'gwilda?xu [LiğwildaŦ^w], as told by Wa'nuku and recorded by Franz Boas in 1910.



MOUNTAINS IN HOMAYNO (LOUGHBOROUGH INLET), JUNE 2024

Long ago, our LiğwildaŦ^w ancestor Ŧatē?cən was sitting quietly in his house when his attendant came rushing in.

“Do not stay here,” they warned. “Someone is coming to the beach.”

Ŧatē?cən answered calmly, “Perhaps this is what I have been waiting for, something to set things right.”

He went out to meet his visitor and welcomed his friend, Qanēqē?lak^w, into his home. Inside, he offered him dried salmon, prepared from the double-headed serpent. As Qanēqē?lak^w ate, his body began to twist and contort from its power.

“Do not rush, friend,” Ŧatē?cən cautioned.

When they stepped outside, Ŧatē?cən turned his gaze toward his salmon-weir. In that moment, Qanēqē?lak^w struck first, transforming him into stone. But just as quickly, Ŧatē?cən returned to human form.

“Take care, friend,” he said. “Now it is my turn.”



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He transformed Qanēqē?lak^w into stone, yet he too rose again, unharmed.

They continued, testing one another. They seized each other and lifted high into the air, turning to fog and back again. Qanēqē?lak^w cast Ŷatē?cən upward, transforming him into a crane that circled the sky before returning to human form. Ŷatē?cən answered in kind, sending Qanēqē?lak^w into the air as a crane, then back again.

At last, Ŷatē?cən spoke. “You are powerful, friend. Come, let us go to my playground.”

They climbed into his canoe and paddled together. Both wore belts adorned with double-headed serpents, and even their canoes carried the same designs. When they arrived, Ŷatē?cən gave a warning.

“Be careful here. No one who has come to play on this ground has ever succeeded. The surface is made slippery by the blood of those who tried before.”

He offered Qanēqē?lak^w the first turn, but his friend refused. “It is your place. You go first.”

So Ŷatē?cən ran. He moved straight up the steep slope without stopping, without even pausing at the resting place. At the top he turned, came back down in one motion, and landed cleanly in his canoe.

“Now you go,” he said. “And take care, fasten your belt well.”

Qanēqē?lak^w ran with strength and determination. He climbed nearly to the top, but at the last moment he slipped. His belt came loose, and he fell, tumbling down into the water below.

Ŷatē?cən overturned his friend’s canoe. “Perhaps you are not as powerful as you claimed,” he said.

But Qanēqē?lak^w was not finished. Unseen, he moved through Ŷatē?cən’s lands. He turned a beaver by the river into stone. He saw the watchman at the salmon-weir and transformed him, along with his pole, into stone as well.

In the end, it was Qanēqē?lak^w who prevailed, not through the playground challenge, but through his actions beyond it, where Ŷatē?cən could not see.

This story reminds us that power is not always shown in the same way. Even among friends, there are tests of strength, skill, and spirit. Qanēqē?lak^w and Ŷatē?cən challenge one another, but they also warn, respect, and recognize each other’s abilities.

It teaches that true strength is carried not only in what we show openly, but in how we act, how we respond, and how we honour one another’s gifts.