

# THE BOY WHO TURNED INTO A FROG



THE LAC LA MARTRE READER PROJECT

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Dedicated to the memory of Dennis Beaulieu 1957-1984

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This story happened a long time ago when the Cree were still fighting the Dogrib. It took place here on the Big Island on Lac La Martre Lake.

There was this one large tribe of Dogrib living together on the west shore of the lake. This village was set far into the bush, among the trees, away from the shore, so as to be hidden from the Cree attacks.

One day all the young men of the village decided to go ice fishing, for there was not much food left for the great number of people in the village and the hunting had been very poor. The village people were badly in need of food.

Among these young men, there was a young boy who was crying his heart out and begging his parents to let him go

with the others. This boy was never worthy to anyone for his body was covered with sores and scabs since his birth. He was never allowed to work, nor play, nor do what the other people would do. The villagers always looked down on him with a sad feeling and they never expected him to carry out any work nor do great deeds.

His mother said to him, "You are not like the other boys, for you could not keep up with them, and you do not move fast enough to keep yourself warm. You will probably only freeze to death!"

But the boy, with the help of his begging and crying finally won out over his mother's wishes. The boy left the village with the others on the long walk over to the Big Island.

When they arrived at the Big Island



they made camp and left the boy to keep the fire going. The young Dogrib men went out onto the lake and set their hooks into holes made in the ice with stone chisels. Then they went back to their camp and to the boy who had stayed to keep the fire going.

Early the next morning all the young men went out to check their hooks. Again the boy was left at the fire to keep it going. Suddenly, while the men were checking the hooks, from nowhere the Cree appeared before them. In sudden panic the young Dogrib fled towards the shore of Big Island.

Quickly they were overcome by the Cree, for they were not prepared for the sudden attack. The Cree ran alongside the young Dogrib and clubbed them while running in such a way that their skulls





broke and the tops of their heads flew onto the ice, like saucers floating to the ground. Before anyone had gotten close to shore, the Cree had overcome them all.

The Cree rushed on toward the camp, for already they had spotted the smoke from the campfire from some distance away. When they came close to the camp they saw the boy standing next to the fire. Before one of them could close in on him, the boy turned into a frog and leapt into the spruce branches that were spread before the fire.

The Cree ran to where the boy had leaped into the spruce boughs and pounded with their clubs among the branches, leaving only bits and pieces of the spruce branches scattered here and there and the snow trampled to the ground. But they found no trace of the boy or the frog.

Long after the Cree had gone, the boy

who was a frog came from his hiding place and became a boy again. He looked at what was left of the campsite and then went out on the lake, despairing for his companions.

He finished the work they had begun, and went back to the village carrying two large trout over his small shoulders.

No one had expected such a deed from a poor, disfigured boy who was never worth much to anyone.

I suppose the moral of this story is to tell you not to make fun of or take advantage of the unfortunate among you. For some day you may be dependent upon them.