

# *James Madison*

## *Raven Creator*

Very long ago Raven was wandering down from the north. He met many people on the way. He was often hungry, but he was full of tricks and usually outsmarted fish or game so that he got food. Some creatures, like the bullhead and devilfish, he could not fool. These he cursed and turned into rocks, which may still be seen. Raven encountered whales, bears, king salmon, birds, and humans on this journey. He was seeking something to cause it to be daylight, for it was then dark all over the world. Everywhere he went he met humans and animals who hoped and wished for daylight. Finally he came to Nass River. At the head of the Nass lived a great chief, called Raven at the Head of Nass, who owned the sun, moon, and stars. On the way to his house Raven was hungry and begged for fish from some people who were fishing in the river. They would not give him any and ridiculed him when he promised to exchange daylight for food. They told him to work for his own food and made scornful remarks about his laziness and reputation as a trickster.

Raven went on up the river asking all the people he met for food. Each time he was refused. By this time Raven was really angry with human beings.

After many days of traveling he finally came to the place where the great chief lived. Then he planned how he could get into the house. The chief had learned of his coming and had instructed his many slaves to keep Raven out. The chief had a daughter who was closely guarded. Everything that she ate or drank was inspected and tested before it was given to her. Raven decided to try to get into her drinking water. He turned himself into a particle of dirt and placed himself in her drinking basket, but being dirt he sank to the bottom and was thrown out. Then he turned himself into a hemlock needle of very light color and was not noticed. When the chief's daughter drank the water she swallowed the hemlock needle.

Sometime later it was apparent that the young woman was pregnant. There was great confusion about the condition of the woman, for she had been constantly attended by slaves. Great medicine men were called, but no one could undo the trick of Raven. In due time he was born as a human child. His grandparents became very fond of the baby. One day his grandmother picked up baby Raven, and his ruse was almost exposed. She said, "There is something very queer about this child. Under its skin it feels almost like feathers."

Raven grew very fast and soon began to cry and beg for the moon that hung on the wall. Though his grandfather was very fond of him he did not want to give him the priceless treasure to play with. Finally, when Raven cried so hard they were afraid he would make himself ill, the moon was given to him. Immediately baby Raven stopped crying and rolled the moon about the floor joyfully. After a day or so he gave the moon a toss and it went up through the smoke hole in the roof and into the sky. Raven pretended to cry because he had lost his plaything. Raven then began to beg for a box in his grandfather's house. He knew that it contained the light of the world. Day after day, night after night he cried, until the box of daylight, priceless

above all things his grandfather possessed, was taken down and given to him. He stopped crying and played about the house with the box, waiting for a chance to make off with it, but this time the slaves were watching him very closely. One day he saw a chance and flew for the smoke hole. A very large fire was burning in the fireplace and Raven counted on the upward draft to carry him through to freedom. The chief saw him and commanded him to stop. So great was the chief's power that Raven was stopped at the smoke hole. He called all the powers that he had ever had into his wings and escaped.

Then Raven started down the river with the daylight box. He came to the camp where the people had refused him food and asked them for something to eat. When they again mocked him he said, "Will someone give me food, or shall I turn night into day?" They told him to go and get his own food. Raven threatened, "If you do not give me food I will open this box. You will all be frightened to death. You will turn into the animal whose skin you are now wearing." They only laughed at him. Raven lifted the cover of the daylight box; with a thundering flash the world was light. As he had foretold, the people who were wearing skin garments turned into animals and ran away. Some became sea animals, some land animals, and others birds. Those who wore no clothing remained human.

Some of the material above is taken from *The Wolf and The Raven* by Viola Garfield and Linn Forrest, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1948

## *Certificate of Authenticity*

This print is a limited edition original serigraph. Working from James' drawings, I cut rubylith stencils for the two colors. The colors are then hand-printed onto archival paper. The paper size is 22 inches wide and 27.5 inches tall. The image size is 18 inches wide and 21 inches tall. The inks used were black and red. This design was printed in an edition of 180 made on Arches Cover Cream paper. In addition, 28 artist's proofs and 5 printer's proofs were made on Arches Cover Cream paper.

This edition was printed by Paul Nicholson of Bellevue, WA in 2008 with the assistance of the artist, James Madison.

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