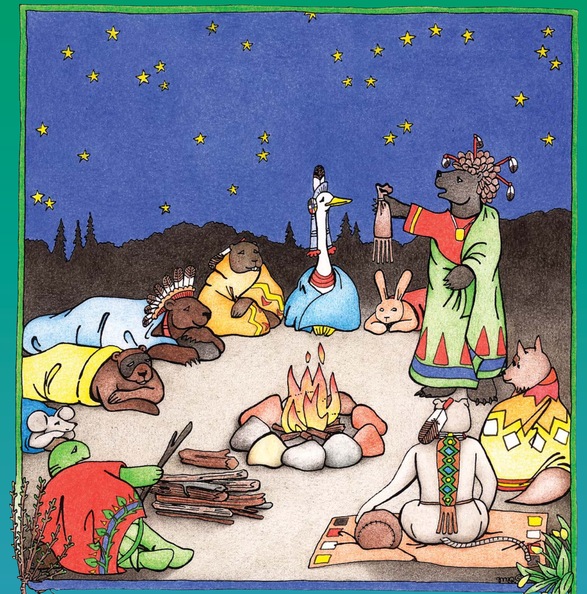
Tricked On The Trail

"Standing Strong"

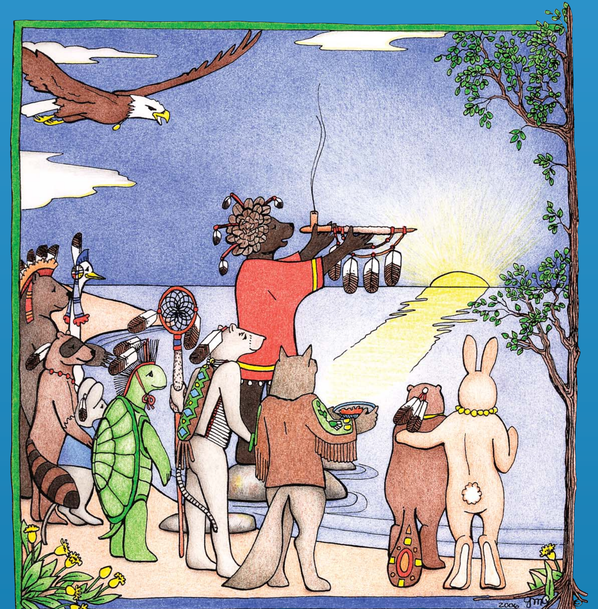
It is a new day… A new village… A new way of life for Nanaabush!

As winter is leaving and spring is approaching, the youth are doing their part to help pack and relocate the village to new grounds by the Big Lake. Despite his past tricks, Nanaabush is likeable and the youth try to convince him to travel with them to the new village. Nanaabush is reluctant at first, but finally agrees. Everyone gathers the bundles, baskets, and travois packs to begin the journey. Elder Bear calls them together and starts them off on their trip. Spirits are high and the youth laugh as Nanaabush begins throwing snowballs at them.

Elder Bear separates the group by directing the adults to an easy path, while leading the youth through rougher terrain. The youth must cross over white-water rapids and climb down steep slopes. Elder Bear takes these opportunities to give lessons on helping each other and looking after the smaller youth. After one very steep descent, Nanaabush finds that he is very short of breath. He has to rest awhile before continuing. Later in the day, a thunderstorm in the northern sky is spotted. Elder Bear uses the thunderstorm as a lesson on life. "Each hardship in life will soon pass if we keep moving forward," Elder Bear says.



As evening approaches, the group stops to make camp for the night. While everyone is working at setting up the camp, Nanaabush tries to talk several of the youth into joining him for a smoke. Elder Bear looks on as the youth refuse to go with Nanaabush. After the youth are tucked into their bedrolls that night, Elder Bear gives them a lesson on the dangers of smoking. "Smoking can cause infections, shortness of breath, increased chances of heart disease, and cancers. It can cause you and others to have asthma, even if they don't smoke. The minor problems aren't that nice either...yellow stains on teeth and fingers, bad breath, and stinky clothes to name a few. And the worse problem is the need---the physical craving that smoking causes---this is called addiction. Once you start it is very hard to stop," says Elder Bear. The night-time sky is filled with dancing stars and Elder Bear points to them. "The stars are the campfires of those who are traveling to the next world," he relates. "They represent each of our ancestors who keep watch over us. By using Semaa the way it was intended, our ancestors are honored and we gain honor ourselves."



In the morning the group continues its journey. In the distance, they can see the sun coming up over the lake. The youth are excited and begin hurrying toward the new village. Soon everyone is running and laughing. Before long Nanaabush finds it necessary to stop and rest. His breathing is shallow and he begins coughing. The others stop and help him without being asked. Once they reach the new Village, Elder Bear congratulates the group on their successful journey. Nanaabush tells the group that he now realizes why he has been having "shortness of breath" and craves smoking. "I promise not to smoke anymore. I will keep the Semaa for ceremonies and the sacred uses as it was intended." He then asks his friends to help him keep this promise.

Before the sun rises the next morning, the whole village gathers at the shore of the Big Lake as Elder Bear officiates at a Sunrise Ceremony. Elder Bear proclaims, "This is a new day, a new village, and a new way of life for Nanaabush!"

The Saginaw Chippewa
Indian Tribe of Michigan
"Working together for the future of Mid-Michigan"

KEEP SEMAA SACRED

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