

HOW THE NARWHAL CAME TO BE

An Inuit Legend

Originally Posted on the Narwhal Tusk Discoveries Website: <http://narwhal.org/IntuitLegend.html>

A wicked woman lived with her daughter and her son, who was born blind. As the son got older, his sight improved, even though the mother tried to convince him of his helpless state. One day, a polar bear came near the house and the mother told the son to aim a bow and arrow at the bear through the window covered with seal skin, and strike him down. The boy pulled back the arrow and the mother took aim from him. The arrow struck the heart of the bear and although the boy could hear the groans of the dying bear, the mother laughed scornfully at him, saying that he missed the bear. That night, the mother and the daughter had fresh polar bear meat, while the mother cooked dog meat for the son. Later, the boy's sister told her brother that his shot was successful, and secretly gave him meat.

Time passed, and an old man came to the house for a visit. Before he left, he told the young girl how she could help her brother regain his sight. In the spring, he told them to watch for a red throated loon who would swim trustingly toward them. Once the loon was close enough, the blind brother should wrap his arms around the loon's neck, and the loon would take him to the bottom of the lake. Once they came up, his sight would return. The loon told the young man not to tell about his regained sight until later in the summer when he would send a pod of belugas to their campsite.

When summer came and the ice began to break, the belugas began to move. On one occasion, a pod was closer to land than usual. The young man grabbed his harpoon and told his sister to accompany him to help him aim. They went to the shoreline and the mother, seeing the son with a harpoon, became concerned and followed them. Once she was close to them, the son gave the end of the line from the harpoon to his mother, asking her to tie it around her waist to hold the harpooned animal. The concerned mother told her daughter to make sure he was after a small animal as she was tied to the harpoon. The son instead aimed for the largest whale and harpooned him. The mother was cast into the sea. As she submerged, she spiraled around the line, with her long hair twisting into a long lance. This is how the narwhal came to be.