

MAHTOQEHS NAKA KIWONIK

How Mahtoqehs, the Snowshoe Hare, Sought to Rival Kiwonik, the Otter.

In the old days, Mahtoqehs lived with his grandmother. He had become fat and lazy and truly did very little during the winter to provide for his small household.

One day, while running through the forest, he found a lonely wigwam next to a lake. A smooth road of ice slanted from the door down to the water. Looking inside the lodge he found Kiwonik, the otter. Kiwonik received Mahtoqehs warmly, and directed his housekeeper to get ready to cook. Then he took some fishhooks and went to fetch dinner.

Placing himself on the top of the slide, he slipped into the water, and in no time he came out with some eels.

In short order Kiwonik and Mahtoqehs dined on the fresh cooked eels. Mahtoqehs was impressed by how easily the otter got his meal. "Truly these fishing-folk have fine fare, and cheap too," he thought. "Cannot I, who am so clever, do as well as this mere otter? Of course I can!"

Feeling very sure of himself, Mahtoqehs invited the otter to dine with him in three days. Kiwonik accepted the invitation and Mahtoqehs left to go home.

Before sunrise the next morning Mahtoqehs told his grandmother that they should move their wigwam next to a lake and Grandmother agreed.

The next day, they were living by a lake with a road of ice from the door down to the water. Their guest came at the time set, and Mahtoqehs told his grandmother to get ready to cook a dinner. But Grandmother replied there was no food in the wigwam.

"Not to worry," he said, and grabbing a line of hooks he turned to slide down the ice path, but he quickly lost his balance and went in with a splash backwards. The water was cold, and he lost his breath and struggled and almost drowned.

Kiwonik asked, "What on earth ails this fellow?"

Grandmother replied, "He has seen somebody do something, and is trying to do likewise."

Kiwonik called to Mahtoqehs to come out of the water. Shivering and almost frozen, Mahtoqehs came ashore and limped to his wigwam. Kiwonik then entered the lake with ease and quickly gathered a load of eels. Returning to the shore, he brought the eels to Mahtoqehs's wigwam. But disgusted by Mahtoqehs's sorry attempt to feed him he threw the eels down as a gift and went home, leaving Mahtoqehs shivering with his grandmother.