



## Why There Are So Many Mosquitos

(A Nicola Legend)

Thousands of years ago when the world was very new all of Tye Sahale's creatures walked upright, could talk and were all about the same size. There were many animals in the world but only a few humans, all members of the Nicola people. The other animals, insects and birds lived in their own camps. Everyone lived happily together in what we now call the Okanagan Valley. Everyone could talk to each other and were good friends. The humans could talk to the four winds and to the children of the winds. Even Tye Sahale, the great chief in the sky, would visit on occasion usually in the form of a small bird or animal.

One day a strange tribe appeared in the valley. They called themselves Mosquito People and they were not friendly. They lived on blood and would bite other people and animals in order to suck the blood from them. However, because they were the same size as everyone else, they were easy to see and to avoid. As a result, the Mosquito People caused little trouble aside from being annoying to others.

One day one of the Mosquito People killed the small daughter of a Nicola woman when the girl was picking berries in the woods. The woman told North Wind what had happened. North Wind told the woman

that he would punish the chief of the Mosquito People if she could lure the chief to the lake.

The woman thought and thought until she had devised a plan. She climbed into a tree that overhung a deep pool at the lake's edge. Then she positioned herself so her reflection was visible in the water. When she was ready she called to North Wind who hid in a nearby bush.

The woman began shouting insulting words about the Mosquito chief, calling him such things as "long nose" and "whining voice." He heard her and came running to inflict punishment. When he got to the edge of the lake, he could see only the woman's reflection in the water. He jumped in thinking he could catch the woman.

As the chief emerged from the lake, dripping wet from head to toe and wondering where the woman had gone, North Wind leapt out from the bush. He blew a cold breath on the Mosquito chief who immediately froze solid. North Wind called to the woman who came down from the safety of the tree.

"The Mosquito chief is frozen solid," North Wind told her. "Leave him there and he will remain frozen until my brother South Wind happens by. South Wind will melt him into a pool of water and he will disappear forever. When his people see what has happened to their chief they will go away because this valley will become taboo to them. The valley will be free of them for all time."

The woman thanked North Wind who turned to leave. As an afterthought he reminded the woman that under no conditions should she do anything except wait until South Wind came by. She promised she would comply.

North Wind was no sooner gone, however, when the woman decided she would destroy the Mosquito chief herself. She lit a large fire, threw the frozen Mosquito chief into it and watched him burn. Before long, the Mosquito chief had been reduced to a pile of ashes.

Suddenly, the ashes were scattered by a playful baby wind who had not been in on the plot. Because the woman had disobeyed North Wind, the ashes were restored to life as they rose into the air. They all became tiny replicas of the Mosquito chief. The cloud of tiny mosquitos flew away toward a swamp.

To this day mosquitos are small and pesky. They swarm as they do because that was the way in which the ashes rose after the zephyr had blown them into the air.

Because they fear North Wind, you will never see mosquitos in win-

ter, and because of the fire set by the woman thousands of years ago, they do not like hot places, fire or smoke. That is why you never see them in deserts or other hot spots. They can be kept away by lighting a smoky fire at your campsite. Mosquitos prefer swamps and damp forests because those places are usually cool.