



## STORY NUMBER 7

# *A Time of Two Winters Together*

**T**here is a story that two winters came together at one time and resulted in a lot of hardship for human beings and all animals. At that time, as usual, springtime came to the land and the snow started to melt. Even the ducks returned. Then the north wind began to blow fiercely and the weather turned cold again. It snowed a lot. The season turned into another winter.

It continued to snow for a period of two months. The snow got so deep that it was impossible to walk around without snowshoes. It was not only humans who had problems, but the animals endured hardships too. They could not walk around and feed themselves anymore.

Prior to this occurrence, the Dene people were

poor, but now the advantage was with the Dene people. It became easy to kill big game, because the animals had a hard time moving in the deep snow. All the hunters had to do was walk right up to the animal and kill it.

Some groups did too much killing. Across the country, the Elders began to worry about the fate of big game animals if this continued. “If we keep on hunting in this way, we will end up killing off all the animals. We will have nothing for the future,” the Elders said. All the Elders got together and they started to make a policy. They advised the people to obey the policy for the good of the people and the animals. The Elders said, “We should save the animals instead of killing them off.”

*“If we keep on hunting in this way, we will end up killing off all the animals. We will have nothing for the future.”*

In time, they were able to get together and were also able to come to a good decision and a good policy. The Elders cautioned the Dene, “Only kill animals when you absolutely need to. You have to think about the future and of the children in the future. If you kill everything now, you will surely die in the future. On top of everything else, go all together and feed the caribou, the moose, the sheep and other animals whatever it is that they eat.”

All winter long, the people did that – carrying out the advice of the Elders. They tried their best to save the animals from extinction. In time, the two winters were over and it was springtime again, but the problem was not over. Because there was a lot of snow all over the country, the spring melt caused a great flood over the land.

It was a terrible flood and the people really suffered. The Elders advised the Dene to move to high grounds to save themselves. The people started to travel all over the country in search of high grounds. It was a very bad spring. Human beings are smarter than animals so they were able to save themselves, but a lot of animals died during this terrible flood.

An incident occurred during this time where two beavers were swimming on the great Mackenzie River. As they swam, they spotted a porcupine stranded on a small island. The beavers came to the island and asked, “What is the matter with you?” The porcupine said, “I am stuck on this island. I will drown and die because I cannot swim. Please help me somehow. I will reward you in some way.”

One beaver responded, “Get on top of me, on my back. I will swim with you to the mainland.” It was a long distance to swim, but the beaver was a good swimmer, so they succeeded in getting the porcupine to the mainland. The beavers advised the porcupine to stay on the east side of the river at all times and to keep away from the west side of the Mackenzie River. It is still that way today.

The beavers asked the porcupine, “What are you going to give us now that we have saved you?” The porcupine said, “With the power that I have, I will put all your fat on your stomach side so that you can float and swim better.” That is why the beaver has no fat on its back. The porcupine did that. That is the end of the story.

*“You have to think about the future and of the children in the future.”*

