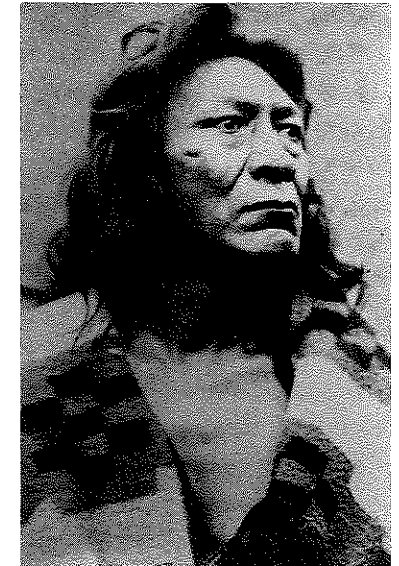


How Fish-Hawk Raided the Sioux

Like Chiloquin, Fish-Hawk was a historical figure, a Cayuse warrior whose feats of derring-do in the 1870s and '80s with a band of Cayuse and Nez Perce comrades (known as the *us-ka-ma-tone*, or "The Brothers") became the stuff of heroic legends, still told by his people. For a detailed study of this stirring narrative and other tales about the *us-ka-ma-tone*, see Jarold Ramsey, "Fish-Hawk and Other Heroes," in *Reading the Fire: Essays in the Traditional Indian Literatures of the Far West*, pp. 133-151. The story was told in Nez Perce Sahaptin by Gilbert Minthorne to Morris Swadesh in Pendleton in 1930, and adapted from Swadesh's interlinear notebook translation by Jarold Ramsey for publication in *Coyote Was Going There*, pp. 24-25. Gilbert Minthorne claimed to have heard the story from Fish-Hawk himself: it's interesting to note that although the Cayuse had vanished as a distinct tribal and linguistic entity before 1900, being absorbed into the Nez Perce and Umatilla tribes, the perspective of Minthorne's telling of the story is distinctly, proudly pro-Cayuse.



Fish-Hawk

A long time ago, when many Nez Perce and Cayuse lived to the east, they used to go buffalo hunting. Once a man dreamed of the Sioux, he saw them in his sleep, and he told the village men, "Now I am going on the war-path day after tomorrow, and I shall travel to the Sioux." He was a tough man; many times he had fought and come out all right. His name was Fish-Hawk. Four Cayuse men and two Nez Perce men were going, the one named Fish-Hawk and one named Come-with-the-dawn and one named All-alighted-on-the-ground and one named Charging Coyote, and two Nez Perce men. Fish-Hawk took the lead, he held the pipe, he was the thinker in travels.

They all had red jackets, they were on the war-path, all six of them. They traveled and it snowed, it snowed like winter on the prairie. They traveled on horseback and they came upon the prairie, and went down into a canyon. Many Sioux lived close by there. Fish-Hawk stopped and he turned around towards his friends—"We've come right into camp, see, here are the tents, and they don't know we're here." Tents were all around, maybe two hundred or more, they saw the tents.

Then the Sioux discovered them and yelled in Sioux! Fish-Hawk said, "Brothers, think good, and take it easy—they are going to try and take us." And now they swept the Sioux horses along with them, they drove them along a little way, and then they all turned. "They are catching up with us," he told the others, the pipe-leader told them. "Younger brothers, move on from here, don't shoot yet, for soon they will try and take us. Look, there is brushy ground ahead, there we will dismount, and soon they will try and get us. We shall not desert each other; look to your guns," and the Sioux chased them along.

Fish-Hawk, the people's chief in battle, turned his horse and he waved at the Sioux, he told them: "I am Cayuse, we all are; come on, you are three hundred or more. You are Sioux and you are just like old women, you never will kill us, we are Cayuse!"

So they yelled at the Sioux during the chase, and shot at them, they killed them as they went, and he told his brothers, the pipe-leader, "Now turn your horses loose," and they got off and they took off the bridles and took off their jackets and left it all behind and took only the guns and bullets into the brush, among the cottonwoods. He told them, the pipe-leader, he told them, "Younger brothers, look: we can dig trenches and fight well from there." They dug out the ground and crossed cottonwoods over the trenches and got under it all. They yelled at the Sioux, the Sioux yelled back at them and hurled insults, they yelled back again. They were killing Sioux.

Now one of the Sioux used up his bullets and he came up to them, one Sioux, a tough man, dog-disguised, he came towards them, he came up singing. Fish-Hawk said, the tough one, "Little brothers, now he comes, take good aim"—and they hit him close by the trench. He came on, and now he shot at Fish-Hawk with a bow and arrows. Fish-Hawk cried, "Little brothers, he shot me!" He got mad, the one named Fish-Hawk. He told them, "Friends, now watch your leader, now! He shot one of us, now know me, now I am going after him and I am going to drag him right into the trench"—and he stood up suddenly and threw himself out of the trench and they yelled, the Sioux, they shot at him, and he hopped, he grabbed the Sioux warrior by the legs and dragged him along, he threw him into the trench and he hit him. They took his bullets and gun, and scalped him.

Fish-Hawk told them, "Little brothers, maybe I am dying, now pull out the arrow"—and they pulled it out, and the pipe-leader, chief in war, breathed good again, but he was bleeding and getting weak and they tied up the wound. He started shooting again, he told them, "Little brothers, think carefully; look, they are trying to get us, try to shoot straighter," and they yelled.

He saw now that there was fire all around them, below and up above, and he told them, "Now, look, it's burning, they are trying to kill us by burning. Dig deeper now, we are going to be burned, they're scared and that's why they are trying to burn us to death. But we will never die of fire, we are younger brothers, tough ones with guns, they can't get us killed, and they will never kill us with fire."

So he told them, and when night came he gathered them in the middle of the thicket, he told them: "We killed many Sioux, now we're going, we're going out. We're in the midst of them but with my knowledge, soon we will get through anyway." And he told them, "A little wind will come up presently, now get ready, little brothers, let's travel!" And it came, the whirlwind, and they got out of the trench. When the fire flared up, they went down, they passed the Sioux by unseen, they traveled on.

Dawn came. The Sioux said, "Now, look they're all burned up," and they went to the trench. When they got there they found nobody. The Sioux were surprised. "Where are they? How could they live? On which side of us did they pass?" They were greatly surprised, and as they went home, they cried on their way, they took many bodies home.

The Cayuse got out from the trench all right and from there they traveled without pants, shirt-less, pants-less, shoe-less—all they had were guns, and he told them, the Chief, the pipe-leader, he told them, "Younger brothers, now we have traveled far, and one of us is getting cold and can travel no further." It was Charging Coyote; he told them, "Friends, now leave me, I will be too much bother, I'll stay right here. My forefathers died too, I'll just rest." Then the others told him, "It's the same with all of us, without shoes, without pants, without shirts, somehow we will all get back."

Then they came upon a buffalo bull, and Fish-Hawk told them, "We have traveled far without eating, now kill it." And they killed two buffalo; and from them they made shoes and pants and shirts, and they ate buffalo meat. But they had no tents, they got black from freezing and were awful to look at: thus they came back to their own tents.

This is all of the story about the raid on the Sioux: now they told it at the big war-dance at celebration-time, how this man, Fish-Hawk, the pipe-leader, went on the warpath, he was the man! "Only six of us, and you couldn't get us killed, only six, and maybe you were three hundred and maybe more" Thus they told the story, and now all the people know it. This is a true story, now there, we have made it, and it will always be the same story.