‘NAMGIS ORIGIN STORY

GWA’NALALIS; THE MAN WHO BECAME THE RIVER GWA’NI

A long time ago, when the world was still young, at a time when many spirit beings wandered the world, a man named Gwa’nalalis and his family settled at a place called Xwalkw. After a time a supernatural being named Ḵanikiʼlakw, came to Gwa’nalalis and asked him,

“Do you want to be a mountain”? Gwa’nalalis answered, “No, for mountains have slides and then crumble away for as long as the days dawn in the world”

He was then asked if he wanted to be a cedar tree and Gwa’nalalis again answered “No, for cedar trees when struck by lightning, split and fall, then they rot for as long as the days dawn in the world”.

Gwa’nalalis was then asked, “Do you want to be a large boulder”? He answered, “No, for I may crack and then crumble away for as long as the days dawn in the world”.

Finally, Gwa’nalalis was asked, “Do you want to become a river”? He answered, “Yes, let me become a river that I may flow for as long as the days dawn in the world”.

So the supernatural being, Ḵanikiʼlakw, put his hand on Gwa’nalalis’ forehead and pushed him down saying, “There you will be a river for as long as the days dawn in the world, and you will be full of salmon so that your descendants may never starve.” The river is still known as Gwa’ni. It is the river of the ‘Namgis.