

2

The Journey Ts'í Xáathe Dishyah Yaabaa Teeshaay Shax Ts'ani'elt'eh Stá'edzá'



Ahh . . . Yaabaa Teeshaay
Tatelch'eegh¹ meedzi'aa neexon Mendees Cheege.

Wu'aat two elt'eh.
(neexendeege ch'exandeege edaay ch'exadah edaay)
Wu^lenh xey naxtedeek tah,
wu^lenh maa da'ahhaak tah, “Sheth shaa datl'adidekaay,” de^lenh ehdiix.
Ey nidaytneltee^l e^l² denaa e^l detaa e^l naxalde^k.

Wunaa wuta' e^l “Nah'og ^li tsaan' des^heth gha datl'anitkaay.”
Xdets'eniin exene^yh e^l ey ts'eniin xudi'et^{sh}aa^k.
Ey nagh^lhxee^l t^l'aan ey e^l wu'aat “Ts'eniin tsoxnindiig diigha ch'e xu' edene^yh?”
“^li tsaan' e^l sheth nadatl'a'dideka^l.”

Ey e^l,

“Nde,' ” yehnih ts'i' yitelts'eek.
Eshege ts'enh t'eey k'a xihheey.

Nagh^lhxee^l t'o t'eey,
na'exeedl tininshaay ndee tihha^l t'eey k'a de'aat edehney.
Ti'ilch'eex.
Ey gha Tatelch'eegh miisi' in^lee^l.

¹ Ellen frequently uses the names *Yaabaa Teeshaay* and *Tatelch'eegh* interchangeably when referring to the cultural hero in the stories.

² Ellen's pronunciation of the postposition and conjunction *e^l*, like other speakers of Tanacross, varies between *e^l* and *é*. We write it as Ellen pronounced it.

2

The Journey Begins Yaabaa Teeshaay Leaves Home Angry



Ahh . . . *Yaabaa Teeshaay*
we Healy Lake people call him *Tatelch'eegh*.

He has two wives.
(Our language is the one that sits up there, over there.)
His brother-in-law, during winter camping,
whenever his brother-in-law comes to visit, he [brother-in-law] says to him, “Bring a container of
snow in for me.”
He got tired of the same old story from *Tatelch'eegh*.

So his mom and dad told him, “He brings in dog poop and snow.”
They told their child and then the child did that.
He melted it, and his wife said to them, “That child isn’t very smart—why did you say that?”
“He brought in dog poop and snow.”

And then,

“Give it to me,” he tells him, and he drank it down.
From that time, he didn’t speak.

Although it’s evening,
he left when it was dark but he did not tell his wife where he would go.
He went out angry.
That’s why his name is *Tatelch'eegh*.³

³ *Tatelch'eegh* literally means “the one who went away angry from having been disrespected or insulted.”

The Adventures of Yaabaa Teeshaay

Tininshah ts'ì' ndeege teeshah de',
dek'eh nah'og nen' k'et all . . . nexneljede, ey
dek'eh all ey k'a ɬá'á iileey,
nideege xi'enuljede gha,
xu'nuney k'eh.

Ey eɬ kode x^wneehaal eɬ,
wu'aat ch'exandegede eedaay “Nt'i shkey' na'ihtsì” diineyh,⁴
“Nts'e' ch'e dhindaay?” Yehneyh e,
“Oh, dook'ah,” inde'.

Dets'eniin t'a'eltl'ųų tl'aan dekey' k'eh teeshah,
ey ch'eshiige all nìh'een e neljet ts'ì' xaanitshah.

Daa'itshaay e nt'i “Nts'e tindę'ę?”
“Ena' shkey' ndeege ninshah deh ɬá'á t'eey edzi'
kax^wdìht'eh.”
“Ges eɬ en' meejunshege daa!”

“Shkey' gha ihtsìj' ” diinih tl'aan chitdiinih”,
and na'etl'ųų ts'ì' ts'eniin t'a'eltl'ųų,
tl'aan dekey' k'eh teeshah.



Two dog teams on the frozen Little Gerstle River

Photo courtesy of Lee Saylor

⁴ The following section primarily involves the two wives, one who follows *Tatelch'eegh* and one who stays behind.

The Adventures of Yaabaa Teeshaay

He went out and where he went,
throughout the land they are all afraid of him,
But that wasn't true;
they are afraid of him in turn,
the way they think of you.

And then they camped, and . . .
his second wife says to the first wife, "I thought you said, 'I love my husband';
you say you love your husband but you are still here."
"In that case, okay," [says first wife].

She strapped her baby on her back and followed her husband [first wife does].
She saw all of the ghosts, was afraid, and turned around.

She returned and someone [the second wife] asked her, "What are you doing?"
"Oh no, my husband went where it is very frightening,"
[the second wife says]. "You should jab it out of the way with a stick."⁵

"You said, 'I love my husband,' and then you said you're afraid."
So she dressed and strapped the child on her back again,
then followed her husband [again].

⁵ *Yaabaa Teeshaay* placed fierce-looking animal skins on his back trail to discourage anyone from following him.

Ałts'ey deetaan gha k'eh t'eey teddh eł dzeen eł na'eha'.
Ey chenh chox teth k'et nininshaay eł ts'ehxeh wut'ey k'od k'exdalneyh.

Dintsij eł edlih eł,
daadaadz ehts'eyh.
X^wneek'etth.

Tatelch'eegh du' tah edint'ah kon' dijhk'aa.⁶
Tuutheł deltseyh ey eł t'eey

Tininshah ts'i' jiiith'ege eł,
łot'eey koxt'een k'eh t'eey wu'eł daxdeltsij.
En' thede nininshah ts'i' jiiith'ege eł,
koxt'een tehteex xedetnih wushuh⁷ xatdedeegh.

Ey eł de'aat enideltheyh ts'i' chenh chox teth t'eey na'atshah.
Wu'aat k'od tehteex wuts'eniin.

Eł dets'eniin eł de'aat eł kon' dehk'en' deh nixuh'ilshah tuutheł neethel eł
ey tl'aan shege x^wneehaał.
K'ahmen' ts'eninthede.

De'aat ts'i' xninheeyh:

⁶ The scene shifts here from the wife to *Tatelch'eegh*.

⁷ The word *wushuh* is a specific Healy Lake word for “breath.”

The Adventures of Yaabaa Teeshaay

Fifty days and nights she traveled.
After she made it over big snow-covered flats, the woman lost her strength.

She is hungry and cold.
There is a north wind.
It's cold weather.

Meanwhile, *Tatelch'eegh* build himself a fire.
He makes soup for himself.

Then he went out to listen;
it really sounds like people to him.
He went out a little ways and stopped to listen;
[it sounded like] dying people pleading as they take their last breath.

Suddenly he thought of his wife and went back over the big flats.
His wife and child were almost dead.

He brought his child and wife back to where he has a fire burning and hot soup on
and then they spent the night there.
He woke up in the morning.

He speaks to his wife:

3

Yaabaa Teeshaay Iin Ch'eshaan' Kon' Kee Nixnindeetl



“Nts'e' tuhde' yinjhthenh?” de'aat ehni.

“Naa ihtsij . . .”

“K'a t'eey naxdhuhxeh yinjhthen,” de'aat ehni.

Wu'aat dadihney.

Dek'ey' theenxundiik ts'i' “Naa ihtsij' t'eey ch'e xu' di'inden?”

“N'eł t'eey tihhaał ts'i' n'eł t'eey shaxtdhahxeh,” dek'ey' ehni.

“Ena',” yehni t'eey łą'a sidihni n'eł teeshah.”

Dekey' eł teeshah.

Xaadeł, xaadeł.⁸

Ch'enda' denihleyh ey k'et xaadeł.

Ey eł tenh ndu' t'eey deł xanet-tseth.

“Ii . . . dii ch'e nt'eh nashog',” de'aat ehneyh eł

ndee deł xunłęę wu'aat nininshaay eł

ch'eshaan' k'eh sixunt'eh.

Ch'eshaan' tenh ndu' łuug xa'elsheek.

“Wuk'eh ts'uudeeł łuug eht'eedh neetl'atahchel sint'eh.”

Xik'eh xaadeł teddh eł dzeen eł nach'axghindeedl eł tah.

Ey ch'eshaan' xaxnindeetl eedah.

⁸ Though the wife is not mentioned in the following section, the verb *xaadédl* [canonically *xaadél*] is used with plural subjects.

3

Yaabaa Teeshaay and His Family Come to Eagle's Camp



“What do you think you want to do?” he asks his wife.
“I love you very much.”
“I don’t want them to kill you,” he tells his wife.
His wife is quiet.

She put her arms around her husband’s neck [and says], “I love you, but why are you doing that?”
“I’ll go with you and they will kill me along with you,” she says to her husband.
Even though her husband told her, “no,” she said, “I’m telling you the truth. I’ll go with you.”

She left with her husband.
They are going along, going along.

They go on to where the creek flows.
Blood is seeping up through a hole in the ice.
“Oh, what is that down there?” his wife said, and
his wife went to where the blood is.
It was an eagle sign.

Eagle takes fish out of the hole in the ice.
“Let’s follow him, he’ll give us fried fish,” [*Tatelch’eegh* says].
Day and night they went along following him.
They finally got to where eagle stays.

Łuug eht'eedh eł
Xuh tah xi'e'udelth'ih ch'eshaan⁹ du' k'a t'eeey xuhheey.
Ey łuug eet'eh ts'į' nayghindlah ts'į' wutth'enn' all . . .
ghįhsu'.
Ey Tatelch'eegh k'ode wuk'eege xunłęę dintsį;
xałtey yininthenh.

Ey eł,

ch'eshaan' k'įį th'aak shii deyghindlah all . . .
Detłęę e how many elt'eh ts'į' t'eeey yetth'aag shii yighind-
lah daxuhshęę.

“All . . . t'eeey yildeeł,” detłęę ehnił.
“Ła'ą ch'etegdeel.”
“K'a t'ey in'aadł de', k'a t'eeey łuug xaatdhegteel,” yehnił.

Ey eł,

de'aat eł ey łuug xunch'aagh t'eeey xghin'aatl.
Ey t'o t'eeey ntsuudł ey,
“ii . . . jaan deghogchuud k'ahmen' kah.”
“Ena' ch'enedihneyh.”
“K'ode ch'įit'ey nach'ih'aatl.”

Ey eł,



Bald eagle

Photo courtesy of Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge files

⁹ Ellen says “eagle” here, but the context appears to require “wolverine.”

He is frying fish.
They stay expectingly but still Eagle does not talk.
He took down the fried fish and cleaned all the bones.
Finally, *Tatelch'eegh* gets really angry because he is hungry.
“Hurry,” he thinks.

And then,

Eagle put it all in a birch bark basket.
And then he put it in his friend's plate (really).

“Eat all of it,” he [Eagle] told his friend.
“Really, I'll eat it,” [he told Eagle].
“If you don't eat it all, I'm not going to fish for you anymore.”

And then,

he and his wife ate a lot of fish.
But then a small bit,
“I'll save this for myself for morning.”
“I'm telling you, no,” [Eagle says].
“Enough—I ate too much.” [*Tatelch'eegh* says.]

And then,

4

Nahtsi̱i̱th Shax Nixnindeetl



“A̱a̱” yehnih e̱,
xuh yidelchuut.

Ch’eshaan’ t’el k’ahme . . . n’ ts’eninthet ts’i’ t’ey naghuux̱e̱ ts’i’ t’ey naghun’aa̱ de’.

“A̱a̱” yehnih.

Wuchaagh t’ey shaxtahkol.

K’ahme . . . n yikah titeeshah da̱a̱ tah t’ey ch’eshaan’ teeshah.

Luug edetdi . . . h, edetdih du’ tah ey luug.

Tatelch’eegh yidelchuude ey naghin’aatl.

Ey e̱ shege ts’enh da’en’ ch’eshaan’ luug xa’edeex.

Xik’eh teedeedl e k’a t’ey xiyexdih’aal.

shege dandedh xaadedl e̱.

Nahts’i̱i̱th k’ee xuṉe̱ ey k’eeaxadel e,

ey e̱ nahts’i̱i̱th deshax,

x^wneethet ts’i’ t’ey xuh’a̱a̱.

Dech’e’ e̱ t’ey deshax xuhtsiin ts’i’

ey shii x^wneethet det’ey eedah.

Ey e̱ t’ey nahts’i̱i̱th [ch’eshaan]’ Tatelch’eegh yidaninshah.

Ey e̱,

nahts’i̱i̱th wunetshaa ts’i’,

4

They Arrive at Wolverine's House



He [Eagle] says to him, “Yes,”
[Tatelch'eegh] stashed his food.

The arrogant Eagle [says to *Tatelch'eegh*] wake up really early and right away you should thaw it, and eat it.
[*Tatelch'eegh*] says to Eagle, “Yes.”
I'll be gone while you are asleep.

It's just dawning when he goes out, and then Eagle left.
Eagle is having a really difficult time fishing.
So, Eagle ate the food *Tatelch'eegh* had saved.
From then on out Eagle had an easier time fishing.

They followed, but did not find him.
From there they proceed onward.

Now, there are wolverine tracks they are following,
and then Wolverine's house.
He keeps it quite warm.
He made his house with his tail.
He is living where it is quite warm.
He [Eagle] blocked Wolverine in.

And then,

Wolverine is embarrassed and,

“tl’ee, tl’ee”

“Aq’, na’aa,”

ey shii xee nelten.

“Ey na’in’aał,” Yaabaa Teeshaay ehnih.

Ey eł,

wunetshaał ts’i’ “tsets kol” e Yaabaa Teeshaay ehney, eł

yaa tsets ahłet nidenindlah tl’aan,

ey xee daa’itkał.¹⁰

Ey nahts’iıth ndee da . . . ’a tah Tatelch’eegh yinee’iin ey yishi’i t’eey yitl’aghihchuut

ey Tatelch’eegh yineh’een e

“ii . . . jah shshi’i ey łaan yikol” yiniithenh.

“Tl’ee xuh t’eey dhintee,” nih.

Tatelch’eegh neetee x^wneethe . . . l e tnet-te’.

K’ahme . . . n’ tah nahts’iıth dech’e’ naadiıhdeetl ts’i’ yi’eł na’et-tl’uı ts’i’ teeshah

Tatelch’eegh elih nıeen eł ts’eninthede.

Sheth k’et eetee—didekol.

Nakon’ diıhk’aa ts’i’ xuh diigaay ghin’aatl tl’aan.

¹⁰ The verb *daa’itkał* indicates that the grease is in a container.

The Adventures of Yaabaa Teeshaay

“Friend, friend . . .”

“Yes, out there . . .”

There is frozen grease.

“Eat that,” he tells *Yaabaa Teeshaay*.

and then,

embarrassed, “I have no wood,” he told *Yaabaa Teeshaay*, so he piled wood together for him and after that he brought the grease back inside.

From a long time before, the food *Tatelch’eegh* had stolen is the same food as he was given and *Tatelch’eegh* looked at the food and he thought, “Oh, this is my food that was missing.”

“Friend, sleep right there,” he [Wolverine] said.

Tatelch’eegh fell asleep. It is so warm that he slept soundly.

Very early in the morning, *Wolvernine* took his tail down, dressed with it, and left.

The cold woke up *Tatelch’eegh*.

He is sleeping on the snow—nothing is left.

He built a fire and ate a little bit.

5

Wukee' K'ee Kol Nenn'



Yik'eh teeshaay ey eł k'a t'eey yik'e'iidaal,
ey tl'aan shege ts'enh aahaal eł chih.

Niiduuy iin gha chih ninshah.
Niiduuy iin ahlet delth'iiy.

Nehxon Mendeescheege “wuk'ee kol” meedzih'aa
dah jah ug du' “niiduuy” eł xe'ehnih.

Ey,

niiduuy iin ndlaan int'eey delth'ih gha chih ninshah
shege chih xu'eł eedaay eł,
“Tl'eę neeshi'i t'eey kol ch'etindeen, dii neets'uu'aał gha?”
“Ey, t'ogh” xi'ehnih t'o t'eey.

Ey,

wuk'ee kol¹¹ iin
nah'en tixghindeetl ts'i' “gah ts'atl'a' gah ts'atl'a' ” xenih ts'i' tixindeetl.
Ndlaan iin t'eey tinindeetl,
xuh kol.

¹¹ The term *wuk'ee kôl* for lynx is also used in the Mansfield dialect.

5

The Land of “No Tracks”—the Lynxes



He followed him but did not catch up
and then he continued walking from there.

He came among the lynxes.
They are all living together.

We Healy Lake people call it “No Tracks.”
Around here, they call it *niiduuy*.

Anyway,

he comes to where there are lots of lynx staying.
He stays there with them and,
“Friend, our food is gone, what can we feed you?”
“That’s okay,” they told him, but,

and . . .

The lynxes,
as they were going out, they chant “*gah ts’aatl’a’, gah ts’aatl’a’*.”¹²
A lot of them went out.
They disappeared.



Lynx

Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

¹² The phrase *gah ts’aatl’a’* is chanted in this story as a way of bringing hunting luck. This phrase is not used in everyday conversation.

6

Yaabaa Teeshaay Eł Tiikaan Łdiikeey Elt'eh



Tatelch'eegh tininshah ts'ì' jii'th'ege e nandodh ndu shii ts'ì' tah sha'ee'aa
gah exetdek ts'ì',
gah ndlaan t'eey xghinxaa ts'ì' gah daxilshah.
Xuh ghìhdlaa ts'ì' t'eey xiyehsu' ts'ì' xiyet'eeth kon' ts'ì',
eet'eh tl'aan eł Yaabaa Teeshaay xuu'e niyghin'aatl.
Xunsu' t'eey xi'ech'ìh'aatl, ts'ì'

Xuu'eł teddh ghinhet
ey tl'aan k'ahmen' eł kode teeshah
teddh eł dzeen eł t'eey nach'eha' jah nen' ła'ą nt'eey nchaax.¹³
Xuu diideen eł ch'e jah nen' xughìhchaax ts'ì' t'eey yik'i'eeshah.
K'a t'eey eteegh ts'ì'
dzeen eł teddh eł niłchii t'eey na'edaak.

Ey eł shege ts'enh kode aahaat

Ey eł du' kode tiikaan łdiikeey elt'eh
menh nchaagh wutaatl'ede ndu ee'aa
ey chii ts'ì' tiikaan łdiikeey eeteets niłdiixa' ts'ì'
one dat-sey ts'ì' one delgeyh k'e'elstij
dendeh eldeel
Tatelch'eegh shog' xni'heen e dendeh tthixa' eł tth'enh eł xu'eedlah
ey eł ey tiikaan de'edetxaade ts'ì' k'e'ildiik.

¹³ This section is an interlude between adventures as Ellen explains how *Tatelch'eegh* could do all these things.

6

Yaabaa Teeshaay and the Two Wolves



Tatelch'eegh went out and heard a commotion ahead in a stand of trees on an island.
They are driving rabbits.
They killed lots of rabbits and brought them home.
They cleaned all of them and fried them to an open fire.
After it was fried *Yaabaa Teeshaay* ate with them.
They fed him really well.

He spend the night with them,
and then early in the morning he left.
He traveled day and night; to the ends of the earth.
That's how he traveled all around the wide world.
He does not sleep at all;
he keeps traveling continuously.

From then on, he is going along,

and then he came upon two wolves.
In the center of a big lake there is a tree-covered island.
At the tip [of the island] two wolves are sleeping end to end.
One looks black and one looks gray.
[They are] Eating people.
He looked down to see human hair and bones scattered around.
A wolf shakes himself off and he [*Tatelch'eegh*] suspects . . .

Ey eł de'aat gha xaneljet ts'i'
de'aat gha dahdzeł di'ee'aq ts'i' ey k'et de'aat di'ehteę.

Ey tl'aan,

tsets łq'a dinchaa . . . gh t'eeey xnideghin'ah.
Ey yettheeł, yettheeł
kode tnetxuudl.

“Jah wut'aagh tihhaal ts'i' wutthilaghegtthet de'
“nde' tiikaan one tdheksheey,” de'aat ehnih.

Wu'aat k'a xeenihthe . . . nh t'o t'eeey “kode ha” de'aat ehneyh eł

De'aat ts'i' ey yech'eninshel ey eł
ey tnetxotl yit'aagh niik'e'eshek dindah t'eeey yitsila'ehshaatl ts'enh
“Kode ch'e tiikaan tdheksheh,” yininthenh
wudalak'ey detxodl ey t'eeey tiikaan yi'eł uuxaan gha ey t'eeey ehtsij.

De'aat dahdzeł k'et di'ehteę tl'aan,
tiikaan ts'i' kode tiikaan ts'i' teeshah.

The Adventures of Yaabaa Teeshaay

so he is afraid for his wife.
He put up a platform and set his wife up on it.

And then,

a really large piece of wood is standing upright.
He is chopping it, chopping it;
finally it is starting to fall.

“I’ll go behind the tree and when I run out
I will kill one wolf,” he tells his wife.

His wife really did not like that.
“It’s enough,” he told his wife.

He pushed it toward his wife;
it broke and fell over and then he jumped back and forth under it until he got to the end.
He thought, “Now I’ll kill that wolf.”
He makes a spear out of wood to kill the wolves.

He put his wife on the platform and
he went after the wolves.



Wolf

Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Adventures of Yaabaa Teeshaay

Yediixah xa'edaak ey t'o t'eeey tiikaan eł niđdiixah ts'į'
łą'ą t'eeey xunaat'ey xunłęę.

Ey t'o t'eeey,

Tatelch'eegh k'a t'eeey xedįhtsedl xu' t'eeey.
Du' tah one tthichii ch'įhtl'eth.¹⁴
Ey dindah t'eeey yidhehxęę.

Ey tl'aan ts'ehłege chih xu' di'eh'ęę.
Ey eł ey łdiikeey t'eeey ghinxąą.

Wujah jah xigha naxaldiik de'ey
Yaabaa Teeshaay jah nen' k'et łą'ą mexneljede.
Mexunsaadh xuh ey t'eeey
niłth'idehttheyh.



Snowshoe hare

Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

¹⁴ The verb *ch'įhtl'eth* implies that *Tatelch'eegh* used some kind of implement, presumably the spear previously mentioned.

The Adventures of Yaabaa Teeshaay

They keep passing each other;
they are both very strong.

But even so,

Tatelch'eegh did not let go.
He finally knocked one over the head.
He finally killed one.

And then continued with the other one.
And then killed both of them.

This is how they tell the story.
To show that throughout the world *Yaabaa Teeshaay* was fearless.
Those frightening, difficult things,
he straighten it out.