



## How Moose Came to Be

Môswa, moose, didn't always look the way he does now. In fact, kayas, long ago, he looked very different. He had short ears, a short slender face and a slender neck. He always had large antlers and his body was pretty much the same but not his face, it was very different.

One day, Môswa was walking through the willows, eating his favourite food, the red willow buds. He came across a small meadow with nothing but short grass growing. Môswa noticed that Wawaskisew, elk, was eating the green grass in the meadow as elk will do. Môswa stopped and took a long hard look at Wawaskisew and noticed something he hadn't before. He noticed that Wawaskisew's antlers were much longer than his. They were thick at the base and went so far back that they almost touched his rump. This made Môswa a little angry.

"Tansi tigwee! What, I wonder, is this all about. I am clearly the bigger animal. I have bigger muscular legs, a powerful neck and a larger body! I should have the biggest antlers in the bush!" He thought to himself. "This isn't right! I'm going to find out why his antlers are bigger!"

Môswa knew that Wesahkechak, the Trickster, was camping nearby. Although Wesahkechak was a Trickster, he was an old being and even though

he had his faults, he had a lot of knowledge about the world around him and knowledge of a great many medicines. Môswa went to his camp to find out why Wawaskisew had bigger antlers than him.

When Môswa got to Wesahkechak's camp he went straight to his tepee and called to him. "Wesahkechak! Astam oota! Kwee-ah-hoo! Come here quickly!" Wesahkechak poked his head out of his tepee and slowly came out. He looked at Môswa. "Tansi Môswa. Why have you come to bother me? I was having a good dream about being on a great water, floating on a giant log." Môswa shook his head, "Never mind your crazy dreams. I have something important to talk to you about. I was walking through the bush earlier and I saw Wawaskisew. I noticed that he has bigger antlers than me. I want to know what's up with that? I am clearly the bigger and stronger one in the bush. I should have the biggest antlers!"

Wesahkechak smiled. "Is that what you are so concerned about? Well, I can't help you there. Mamawi Ohtawimow, The Creator, is the one who made all the creatures in the bush. He made you the way you are and there's really nothing I can do to change that. You just have to accept the way you are and be happy with that!"



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Môswa scowled. "It's not fair! I am much bigger than Wawaskisew, I am way stronger and I would look better with the biggest antlers!"

Wesahkechak looked as though he was in deep thought. He shook a finger in the air slowly. "You know what Môswa, I might be able to help you after all. I might not be able to change the way you look but I do know some muskee-kee, medicine, that might help you." Môswa looked hopeful and continued listening. "Now, this muskee-kee I know will make your antlers grow much bigger than they already are so you will have the biggest antlers in the bush. However, there is a small problem. The muskee-kee I know is a small plant that grows out the side of a cliff. It's too far down for me to reach alone so you're going to have to agree to come help me pick it."

Môswa was happy with what he was hearing and shook his head up and down. "Yes! I will go with you and help you pick this muskee-kee, after all, I only want bigger antlers and if this plant can give me that, then that's all I ask for. Kwee-ah-hoo! Let's get going!" The two set off together into the bush.

It wasn't long before the pair came to the edge of a high cliff. The edge of the cliff was smooth, dropping off a long way down to jagged rocks below. Wesahkechak called to Môswa, "Aw, Môswa, ka-ihtapihk. Look. See that plant sticking

out the side of the cliff down there?" Môswa looked over the cliff's edge and shook his head up and down. "That's the muskee-kee we need to pick. I'll grab onto your antler and you can lower me down with your long powerful neck. I can reach it then." Môswa agreed.

Wesahkechak grabbed Môswa by the antler and stepped off the edge of the cliff. Môswa slowly lowered Wesahkechak over the edge of the cliff. Just as Wesahkechak was about to grab the muskee-kee, kahkahkew, raven, flew by cawing loudly. The sound startled Môswa and he jerked his head up! When he jerked his head up Wesahkechak lost his grip and nearly fell to his death but at the last minute he reached up and grabbed Môswa around the face with both hands! Môswa noticed that when Wesahkechak grabbed him by the face it started stretching his face longer and making the end of his nose wide and fat! Môswa didn't like that at all and started to shake his head so Wesahkechak would let go. Wesahkechak again lost his grip and at the last minute he managed to reach up and grab Môswa by the ears! Now Môswa noticed that his ears were being stretched longer by Wesahkechak and again he started shaking his head to make Wesahkechak let go! Wesahkechak lost his grip again and just as he was about to fall to the rocks below he reached up and in one last attempt to save himself he managed to grab Môswa by the throat!



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The skin where Wesahkechak grabbed Mōswa started to stretch longer and longer as well! Mōswa dug his feet into the dirt and started backing up, pulling Wesahkechak up and over the cliff. When Wesahkechak was safely up on the cliff he let go. As soon as he let go, Mōswa turned and ran as fast as he could for he knew Wesahkechak was going to be mad at him.

Mōswa ran through the trees, across the meadows, through the spruce and through the willows until he could run no more. He was terrified to have Wesahkechak catch up to him and do awful things to him for nearly killing him. Mōswa came to a large clear lake and he stopped to get a drink.

The water was calm and as clear as glass. When Mōswa stretched his neck down to get a drink, he could clearly see his reflection in the water. He now had a long face with a wide, fat nose on the end! He also now had huge, long ears where he once had short slender ones! He could also see a long flap of skin hanging off his neck where Wesahkechak had grabbed him! Mōswa was horrified! From then on he started staying to himself, rarely going near other animals and choosing to hide in the deep willows to avoid being seen by the other animals for he was scared they would laugh at him. This is why even today, Mōswa choose to stay by themselves, hiding in the willows. And that is the story of how Mōswa came to be the way he is.

Ekosi Maka