



Squirrel and Pine Marten

Kayas, we are told that Anikwacas, the squirrel, lived very much like Apakosis, the mouse. He only stayed on the ground and never ventured into the trees. He would make burrows in the ground and eat all the plants and grasses around him. This changed when Wapiscanis, the marten, came to Nehiyaw-askiy, Cree, country. Wapiscanis was an odd character, arrogant and forever hungry. He too stayed and hunted mainly on the ground, hunting the small animals there for he loved to eat Apakosis.

One day shortly after coming into Nehiyaw country, Wapiscanis was busy hunting mice near a stand of Sihta, spruce. He looked in every crack and crevice he came across but there was no sign or scent of Apakosis. He was starting to get very hungry and frustrated. "Taniwa Apakosisak. I wonder where the mice are. I'm getting hungry and there is no sign of them around. What am I going to do for dinner?" It was then that he noticed Anikwacas stretched out on a rock, sunning himself. Wapiscanis hid behind a willow bush peeking out at Anikwacas. His eyes grew big as he thought to himself "Oh, that's the biggest Apakosis I've ever seen! What an odd looking one though. Why does he have such a fluffy tail? Not that it matters much anyway. He sure looks tasty and there's more than enough to fill my belly!

"I'm going to have to be careful though; he's big and could put up quite a fight!"

Wapiscanis decided to use a bit of trickery to try to make a meal of Anikwacas. He stepped out from behind the nipisiy bush and casually strolled up to where Anikwacas was sunning. Anikwacas was startled when Wapiscanis began talking, "Tansi n'toteem! It's a very nice day today for sunning. I'm new to this country and just had to stop in to say hello. I've never seen such big Apakosis before."

Anikwacas grew a shocked and angered look on his face for Anikwacas too is a very short tempered little creature that is just as arrogant as Wapiscanis. "Apakosis! How dare you call me a Apakosis! For a stranger here you're sure quick to insult those that you come across! I ought to slap you around for even thinking I am a nasty little Apakosis!"

Wapiscanis stepped back, surprised that the big Apakosis was getting up in his face, unafraid of him. "I'm sorry friend! I've never seen a creature like you. I just assumed you were an Apakosis. There is none of your kind where I come from. Please don't be angry with me."

"I guess I can forgive your ignorance, you are after all a stranger here and clearly a little low on manners. I am called Anikwacas and I am much cleaner and smarter than a stupid little Apakosis."

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"Even though I live in a burrow, it's clean and much nicer than an Apakosis hole. I spend most of my time running about beneath the trees and eating all the tasty little grasses and plants there," said Anikwacas with one little hand on his hip and a smirk on his face.

Wapiscanis knew he would need to very sly with this fat overgrown Apakosis. He came up with a quick plan to try get Anikwacas in his belly, and soon for he was growing hungrier just looking at his fat body. Wapiscanis looked up at the Sihta nearby. "It's getting close to lunchtime my friend. Have you eaten yet? If not, have you ever tried waskwetoy, pine cone? I really recommend them, especially the ones that grow near the top of Sihta."

Anikwacas turned his head sideways looking at Wapiscanis with a hand still on his hip.

"Waskwetoy? I've never thought to try them. They grow way up on Sihta and I like it right here on the ground. The plants near the trees are good enough."

"Oh, but if you haven't tasted waskwetoy before, I recommend you try it as they are very tasty," said Wapiscanis.

"If you say they are good I'll try it I guess. But you say the best ones are near the top of Sihta so we'll need to climb up pretty high. I'm not too afraid to climb, although I don't do it much.

Aw mahga, let's go." Anikwacas said, following Wapiscanis to a nearby Sihta.

Wapiscanis chose a very tall Sihta to take Anikwacas up. A smile formed on his face as he thought to himself. "Now I have this fat Apakosis! I'll take him way up near the top of this Sihta and when we get there I will throw him off the branches. After he falls out of the tree and gets flattened into the ground, I will stroll down and have a good meal!"

Wapiscanis had Anikwacas go up the tree before him so that when they got high enough, he could grab Anikwacas by the back leg and throw him off the tree. Anikwacas was a bit nervous at first but soon found that he was a great climber. He could easily hold onto the tree and soon found that he was having fun, climbing for a bit then jumping from branch to branch with ease. Wapiscanis was starting to fall behind as he had no idea that the fat Apakosis was such a good climber.

When they were finally near the highest branches, Anikwacas was about to grab a waskwetoy from a branch when he felt Wapiscanis grab him by the back leg.

He looked down at Wapiscanis and saw that he had an evil grin on his face as he pulled Anikwacas' leg and flung him toward the ground! Anikwacas quickly grabbed a nearby branch as he was falling and pulled himself to safety.



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He took a powerful jump and managed to land on the neighbouring tree. He looked down at Wapiscanis on the next tree and scolded him.

"What the heck are you trying to do? I could see you smiling when you purposefully tried to throw me off the tree!" Anikwacas hollered.

Wapiscanis shook his head and looked angrily at Anikwacas. "You stupid fat Apakosis! I was going to make a good meal of you, but now I'm going to have to work for it. I live in the trees so you'll not get away from me here. I'm going to enjoy eating you even more once I catch you!"

Wapiscanis leapt to the tree where Anikwacas was, and tried to scurry up after him. Anikwacas found that he was even more agile in the trees than he was on the ground, quickly darting out of the grasp of Wapiscanis, and either jumping to the next tree or scurrying up to the higher branches. After a great deal of jumping and climbing and scurrying through the trees, both creatures sat on branches, tired from the ordeal.

Anikwacas, sitting on the higher branches laughed at Wapiscanis. "Ha, you thought you could catch me up here huh! I rather enjoy running around in these trees. I think I'll stay up here!" he said as he grabbed a waskwetoy and took a bite of it.

He found the outsides to be bitter but soon found the little seeds hidden within the wasaskwetiw.

He instantly fell in love with the taste. He quickly ate the remaining seeds then threw the peeled cone at Wapiscanis. "You're right! These are tasty!"

He continued eating the waskwetoy and throwing the peeled pits at Wapiscanis. Soon there was cone after cone flying toward Wapiscanis. He slowly retreated from the tree shouting at Anikwacas, "One day I'll get you, you fat Apakosis. I'll never stop hunting you, for I want to taste those fat little legs and suck the marrow from your bones. I'll hunt you till the end of time if I have to!"

Since that day so very long ago, Anikwacas loves being in the branches of trees and is quite at home climbing and scurrying about. He still has a love of waskwetoy and eats them as much as possible. Even today if he feels threatened he will climb a tree and throw waskwetoy down at whatever is threatening him. He also continues to scold just as he did so long ago when Wapiscanis chased him into the Sihta. As for Wapiscanis, he still has a great hunger for Anikwacas and will go to great lengths to try to catch him. Even now Wapiscanis can be found wherever you find Anikwacas, as he still races through the trees trying to catch that fat Apakosis.

Ekosi Maka