

Abstract: Etnugunaks origin myth of lens and  
lagaxni'tsk, gispaxlɔ'ts, gispawudwa'də.  
Matthew Johnson (lagaxni'tsk), 195.

The myth is the same as that of t'anks in its early part. The difference begins when they came out of the house of the Etnugunaks monster.

The three men in the canoe were lost. They stopped at an island to clean the canoe of sea-life, and one man climbed a tree and looked in all directions. As he resembled an eagle looking around, his companions thought of a name for him: lagaxni'tsk "in all directions looking". They paddled in the direction he had chosen, and at nightfall reached their village of gidzstsu'.

They had a new naxnoʔ, a deep groaning whistle like a foghorn, which they sounded. The people of the village were frightened. They had long ago given these men up as lost. The men related their experiences to the wise men, and demonstrated their new naxnoʔ to the chiefs. They gave a ye'ok ~~to~~, demonstrated the naxnoʔ (associated with a human face mask), and lagaxni'tsk formally assumed his name.

The neighbouring wudste of git'au'ye and gitmax lagaxni'tsk, jealous of their superiority in such matters, tried to <sup>purchase</sup> obtain the new naxnoʔ. They offered a slave woman, then a slave woman with child, then three slaves, but were refused. They then called together all the neighbouring villages and attacked gidzstsu'. The gidzstsu' retired to their fortress of laxg,ε'səmte'm (on foot of knees) but when they saw how numerous the attackers



were, they scattered and fled. The women of the house of lagaxni'tsk took with them the new naxnɔ'x, a ten-layer lanəmɣ.ɛ'it (which they had to reduce to seven for ease of carrying), an ambala'it, and their crests: the gi'bo'lk costume, the gwuste'its, the g.ɛidəm'next, and the txa'tku nɛ'ɔ'xs. They fled north.

They went up the Skeena and joined the gi'spa'x'ɔ'ts at their original place just below the canyon, at lax'nəmax'təgwɔ'li. There lagaxni'ts, who was recognized as the chief of the newcomers, built a special house in which to display his naxnɔ'x. This house was the "house of nugun'a'ks", and on it were represented all the sea creatures seen in the house under the sea, including the crests lagax'wɛ'sɔ and wil.ɛhɛ'dəksət qət "where humans spawn". To ni'swa'a'mak the chief they gave permission to use the new naxnɔ'x. They were permitted to live with the tribe, but did not assume any particular rank.

The inland monsters of the Skeena were angry that saltwater monsters should be represented here, and wiped lagaxni'tsk's house away with a flood. The latter then built an undecorated house next to that of ni'swa'a'mak at kpu'nəmɣ.aldza'p. Later they moved downriver to ~~the~~ Graveyard Point, t'sewɛ'nəxtəmɣ.aldzap "village on the point", and lagaxni'tsk built his nugunaks house again, despite the objections of the old people. Here they displayed their crests to show their rank. Once again, however, a river flood destroyed the house, and to appease the river monsters, the tribe insisted that he build a



plain one. The Kitnuquaks group expanded, and spread to other villages.

lag.axnit'sk decided to return finally to saltwater, and built a house at Mtitlakatla. During the move, one of the women of his house camped at kt'som'a'us. She was visited by a man who was actually the monster of this place (hagwəlx kt'som'a'us), who had an interest in the welfare of the Kitnuquaks. Later she had twin girls, sag.εtnlu'ətk and te'ms, who had special <sup>supernatural</sup> powers over the salmon and eulachons.

The gispaxl'ots moved with the rest of the Tsimshian to the Pass, and at g,t'yε'ks they built their houses. legε'x the chief built his xsk'i'gam wəlb (Eagle house). Here te'oms sang a nuquaks dirge song, and the Kitnuquaks finally achieved a secure place in the tribe. (lens had married into the house of ni'swa'a'anak). The tribe moved down to laxgaldzap, and lag.axnit'sk wanted to build his Nuquaks house again, but was not permitted to do so. Later, when the tribe moved to Port Simpson, they made lag.axnit'sk and lens build their house at the water's edge, in case it would be flooded.

(When they became more numerous they began to use other gidəst'su' names, and t'anks was one of these. t'anks and tsagamsz'g'sk are connected with lens).