

# *NI'NOXSOLA*

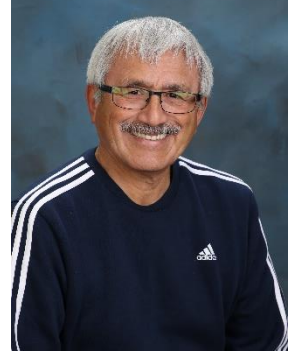
Elders in Residence Program  
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



Bryce Mercredi

Animal Encounters

Muskrats



Over the years I have had quite a few encounters with wildlife. I had learned, at a very young age, to call muskrats which is done in this manner: You purse your lips and suck air through the pursed lips. The sound that this produces is like a squeak and by moving your lips while sucking the air changes the tone of the squeak.

Unlike the beaver which builds lodges out of sticks and mud, the muskrat prefers to live in banks on the shore in summer. In the winter, they push through the newly frozen pond and make their dens called push-ups. A push-up is made up of mud, sticks and other debris they find and stands up about a half meter above the ice. The snow generally covers these push-ups and prevents them from freezing. The muskrats will have several of these push-ups scattered throughout the bay. Sometimes you will see a fox trying to get inside, but they can't get through.

In the spring, when the ice is melting, the areas that was first to be ice free was near the shore and shallow bays. These shallow bays were where the reeds and cattails grew, which was a food source for these little animals.

I used to go to one of these bays where I knew that the rats were present and sit on the rocks overlooking the bay and call them. They appeared shortly after and would come to the shore directly below me and swimming circles, making the same sound that I was making.

One summer I was in an exploration camp and decided to go to the shore and started calling. Muskrats were coming from across the bay. There was a total of about 14 rats swimming in front of me.

