A baby boy was born to proud Chinook parents. The baby was put to its mother’s breast. Grandparents and the baby’s siblings were brought to see him. A Chinook cradle had been made with a carving of a strong spirit to look after him. Images of canoe paddles were placed on that cradle to remind him of his past and future. The young boy was placed in the cradle and slept and ate there. Another grandmother, the placenta, was taken by the father into the woods. Deep enough not to be disturbed, but in a place where he could return when he felt the need. A young tree, tall and strong, was located in a good place along the creek. A hole was dug among the roots. Five long dentalia, saved for the purpose, were unwrapped. Grandmother was turned over in the fashion of his ancestors and placed carefully in the hole. With the gift of dentalia and words spoken in Chinook, much was placed there. A knowledge that the boy would grow tall and strong and live a long life with the help of that tree. A thank you to the grandmother for taking care of the boy, and an understanding that by ritualized treatment of the grandmother she would help bring a child of a different sex the next time.

The boy’s limbs were pulled and rubbed to make them straight and strong. Chinook lullabies sent him off to sleep. Only good words were said to him, and he was reminded how much he was wanted here, all to make sure he did not go back to the place he came from, a place called Sunrise. The parents knew that all babies miss Sunrise and their acquaintances there. That special care paid off, and he chose to stay with them. Later, when he learned to speak, he told of the people he knew and what he had done there.

A few years passed, and his hair was long. He was handsome, and he had grown strong. He would be strong in the canoe, and he already had a paddle. He was a good runner, and he loved to shoot his bow. His family was proud of that boy, and he had the name of his grandfather.

His mother was pregnant again. She took off her necklaces and bracelets, went quickly through the doors, and never looked at an animal being butchered or at snakes. She followed the many taboos of her ancestors and gave birth to the girl baby they both knew they would have.

The boy was born in 2005 and the girl in 2010. They, like their three older siblings, are Chinookans of the Lower Columbia River.