

Anishinaabe Creation Story – Seven Fires of Creation

Slide Deck Notes

- Edward Benton-Banai, Sounding Voice Indian Country Press, 1978.
- Jim Dumont, Reflections on the Ojibway Creation Story, 1993.
- Edward Benton-Banai, Mishomish Book

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Themes:

1. Unfolding the teaching of the creation story, to highlight our personal approaches to community.
2. Pay attention to how creation unfolds from an Anishinaabe perspective. Can you see the patterns?
3. Original instructions/teachings, how to connect & know our place within the interconnected web of life.

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The teaching is known as *The Seven Fires of Creation*
And is taken from the sacred scrolls of the Anishinabe Nation.
Of that Nation, there is a tribe called the Ojibway.
It is in their tongue,
It is told of the Seven Sacred Fires.
The teaching belong to all time
And to all people that may pass this way
But, it is ever theirs – the Ojibway.
(Edward Benton)

“The Creation Story of the Anishinabe is told as the “Seven Fires of Creation.” Each Fire Represents an era of time. Now, we don’t know how long each one of these fires or periods of time actually are. But in the time that the universe knows, they are seen as eons of time; from the place before time could even be recognized or measured in the way that it is conceived today.” (Jim Dumont)

Anishinabe worldview

- begins with a strong integrity of belief
- vs western worldview based on science/fact then belief from that.

Symbolism

- Spirit Centered

Ancient Texts

- There are Sacred Birch Bark Scrolls that hold ancient knowledge of Anishnawbek Ceremonies.
- These texts are very precious because they survived the history of genocide, colonization, the Indian Act etc.



- There was a need to protect the Culture at all costs.

Story tellers

- Oral communication was apart of tradition,
- Traditionally only way to receive it was through storytelling
- The creation story is told to acknowledge who created all of life.
- Edward Benton, The Mishomis Book – written text from his poem 7 Fires of Creation, 1978, and is told from the Midewin Lodge teachings.
- James Dumont, storytelling also is a large influence today.

Creation Story

- Help humans conceptualize & understand, put a picture to it
- A story about humans and our solar system specifically Mother Earth
- AKA Our original instructions = Natural Law

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“The Ojibway Creation Story then begins with a place before time when there was only silence, emptiness, darkness, and cold and extends to a time when earth was created and life was placed upon her surface. Creation unfolded in seven stages. (Edward Benton)

We are told that in the beginning there was only darkness, emptiness, silence and cold. It was a vast unknown, extending forever without boundaries. Then, somewhere in the darkness, a sound, like the rumbling of the thunder far in the distance, sounded out only to be followed by silence once again. After a long unimaginable period of silence, the sound rumbled out again. Only this time it seemed closer.” (Jim Dumont)

Concept of time:

- 100s of millions of years (eons of time)
 - Time before there was consciousness
 - Each Fire of creation represents an era of time (Jim Dumont)

Concept of space

- VOID – No life; hard for humans to conceptualize
 - Infinite, forever (gaa-ge-gay’)
 - No centre, No circumference

Concept of Creator

- Gitchi Manito is translated to the Great Mystery, AKA Creator
 - There is no past or present tense
 - Spirit is a constant

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“It is in this way that the very beginning stage of creation is talked about. A sound that rumbled in the distance after which followed a long period of silence. Each time the sound rumbled closer and closer until finally, after an incredible time of silence, a blinding flash of light and a deafening sound of thunder surged forth. *We are given to understand that there must have*



been **someone** listening in the darkness to that sound; seeing the first spark of creation, witnessing the explosion of outward creative activity.

It is said that a shaking and shimmering sound like the shaking of seeds in a gourd was heard everywhere in the darkness “without end”. What was this sound? we are given to ask. What was shimmering and shaking? What were the seeds? Were they the thoughts in the Creator’s mind?” (Jim Dumont)

Sounds - Thoughts:

The sounds that were heard, was *energy before there was energy*

- 1st Clap of thunder,
 - singular sound from far away / then still and silent for long time
- 2nd Same sound but sound closer,
 - 6 times happened, each time sound closer
- 7th time, deafening sound,
 - with a flash of light, like a storm and thunder is right over head.
- Then there was a soft rustling sound
 - Like sounds of a Shaker (she-she-gwun’)
 - Sounds spread out, came back to center, back out, and back to center (spreading the vibration out)

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“Then, another sound could be heard. It was different sound – a “feeling sound.” This sound was before the shimmering, shaking sound. It was before the rumbling sound that came from the distance. It was before all else. From the center of the one who had the First Thought, the rhythm of a heartbeat could be heard. It was the sound of the heart throb which must have been at the center of all that was to be.” (Jim Dumont)

2nd Feeling Sound

- As if came from the center of it all
- Felt by Gitchi Manito
- Came from within Gitchi Manito

The universe cares, it is made of the original energy.

The guiding principles are love, kindness & caring.

Creator cares for his creation, and all within it.

All creation respects & lives in harmony in the web of life.

WWNT pg 18

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“And so it was that even in the beginning, creation could not have taken place by Thought alone, but by the Heart as well. From the center of the darkness, many thoughts emerged from that first thought, moving out in great rhythmic circles into the vast reaches of the unknown.

Whenever the thoughts touched on the darkness, a star was formed, and it was in this way that the whole empty void was filled, giving birth to the star world. By that First Heartbeat and by that First Thought, the Universe was created. **The First Thought is the First Fire of Creation.** (Jim Dumont)

Thoughts:

- Projected his thoughts outwards from within.
- He sent his thoughts out to each direction,
 - in “rhythmic circles” (JD) each thought left an imprint.
- 1 thought produced other thoughts, and so on and so forth;
 - what we see and know as stars (ah-nung-ug’)
- Thoughts out and in and out and in in a rhythm, was the first heartbeat.
- Shaker (she-she-gwun’) sound,
 - thoughts coming into existence of the universe (Ish-pi-ming’)
- The knowledge of creator is never ending – infinite.
- The Milky Way (manidoo-miikana), said to be the closest to the thoughts of Gitchi Manito.

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“Because the thoughts went on forever in the darkness, “without anything for them to bounce back from,” the Creator knew that he needed to create a place to send his thoughts. In the **Second Fire** of Creation, he created light. He built a fire in the darkness to light up a place in the universe to create. The Sun, as the Creator’s Fire was lit. Around that fire he traced out a great circle and assigned the four directions. **The Creator’s First Fire is the Second Fire of Creation.** It is said that Creator heard a voice so beautiful like a song, he turned around and saw her where she was standing...and that became the center. The way it is described, is a pulse in the center. (Jim Dumont). {The Duality, needs to be two to create anything}.

The Sun

Fire/Spark, is symbolic throughout Anishinaabe culture.

- Grandfather Sun (Gee’-sis) – keep watch over Earth during day
 - Day (gee-zhi-gad-doon’)
- It is described that the sun is the pulse/heart (o-day’) in the center (nee-way-ee).
- Creation of the physical life in the universe (Ish-pi-ming’)
- Is mimicked for heart of humans
- Fire is a way of communicating with creator, why fire is highly respected and at every ceremony if possible.
 - Symbolic of starting sacred fire by flint and striker to get the spark (what creator used to create the sun, same spark in us)
 - Shkaabewis helper – Fire Keepers



The Circle – WWNT p 16

- Cycles & progression, cyclical patterns
- Unfold in most harmonious & effective manner
- Primary patten, by which all begins (being, change, grow toward fulfillment and eventually begins again)
- How the mind thinks: circular (wholesome/interdependence) vs linear (separateness/birth – death)
- Each recognizable unit, only meaning when in relationship to the whole

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The Four Sacred Directions:

Medicine wheel teachings, from Sweat Lodge Teachings

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“He thought to create another light. And, having done so, he created the Moon whom we know as Grandmother, Universal Woman, the Grand-Woman of the Sky World. In completing this, he created Sun and Moon, the Twinness of all of reality. Without this twinness, nothing else could have wholeness is composed of twinness. In all things, we see the twin. Sunrise and sunset, day and night, including the two sides of our being, so that even in human beings there is the twin. **The Unfolding of Twinness is the Third Fire of Creation.**” (Jim Dumont)

The Moon - Duality

- Grandmother Moon (Nee-ba-gee'-is), keep watch over Earth at night
 - Night (dee-bee-kad-doon')
 - Mother to the Earth
 - original instructions to watch over the women and have effects (water, growth, actions of animals, women)
 - Strong enough to move oceans
 - Moon tells us when to plant, have ceremonies, harvest, pick medicines and hold events throughout year.
 - This cycle is symbolized in ceremony by going in one direction (clockwise)

Duality:

- Taking first shape and form, becomes what life is.
- Blueprint for how creation can proceed
 - Sunrise / Sunset = new day
 - Male / Female = babies
- Harmony and Balance is the whole intention and what the universe patterns towards. (WWNT p 19)
 - Acceptance
 - Reciprocated kindness

- Equality
- Sharing
- Failure or opposite to this worldview / intention would (WWNT p 21)
 - Destroy vs build
 - Wastes vs conserve
 - Scars vs heal
 - Alienates vs includes
 - Consumes vs share

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“The Creator then, having created the Star World with his thoughts, having built the first fire of the universe – the Sun, and having created the Twin, Grandmother Moon, established the whole of the Universe. So, in the fourth stage of Creation, he caused the universe to move according to the forces of the four directions. **The First Movement is the Fourth Fire of Creation.** And so we know that at the fourth stage in the development of all things, in the unfolding of all life, is the beginning of movement that is measured by the principles of the four directions. When you have four, then you can have movement, which is complete in itself and moves from thence on its own volition.” (Jim Dumont)

Movement

- Movement and direction is naturally, always in the direction of life.
 - Cycle Sun & Moon in clockwise direction
- For movement to occur, creator needed to release (let go of) control.
- To set in motion for things to naturally unfold, always towards harmony and peace.
- Took each direction/level to work in harmony with one another to begin the movement of evolution of the universe, and to spiral into existence.
- A question was asked, Is it time for life to begin? Do we have a home for this life to come into? Can this life be supported?
 - SAME questions that parents ask today.

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“Then, gathering together the essence of all that he created, the Creator molded a shape, a form, which contained the inspiration and the motivation to be. This, what he made, possessed intention and had within its blueprint the two sides of the twinness that makes up life itself. It contained the four principles which are the cause of movement. By taking those things and shaping it into a form, he created a seed which contained within it the potential to be. **This First Seed is the Fifth Fire of Creation.** The Creator took his seed-thoughts and shaped them into kernels containing the essence of life, so that when planted in fertile ground, they would reflect back to him creations’ every possibility. “ (Jim Dumont)

Seeds

- Transformed his thoughts from within into physical seeds.
 - Seeds came from universe to earth in plant **form**
- Who is going to carry my seed/thoughts?
 - Birds (ba-nay'-she-ug'),
 - Song (na-ga-moon')
- Need a place to send seed/thoughts to.

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“Having completed this, he began to make a place to send the seeds of life, and so he created this Earth. Four times he tried, and the fourth time he completed this earth as we know it today. In completing the Earth, he caused the waters to flow in and around the earth, like veins and arteries carrying the force of life itself.” (Jim Dumont)

Earth

- Creation of our Solar System:
 - Took 4 tries to make Earth
 - covered with cloud
 - rock full of heat
 - one covered with ice
 - Mother Earth – Ah-ki'
- Earth Ah-ki'; is thought of as woman and was made before man; and comes before man in all things.
 - She is mother because she is mother to all living things; a sacred giver of life.
 - Made of water and air
 - Threatened due to sickness/pollution; which threatens us
 - Spark of Fire was put in the middle of the Earth/heart
- 9 planets were gifts, and symbols of the bundle for carrying life.
 - It takes 9 moons to carry life
 - It takes 2 parents to carry bundle of life
 - Mother needs help and support to carry life

Water (nibi)

- It is told that the creator made Earth from water and can be related to the water that woman carries life with.
- Why, in ceremony water is held up; to honour the water from the realm in which it came, its original pure source.
- Mother Earth's arteries and veins, all connected

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“He then sent all of the birds to carry the seeds of life and to spread them over the ground. When all was complete, he saw the beauty of the Earth that he created. In her, he saw absolute perfection, absolute wholeness, harmony and balance. All was complete within the First Woman who was the First Earth. And so, he took from his first fire, the Sun, and placed a hart at the very center of that first woman, and by so doing, made her the first Mother, whom we call our Mother the Earth. She was a “Mother with a Heart” who gave birth to all the children of creation. **The Sixth Fire of Creation, the Creation of Earth, was now complete.**” (Jim Dumont)

Birds

- Birds (ba-nay'-she-ug), have direct connection with seeds and this life.
 - Original instructions to wake up energy in the earth and seeds.
- Eagle (Miigzi) is the Chief/leader of the birds
 - Was beside Gitchi Manito when all life on Mother Earth was being created.
 - Is a mediator between creator and human beings
 - Carry the message to Gitchi Manito
 - Eagle Whistle is very sacred, all spirits turn toward the direction of sound, and wait to hear the message from the Eagle Spirit
 - Sounded 4 times before ceremony starts
 - Feather, needing to take care of as if it is a grandparent
 - Cozy bed, feed, like to visit, talk to it
 - Eagle was instructed to look for Eastern door way at first light, (waaseyaaban); to bring the peoples messages
 - Sunrise Ceremony (burning of tobacco 7 prayers & thanking the water), to show Gitchi Manido that the Anishinabe people are still practicing original instructions

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“Out of his love, the Creator made the Earth as the finest expression of his thoughts. She would reflect back his thoughts to him. Her form and shape would hold the Creator’s intention to bestow purpose and meaning onto the spirit of life. Out of his desire to create, he created a beautiful place and made this thoughts real. The creation of the Earth was the ultimate act of our Grandfather-Creator’s kindness.” (Jim Dumont)

Life on Earth

- 1st water is life – oldest, Amphibian's & reptiles
- 2nd 4 legged
- 3rd flyers
- 4th Man

- Natural Law (inaakogigewin) – a natural order to live in harmony & respect each other's territory and live lives in their unique ways of being. To this day, animals respect one another in this harmony, and teaches us this worldview of extended family.

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In the Seventh Fire of Creation, he desired to create “one in his own image”. And so, he took four parts of the earth and shaped those for parts together into a physical being. Then taking his own thoughts, “as many as the stars in the universe,” placed them within that first being. By this act, he gave the First Human Being the ability and capacity to hold the very thoughts of the Creator. He caused to beat within the breast of this first being, the same heartthrob and rhythm that was there in the beginning at the center of the universe. And, so it is said that he caused to beat in the heart of Anishinabe, the very rhythm, the very heartbeat of the Creator himself. With his breath, the Creator blew into Anishinabe he spirit of life. And so, being made of this earth, a physical vessel vested with mind, heart, and spirit, Anishinabe, the first human being, was lowered to the earth. **The creation of the First Human Being is the Seventh Fire of Creation.”** (Jim Dumont)

Anishinaabe – Human

- Gitchi Manito wanted to create a way for spirit to live in this Earth realm, so he created a vessel for the spirit to live in during their stay.
 - **We are on a Spirit Journey in a Human Body**
 - 50% Human – from Earth
 - 50% Spirit – from Spirit
- Made from handful of soil, he did this from each direction.
 - Filled his thoughts
 - The thoughts and knowledge of creator is never ending – infinite.
 - We are filled with these same thoughts
 - Anishinaabe intelligence – (gikendaasowin)
- Heart (o`day), spark of the sun, Creator caused heart beat to be in sync with his heart beat (as in the universe)
 - Vessel in center of bundle, is drum (deweigan), heart in side it and can bring the human heart back in beat with creator and the universe.
 - The universe is charged with the energy of LOVE. It is the center of everything that was created, and that energy flows through everything.
 - **How we learn, is by the way of the heart! Gitchi Manito teaches us of the kind spirit and love of life.**
- Breathed into through meegis shell
 - Breath is by means which the Spirit moves
 - Reason we come to earth, is to experience life directly.
- Jim Dumont`s 4 levels of being, each level make up being



1. Land – earth
 2. Mind – thoughts
 3. Heart – fire
 4. Breath – meegis shell
 5. Spirit Center/soul
- 4 colours of man
 - Each with own teachings
 - Each own place on earth
 - Each with own way of relating to creator
 - 4 fundamental distinct way so seeing

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“As the Creator lowered him, Anishinabe knew that he was created from the very substance of the Earth. He knew that he possessed the very thoughts, heartbeat and spirit of the Creator himself. And, although he knew that he was created in the sky realm, and was both Earth and Sky, he could see that he belonged especially to the Earth. He sensed a great desire to be part of this creation. The would be his home, and he wanted to share as the other beings were and be part of the great harmony and balance in the Creation to which he was descending. Approaching the Earth, he saw how everyone, every life-form of this creation was kind and true to the ways that the creator had given them. He was the strength and the beauty of all the was created on this earth. So, as he approached, he pointed his toes so that somehow, if at all possible when he touched down on this earth, he wouldn’t stamp out or crush even the smallest life-form – the smallest blade of grass, the tiniest flower, or smallest living creature that crawled upon the earth. Rather, he would come down in and amidst the creation and be a living and loving, harmonious part of all of life.

This is how the Original Human Being touched down upon the earth. This is how the First Human Being, Anishinabe, the Red Colour of humankind, met his Mother and Earth for the first time. This is how Anishinabe has always known his Mother and has always felt the relationship with the family of this creation – it is in his blood-memory, his spirit-memory. Being vested with spirit, the human being comes from the Creator who has given him his purpose and intention to be. Through him flows the life force that comes directly from the Creator himself. But, within him also is a desire to be a part of this Earth and to give the finest and highest expression to his being in this world. He has within him the desire to reflect back to the Creator, the Creator’s very intention when he made the First Anishinabe “in his own image.” (Jim Dumont)

Waynaboozhoo

- The knowledge of creator is never ending – infinite.
- Humans are said to be made in his image:
 - Breath from him through he meegis shell

Bundle 4 Our Birth Story – The Ojibway Creation Story – 7 fires of Creation

- Our minds and thoughts are that of Gitchi Manito – infinite
- The beat of our heart (o'day') and the beat of the universe (Ish-pi-ming') is the same
 - Strawberries (o'day--min-nug') are like the human heart in shape, structure and colour (runner root system like veins).
- Lowering
 - Toes pointed down, concerned that he will hurt creation/life
 - Babies today, they do the same
- Anishinaabe teaches us:
 - Mindfulness
 - Compassion
 - Empathy
 - Humbleness
 - Respect
- Naming

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“In these seven stages of Creation, we see how all things began for Anishinabe, the Red Colour of Human Life. From the First Thought to the Final Image, we now understand how the Creation unfolded.” (Jim Dumont)

Anishinabe / Indigenous Person`s Right

To follow way of life and respect their original instructions that have been given to them.

Jim Dumont

We are given a road, a `moccasin trail`,

When we stop using it, it grows in.

People don`t know where the trail is anymore.

They are searching but don`t see it anymore.

We need to take care of it.

We need to make tracks on the road physically,

We need to have our children with us!

We need to have our elders with us!

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A review

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The End

