

Reflections on the Ojibway Creation Story

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The Creation Story of the Anishinabe is told as the “Seven Fires of Creation.” Each Fire Represents and 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.

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.

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.

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?

Then, another sound could be heard. It was a 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.

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.

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.

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.**

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.

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.

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. 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 heart 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.**

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.

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.**

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 that 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."

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.

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[These "Reflections on the Anishinabe Creation Story" are based on the Teachings of the Seven Fires of Creation of the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge, given through Edward Benton-Banai, and specifically as given through the poetic version in the Sound Voice (1978). These "Reflections" have meaning and validity only within this context.]