

The Prophecy of the Seven Fires of the Anishinaabe

Then seven prophets appeared to the people. The First Prophet told the people that in the time of the First Fire they would leave their homes by the sea and follow the sign of the megis. They were to journey west into strange lands in search of a island in the shape of a turtle. This island will be linked to the purification of the earth. Such an island was to be found at the beginning and at the end of their journey. Along the way they would find a river connecting two large sweet water seas. This river would be narrow and deep as though a knife had cut through the land. They would stop seven times to create villages but they would know that their journey was complete when they found food growing on the water. If they did not leave, there would be much suffering and they would be destroyed. And they would be pursued and attacked by other nations along the way so they must be strong and ready to defend themselves.

The Second Prophet told them they could recognize the Second Fire because while they were camped by a sweet water sea they would lose their direction and that the dreams of a little boy would point the way back to the true path, the stepping stones to their future.

The Third Prophet said that in the Third Fire the Anishinabe would find the path to the lands prepared for them and they would continue their journey west to the place where food grows upon the water.

The Fourth Prophet was two who came as one. The first told them to expect a race of people who had light skin. The future of the Anishinabeg would be known by the face the light-skinned people would wear. If they come in brotherhood there would be a time of wonderful change. New knowledge would be joined with the old knowledge and the two peoples would join to make a mighty nation. Two other nations would join to make four and they would become the mightiest nation of all. If they brought only their knowledge and their good-will they would be like brothers.

The second being of the Fourth Prophet warned the light-skinned race might wear the face of death that would almost look the same as the face of brotherhood. "If they come carrying a weapon and if they seem to be suffering, beware. Behind this face is greed. You shall recognize the face of death if the rivers are poisoned and the fish are unfit to eat."

The Fifth Prophet said that in the time of the Fifth Fire there will be a struggle between the way of the mind of the light-skinned people and the natural path of spirit of the many nations of natural people.

"As this fire loses its heat there will come among the people those who promise great joy and salvation. If the people accept this promise and abandon the old ways, the struggle will continue for many generations. This promise is false and it will nearly destroy those who accept it."

The Sixth Prophet told them that in the time of Sixth Fire it would be clear that the promise accepted during the Fifth Fire was false.

"Those who were deceived by this promise will take their children away from the teachings of the elders. The elders will lose their purpose in life and many will become sick and die. Many people

will be out of balance and the cup of life will become the cup of grief."

The Seventh Prophet was younger than the others who had come and there was a glowing light from his eyes. He said that there would come a time when the waters had been so poisoned that the animals and plants that lived there would fall sick and begin to die. Much of the forests and prairies would be gone so the air would begin to lose the power of life. The way of the mind brought to the red, black, and yellow nation by the white nation would bring danger to the whole earth. In this time there will be a new people who will emerge from the clouds of illusion. They will retrace their steps to find the treasures that had been left by the trail. The stories that had been lost will be returned to them. They will remember the Original Instructions and find strength in the way of the circle. Their search will take them to the elders and the new people will ask for guidance. But many of the elders will have walked the Path of the Souls to the Star Web. Many elders will have forgotten their wisdom and they will not be able to help. Some of the elders will point in the wrong direction and others will remain silent because of their fear. Some of the elders will be silent because no one has asked them for their wisdom.

If the New People will find trust in the way of all things, in the circle, they will no longer need the selfish voice of the ego and they can begin to trust their inner voice. Wisdom will be once again be found in dreams of the night and of the day. The sacred fire will once again be lit. The Light-skinned People will be given a choice between two paths. If they choose the right path the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth Fire and final fire of brotherhood and sisterhood. If they choose the wrong path, remaining on the path of the mind, then the destruction they brought with them will come back to destroy them. The people of the earth will experience much suffering and death.

The Prophecies are Fulfilled...but for the 7th

Along the Great Salt Water in the East, life was full and rich for the People, the Anishinabeg. After the Seven Prophets came to them, there were many large gatherings to discuss their predictions. Many people did not want to move away from their homes with their families and begin a long migration through strange lands. Some unselfishly supported those who believed in the power of the prophecies and were ready to follow because they thought it was in some way part of the Creator's Plan. One group supported the plans to follow the Megis into the unknown lands of the setting sun, but they pledged to stay and care for the eastern fire of the people. They were called the Wa-bun-u-keeg', the People of the Dawn. Five hundred years later they would be among the first to be caught in the death and suffering the Light-skinned people would bring. By the time of the Fourth Fire, their homes, families, and villages would be torn apart. They would be scattered, lose their roots, their power. Today these people are called the Abenaki. The U.S. government does not recognize their existence as a tribe. These are also my people. My great-great grandmother was born in Vermont in about 1841, married a white man and they moved to Wisconsin and then to Minnesota. They did not realize that they followed her relatives who had made the journey hundreds of years before. Many Ojibwe people live in Wisconsin and Minnesota today.

The people followed the Great River to the Setting Sun, the St. Lawrence River, looking for the island shaped like a turtle. Near present-day Montreal they found such an island and the Megis shell rose up out of the water to greet them. There they brought the Sacred Fire and did many ceremonies to cleanse themselves to be ready to receive their next instructions. After some time they continued to follow the Great River into a sweet water sea until they came to a roaring waterfall that spoke like thunder. They called it Ani-mi-kee'wabu, place of the thundering water. Once again the Sacred

Megis shell rose up out of the water and greeted them, and the Sacred Fire was brought here. Today the Light-skinned people call this place Niagara Falls.

Again the people moved on along another large sweet water sea until they came to a narrow river that was cut deep into the earth. It was the river the First Prophet had described. Many people were drowned trying to cross this river. When the people set up a village there, the Sacred Megis rose up out of the water to greet them. That river is today called the Detroit River.

At this time there came to be three groups among the Anishinabeg. Each group had a special task. One group, called the O-dah-wahg', were responsible for providing the people with their food and supplies. They were the hunters and traders. A second group, called the O-day'wah-to-mee, were the keepers of the Sacred Fire as the people moved along. The third group was the faith keepers of the nation, called the Ojib-way.

Today, the O-dah-wahg' are called the Ottawa, the O-day'wah-to-mee are called the Potawatomi, and the O-jib-way are called the Ojibwe or incorrectly, Chippewa. These were the nations of the Three Fires, powerful and united by a common purpose—following the Sacred Megis to an unknown destination. The nations of the Three Fires were asked to join war expeditions against the Light-skinned invaders in the East, but they remained focused on their mission and their destiny, whatever that was to be. They followed the sissagwad, the soft whisper of spirit, not knowing where it would lead them.

At the time of the Second Fire the people were encamped along the east shore of the third sweet water sea. There they searched for a way to cross the sea to continue their journey in search of the food that grows on water. Here they stayed for a long time establishing villages and planting gardens. In attending to basic survival needs, people began to neglect the sacred ways and soon forgot about their journey. Only a few of the elders still remembered the purpose of their migration. Then a little boy had a dream about a path of stones that would lead across the waters. They returned to the River that Cuts Like a Knife and retraced their steps. There they found a chain of islands that lead across the sweet water sea.

Moving the people by canoe they continued their western journey in search of the food that grows on water. On the largest island in the chain the Sacred Megis appeared to the people, rising out of the water.

This island became the center of the Anishinabeg nation, the Sacred Fire was brought here, the sacred water drum of the Midewiwin Society was heard again. Then the water drum was moved to the eastern shore of another sweet water sea and the Sacred Megis appeared again. Here the people had their first contact with the Light-skinned people, French explorers, voyageurs, and traders, called the Ah-dah-way' wih-nih-neeg. These people brought many gifts, metal knives, axes, kettles, and pots, woven cloth and coats, colored glass beads. These people came in brotherhood, and seemed to be friendly and respectful of the ways of the people. These people were treated as brothers, many of them married women of the Anishinabeg, and they were adopted into the nation. It was the beginning of the Fourth Fire. In the East, other Light-skinned people would come wearing the face of death. These people destroyed many villages of the People of the Dawn who had remained along the Great Salt Water. They destroyed the garden paradise the Anishinabeg had tended for thousands of years. These people seemed not to know how to be in balance and yet they believed that their way was the best and only way to live.

Groups of the Anishinabeg traveled along the north and south shores of the fourth sweet water sea and reaching a bay at the western end they found mah-no-men, wild rice, "the food that grows on water." The destination had been reached. Spirit Island in the bay was the sixth stopping place. Not very far away along the southern shore of the great sweet water sea they found an island shaped like a turtle, the final sign that their journey was complete. They placed tobacco on the shore as an offering to the Great Spirit who had led them to this holy place. They called the island Moh-ning'wun-ih-kawn-ing. This became the capital of a powerful Anishinabeg nation and the Great Sweet Water Sea was called Gii-dzhii Ojibwe-gah-meeng, the Great Sea of the Ojibwe (called Gitchi gumi in Longfellow's poem, Hiawatha). The Sacred Megis rose up out of the waters and told them that they had reached their destination and that now they must continue to follow the path of the spirit so they could light the path in the time of the Seventh Fire. Here they brought the Sacred Fire and the sacred water drum sounded for many years. The prophecies of the First, Second, and Third Prophets had been realized, and the prophecy of the Fourth Prophet continued to unfold.

Light-skinned men in long black robes, Muk-a-day-ih-kahn-ah-yayg, came clutching a black book to their chest and carrying something that seemed to honor the four directions. These men were impressed with the generosity, honor, and respect shown by the Anishinabeg. Still, they wanted the Anishinabeg to change their ways and accept the teachings of a man from far away. They warned that not following this book they would not be able to walk the Path of Souls to the Star Web to join their relatives. This was very frightening to many of the people and they left their traditional ways to follow the Black Coats and their black book. A wedge was driven between the people of the Midewiwin Society and the people following the new teaching. The conflict between the people of the black book and the people of the Sacred Megis split the community into factions that broke the circle of the nation. People scattered to the smaller lakes of Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Thus began the time of the Fifth Fire. The wave of light-skinned people forced all native people into poverty on tiny reservations supported by erratic deliveries of promised supplies and equipment. These were usually rotten, poor quality, or insufficient to care for the needs of the people. To educate the children in the new ways the light-skinned people took children away from their parents, put them in boarding schools far away from their homes and families, cut their hair, took away their medicine bundles, forbade the use of their native language. So the hoop of the nation was broken, taking the young people away from the medicines, the stories, the teachings, the spirit ways, the strength that had brought a spirit-filled people on a journey for more than six hundred years. The children were taught to walk the way of the light-skinned people who thought that theirs was the superior way, the way of "progress."

This was the time of the Sixth Fire. Children were turned against their parents and their grandparents. The teachings of the elders could not be heard and the elders grew sick. They had lost their place in the circle. The circle was broken. The weapons used by the light-skinned were untrue stories, racism, guns and bayonets, cannon and disease. Today the weapons are courts, attorneys, textbooks and schools that teach propaganda as history, movies and television that portray the way of Native People in a shallow way, and sometimes guns and bayonets.

Fulfilling the Seventh Fire Prophecy

Now is the time of the Seventh Fire. By the light of the Seventh Fire come the Ogichidaag', those who would use their power and strength with wisdom and gentleness to bring harmony and balance. They will soar with *wabishkie ginu'*, the White Eagle, bringing the wisdom of Spirit with the first

light of day. They will learn of their power and strength like the *gidzhii makwa'* the Great Bear who holds ice and snow in the North so the Earth would not be covered with water. And they will open their mind and heart like *makinaak'* the turtle who offered his back upon which to build a new earth.

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