

The Ho-Chunk Creation Story

In the beginning Earthmaker was sitting in space. When he came to consciousness, nothing was there anywhere. He began to think of what he should do, and finally he began to cry, and tears flowed from his eyes and fell below him. After a while he looked below him and saw something bright. The bright object below him represented his tears. As they fell, they formed the present waters. When the tears flowed, they became the seas as they are now. Earthmaker began to think again. He thought, "It is thus: If I wish anything it will become as I wish, just as my tears have become seas." Thus, he thought. So, he wished for light, and it became light. Then he thought: "It is as I thought, the things that I have wished for have come into existence as I desired." Then again, he thought and wished for the earth, and the earth came into existence. Earthmaker looked at the earth and he liked it; but it was not quiet. It moved about as do the waters of the seas. Then he made the trees and he liked them, but they did not make the earth quiet. Then he made some grass, but it likewise did not cause the earth to become quiet. Then he made rocks and stones but still the earth was not quiet. It was however almost quiet. Then he made the four directions and the four winds. At the four corners of the earth, he placed them as great and powerful people, to act as island weights. Yet still the earth was not quiet. Then he made four large beings and threw them down towards the earth, and they pierced through the earth with their heads eastward. They were snakes. Then the earth became very still and quiet. Then he looked at the earth and he liked it.

Then again, he thought of how it was that things came into being just as he desired. Then for the first time he began to talk, and he said, "As things are just as I wish them, I shall make a being in my own likeness." So, he took a piece of clay and made it like himself. Then he talked to what he had created but it did not answer. He looked at it and saw that it had no mind or thought. So, he made a mind for it. Again, he talked to it, but it did not answer. So, he looked at it again and saw that it had no tongue. Then he made it a tongue. Then he spoke to it but still it did not answer. He looked at it and saw that it had no soul. So, he made it a soul. Then he talked to it again and it very nearly said something, but it could not make itself intelligible. So Earthmaker breathed into its mouth and then talked to it, and it answered.

The Judeo-Christian Creation Story (Genesis)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So, God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights-the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night-and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So, God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I

have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

The Haudenosaunee Creation Story

Keller George, Wolf Clan Member of the Nation's Council, relates the following story his maternal great-grandmother told to him about the birth of the Evil Spirit and the Good Sprit.

Long, long ago, the earth was deep beneath the water. There was a great darkness because no sun or moon or stars shone. The only creatures living in this dark world were water animals such as the beaver, muskrat, duck, and loon. Far above the water-covered earth was the Land of the Happy Spirits, where the Great Spirit dwelled. In the center of this upper realm was a giant apple tree with roots that sank deep into the ground. One day the Great Spirit pulled the tree up from its roots creating a pit in the ground. The Great Spirit called to his daughter, who lived in the Upper World. He commanded her to look into the pit. The woman did as she was told and peered through the hole. In the distance, she saw the Lower World covered by water and clouds. The Great Spirit spoke to his daughter, telling her to go into the world of darkness. He then tenderly picked her up and dropped her into the hole. The woman, who would be called Sky Woman by those creatures watching her fall, began to slowly float downward. As Sky Woman continued her descent, the water animals looked up. Far above them they saw a great light that was Sky Woman. The animals were initially afraid because of the light emanating from her. In their fear, they dove deep beneath the water. The animals eventually conquered their fear and came back up to the surface. Now they were concerned about the woman, and what would happen to her when she reached the water. The beaver told the others that they must find a dry place for her to rest upon. The beaver plunged deep beneath the water in search of earth. He was unsuccessful. After a time, his dead body surfaced to the top of the water. The loon was the next creature to try to find some earth. He, too, was unsuccessful. Many others tried, but each animal failed. At last, the muskrat said he would try. When his dead body floated to the top, his little claws were clenched tight. The others opened his claws and found a little bit of earth. The water animals summoned a great turtle and patted the earth upon its back. At once the turtle grew and grew, as did the amount of earth. This earth became North America, a great island.

During all this time, Sky Woman continued her gentle fall. The leader of the swans grew concerned as Sky Woman's approach grew imminent. He gathered a flock of swans that flew upward and allowed Sky Woman to rest upon their back. With great care, they placed her upon the newly formed earth. Soon after her arrival, Sky Woman gave birth to twins. The first born became known as the Good Spirit. The other twin caused his mother so much pain that she died during his birth. He was to be known as the Evil Spirit. The Good Spirit took his mother's head and hung it in the sky, and it became the sun. The Good Spirit also fashioned the stars and moon from his mother's body. He buried the remaining parts of Sky Woman under the earth. Thus, living things may always find nourishment from the soil for it springs from Mother Earth. While the Good Spirit provided light, the Evil Spirit created the darkness. The Good Spirit created many things, but each time his brother would attempt to undo his good work.

The Good Spirit made the tall and beautiful trees, including the pines and hemlock. The Evil Spirit, to be contrary, stunted some trees or put gnarls and knots in their trunks. Other trees he covered in thorns or poisoned their fruit. The Good Spirit made bear and deer. The Evil Spirit made poisonous animals such as lizards and serpents to destroy the animals created by his brother. When the Good Spirit made springs and streams of pure crystal water, the Evil Spirit poisoned some and placed snakes in others. The Good Spirit made beautiful rivers. The Evil Spirit pushed rocks and dirt into the rivers creating swift and dangerous currents.

Everything the Good Spirit made his wicked brother attempted to destroy. After the Good Spirit completed the earth, he created man out of red clay. Placing the man upon the earth, the Good Spirit instructed the man about how he should live. The Evil Spirit made a monkey from sea foam. Upon completion of his work, the Good Spirit bestowed a protecting spirit upon all his creations. This done, he called his brother and told him he must cease making trouble. The Evil Spirit emphatically refused. The Good Spirit became enraged at his brother's wickedness. He challenged his evil twin to combat. The winner would become the ruler of the world. For their weapons they used the thorns of the giant apple tree. The battle raged for many days. The Good Spirit triumphed, overcoming his evil brother. The Good Spirit took his place as ruler of the earth and banished his brother to a dark cave under the ground. In this cave the Evil Spirit was to remain. The Evil Spirit, however, has wicked servants who do his bidding and roam upon the earth. The wicked spirits are able to take any form and cause men to do evil things. This is the reason that everyone has both a good heart and a bad heart. Regardless of how good a man is, he still possesses some evil. The reverse also is true. For however evil a man may be, he still has some good qualities. No man is perfect. The Good Spirit continues to create and protect mankind. It is the Good Spirit who controls the spirits of good men upon their death. His wicked brother takes possession of the souls of those who are evil like himself. And so, it remains.