
The Prophecy of the Seven Fires

This universal knowledge has been part of the oral traditions as handed down by Elders such as Grandfather William Commanda who holds the purple and white Seven Fires Wampum Belt which dates back to before the arrival of Columbus. Grandfather Commanda is an Algonquin Elder from Kitigan Zibi, [Maniwaki] Quebec. In addition, a written version of the prophecy was included in *The Mishomis Book* by Edward Benton Bakai, Midewiwin Grand Chief.

The accounts of our history that have been handed down to us by our Elders tell us that many years ago, seven primary prophets came to the Anishnabe. They came at a time when the people were living a full and peaceful life on the northeastern coast of North America. These prophets left the people with seven predictions of what the future would bring. Each of these prophecies was called a Fire and each Fire referred to a particular era of time that would come in the future. Thus, the teachings of the seven prophets are now called "The Seven Fires".

The First Fire

The first prophet said to the people, "In the time of the First Fire, the Anishnabe nation will rise up and follow the Sacred Teachings. They will serve as a rallying point for the people and its traditional ways will be the source of much strength. The Sacred Elders will lead the way to the chosen ground of the Anishnabe. You are to look for a turtle-shaped island that is linked to the purification of the Earth. You will find such an island at the beginning and end of your journey. There will be seven stopping places along the way. You will know that the chosen ground has been reached when you come to a land where food grows on water. If you do not move, you will be destroyed."

The Second Fire

The Second Prophet told the people, "You will know the Second Fire because at this time, the nation will be camped by a large body of water. In this time, the direction of the Sacred Teachings will be lost. The traditional

ways will diminish in strength. A boy will be born to point the way back to the traditional ways. He will show the direction to the stepping stone to the future of the Anishnabe people."

The Third Fire

The Third Prophet said to the people, "In the Third Fire, the Anishnabe will find the path to their chosen ground, a land in the West to which they move their families. This will be the land where food grows on water." Elders have determined that this food was wild rice.

The Fourth Fire

The Fourth Fire was originally given to the people by two prophets. They came as one. They told of the coming of the light-skinned race.

One of the prophets said, "You will know the future of our people by what the light-skinned race wears. If they come wearing the face of brotherhood, then there will come a time of wonderful change for generations to come. They will bring new knowledge and articles that can be joined with the knowledge of this country. **In this way, two nations will join to make a mighty nation. This new nation will be joined by two more so that the four will form the mightiest nation of all.** You will know the face of the brotherhood if the Light-Skinned Race comes carrying no weapons, if they come only bearing knowledge and a handshake."

The other prophet said, "Beware if the light-skinned race comes wearing the face of death. You must be careful because the face of brotherhood and the face of death look very much alike. If they come carrying a weapon, ... beware! If they come in suffering, -- they could fool you. Their hearts could be filled with greed for the riches of this land. If they are indeed your brothers, let them prove it. Do not accept them in total trust. You shall know that the face they wear is the one of death if the rivers run with poison and fish become unfit to eat. You shall know them by these many things."

The Fifth Fire

The fifth prophet said, "In the time of the Fifth Fire, there will come a time of great struggle that will grip the lives of all Anishnabe people. At the waning of this Fire, there will come among the people one who holds a great promise of great joy and salvation. If the people accept this promise of a new way and abandon the old teachings, the struggle of the Fifth Fire will be with the people for many generations. The promise that comes will be a false promise. All those who accept this promise will cause the near destruction of the people."

When the era of the Fifth Fire came to pass, a great struggle did indeed grip the lives of all Anishnabe people. The light-skinned race launched a military attack on Anishnabe people throughout the country, which was aimed at taking away their land and their independence as a free and sovereign people. It is now felt that the false promise that came at the end of the Fifth Fire was the materials and riches embodied in the way of life of the light-skinned race. Those who abandoned the ancient ways and accepted this new promise, were a big factor in causing the near destruction of the Anishnabe people of this land.

The Sixth Fire

The prophet of the Sixth Fire said, "In the time of the Sixth Fire, it will evident that the promise of the Fifth Fire came in a false way. Those deceived by this promise will take their children away from the teachings of the Elders. Grandsons and granddaughters will turn against the Elders. In this way, the Elders will lose their reason for living -- they will lose their purpose in life. At this time a new sickness will come among the people. The balance of many people will be disturbed. The cup of life will almost be spilled. The cup of life will almost become the cup of grief."

At the time of these predictions, many people scoffed at the prophets. They then had medicines to keep away sickness. They were then healthy and happy as a people. These were the people who chose to stay behind on the great migration of the Anishnabe. These people were the first to have contact with the light-skinned race. They would suffer the most.

When the Sixth Fire came to be, the words of the prophet rang true as children were taken away from the teachings of the Elders. The boarding school era of 'civilizing' Anishnabe children had begun. The Anishnabe language and religion were taken from the children. The people started dying at an early age -- they lost their will to live and their purpose in living.

In the confusing times of the Sixth Fire, it is said that a group of visionaries came among the Anishnabe. They gathered all the Elders of the Sacred Teachings and told them that our traditional ways were in danger of being destroyed. The Elders gathered all the sacred bundles and the scrolls that recorded the ceremonies and placed them in a hollowed-out log from the ironwood tree. Men were lowered over a cliff by long ropes. They dug a hole in the cliff and buried the log where no one could find it. It was in this way that the teachings of the Elders were hidden out of sight, but not out of memory. It was said that when the time came that the Anishnabe people could practice their religion without fear, that a little boy would dream where the ironwood log full of sacred bundles and scrolls was buried. He would lead his people to the place.

The Seventh Fire

This seventh prophet who came to the people long ago was said to be different from the other prophets. He was young and had a strange light in his eyes. He said, "In the time of the Seventh Fire, a new people will emerge. They will retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail. Their steps will take them to the Elders who they will ask to guide them on their journey. But many of the Elders will have fallen asleep. They will awaken to this new time with nothing to offer. Some of the Elders will be silent out of fear. Some of the Elders will be silent because no-one will ask anything of them. The new people will have to be careful in how they approach the Elders. The task of the new people will not be easy."

The seventh prophet continued, "If the new people remain strong in their quest, then there will be a rebirth of the Anishnabe Nation and a rekindling of old flames. The Sacred Fire will again be lit."

"It is at this time that the light-skinned race will be given a choice between two roads. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and final Fire - an Eternal Fire of Peace, Love, and Brotherhood.

But if the light-skinned race makes the wrong choice of roads, then the destruction which they brought with them in coming to this country will come back to them and cause them much suffering and death to all the Earth's people."

Traditional people from all Nations have interpreted the 'two roads' as technology and spirituality. The head-long rush for technological development has left the Earth seared and in danger of destruction. It is time for the Anishnabe to share our traditional ways of living in harmony with Mother Earth with all the other races of the world. We must help them to choose the right road for the good of us all.

