

The Mi'kmaq Creation Story (as told by Stephen Augustine)

As a reminder, this story is an opportunity to explore sacred and important teachings. Teachers and learners will need to give this the utmost consideration as they engage in this learning experience.

The Mi'kmaq Creation Story describes how life began for all things. This process occurred in seven stages or levels of creation and is described as follows:

Level 1

The sky represents the Giver of Life, Gisoolg, who creates everything. Creation is a mystery that contains everything and is within everything. It is regarded with awe and reflected in all aspects of life.

Level 2

The Sun creates life and gives us our Shadows. The shadows reflect the identities, characteristics and spirits of ancestors. The Shadows are the joining of earth, matter, and the blood of human life. The Sun connects the spirit world to the physical world and is represented by the centre direction.

Level 3

The third level of creation, down below us, is our Mother Earth, on whom we walk, and who bears the spirits of our ancestors. The interconnective relationship between Mother Earth and the whole of creation is evident in the Mi'kmaw language. The Mi'kmaw words for the people, and for the Earth, and for mother, and the drum, all come from that term which refers to "the surface on which we stand, and which we share with other surface dwellers."

And so when we talk about the drum, we are talking about our Mother the Earth. When we hear that drumbeat, we are hearing the heartbeat of our Mother the Earth. And so it is understood that when we drum we are acknowledging that we are children of the Earth and that we are sending a message back to our own mother, saying, "We hear you, we understand, and we recognize your heartbeat in the same way that a child after it is born recognizes the heartbeat of its own mother."

Level 4

The first man, Glooscap, is created from a bolt of lightning. The bolt hits the Earth and his body is created on the Earth's surface. He is lying with his head in the direction of the rising sun and his feet are facing the setting sun. His arms are outstretched to the north and south. When the lightning meets with the elements of the Earth that make up Glooscap's body, a life force is created. When lightning hits a second time, Glooscap develops fingers and toes, and seven sacred parts to his head (two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and a mouth) appear. At the third bolt of lightning, Glooscap is freed from the surface of the Earth to walk and move about. Glooscap gives thanks to Mother Earth and Grandfather Sun for his creation, and pays his respects to the South, the West, the North and the East directions. Once returning to the east where he was created, Glooscap is visited by an eagle that tells him he will soon be joined by his family to help him understand his place in this world. The eagle drops a feather, which Glooscap catches. This feather gives him strength and serves as a symbol of connection between his people and the Giver of Life, Grandfather Sun and Mother Earth.

Level 5

Glooscap meets his Grandmother, who is born from a rock. She teaches him to respect her wisdom and knowledge about the stars, the wind, the seasons and the tides, the characteristics and the behaviour of the plants and animals, and how to make food, clothing and shelter. For their *sustenance*, Glooscap takes the life of a marten, asking *permission* of the animal first, and giving thanks to the Giver of Life, Grandfather Sun and Mother Earth afterwards. Then, using the seven sparks from the bolts of lightning that created Glooscap, and seven pieces of dry wood, cousin Whirlwind is invited to create the Great Spirit Fire. Grandmother and Glooscap then feast to celebrate Grandmother's arrival into the world.

Level 6

Glooscap meets a young man who says he is Glooscap's nephew, a creation of Whirlwind, who passed through the ocean in the direction of the rising sun, causing foam to form and blow ashore. This foam has rolled in sand and picked up rocks and wood and feathers, eventually resting on sweet grass. With the help of the Giver of Life, Grandfather Sun and Mother Earth, the nephew was created. The nephew offers vision to the future and comes as a gift of the ancestors. Nephew is also a responsibility for Glooscap to guide, since the young turn to the old for direction in life. And just as Glooscap took the life of the marten for survival, the nephew calls upon the fish to give up their lives. Glooscap gives thanks, apologizing for taking the shadows of the fish and for taking elements of Mother Earth for their own survival. Again they feast, and continue to learn from Grandmother.

Level 7

Glooscap's mother appears, coming first as a leaf on a tree that falls to the ground and collects dew. The Giver of Life, Grandfather Sun and Mother Earth have made Glooscap's mother from this dew to bring gifts to her children. These gifts include the colours of the world, understanding and love, so that her children will know how to share and care for one another. Glooscap has his nephew gather food for a feast to celebrate the creation of Glooscap's mother. Glooscap provides leadership, respecting the teachings of the elders, the vision and strength of the young people, the gifts of the ancestors, and the teachings on how to rely on each other and to respect and care for one another. In this way, they live a good life.
