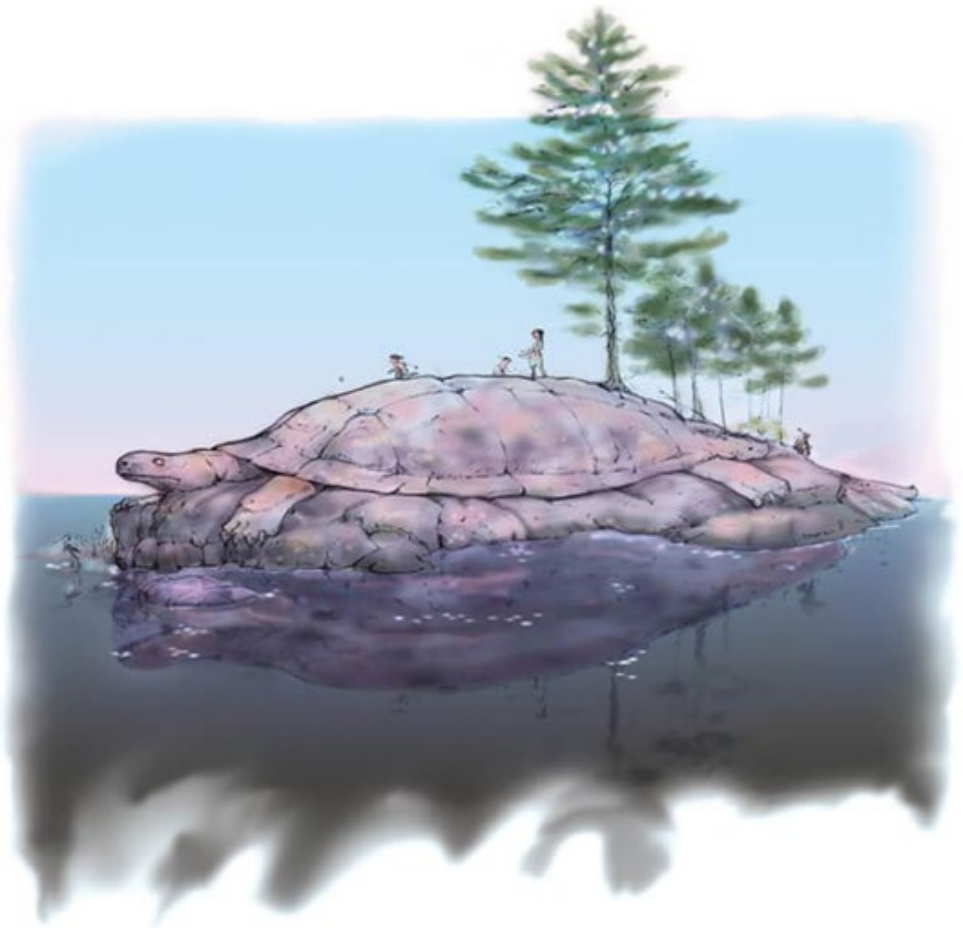
The Haudenosaunee Creation Story

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The Haudenosaunee have always recognized that people are complex, possessing both good and bad qualities. The Creation story serves as a reminder: no human is flawless– the Great Spirit alone is perfect.

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

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 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 of 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.

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