The World on the Turtles Back

**Iroquois Story of Creation**

**Woman Who Fell From The Sky**

In the beginning, in the Sky World, a pregnant wife asked her husband to fetch the delicacies she craved. But she wanted the bark of a root of the Great Tree in the middle of the Sky World, which none were permitted to touch. Finally, however, he gave in, and scraped away soil to bare the root of the Tree.

Underneath was a hole, and as the woman peered down into it, she fell through. The birds helped transport her as she fell, and the great Sea Turtle received her on his back.

Here, on the Sea Turtle's back, she planted bits of the roots and plants she had brought from the Sky World. And she walked across the turtle's back, planting, praying and creating the Earth that we know as Turtle Island.

The woman who had fallen from the sky then had a daughter, who became impregnated by the West Wind. While in the womb, the daughter's unborn twins began to quarrel about how they should emerge, the left-handed twin refusing to be born in the usual way. Instead, he forced himself out of his mother's left armpit, killing her as a result.

The newborn twins then buried their mother, who became Corn Mother, source of corn, beans and squash, the Three Sisters of the Iroquois. From her heart grew sacred tobacco, used to send messages and thanks to the Sky World.

The two brothers continued to compete with each other as they created the animals and plants, and in the process, represented different ways of living. Right-Handed Twin created the beautiful hills, lakes, blossoms, gentle creatures; Left-Handed Twin, the jagged cliffs and whirlpools, thorns and predators.

Right-Handed Twin was always truthful, reasonable, goodhearted, and "straight-arrow"; Left-Handed Twin lied, fought, rebelled and made "crooked" choices.

Because Right-Handed Twin created human beings, he is known as "Our Creator," and "The Master of Life."

But Left-Handed Twin helped, and invented rituals of sorcery and healing. The world they built included both cooperation and competition, lovingkindness and aggression.

After they finished their creations, the continued to compete in other ways - by gambling, by playing lacross, then fighting with clubs.

One day, grasping a deer antler, Right-handed Twin finally prevailed, and killed his brother, throwing the body of Left-Handed Twin over the edge of the earth.
As a result, Right-Handed Twin rules day and the Sky-World and Left-Handed Twin prevails over night and the lower world.

Grandmother Skywoman was furious that Right-Handed Twin murdered his brother, and accused him of wrongdoing.

Angry, and believing that grandmother had always favored the errant Left-Handed Twin, he cut off her head and threw it up toward the sky, where it became the Moon.

Then he threw her body into the ocean, where it became all the fish of the sea.

The Iroquois believe that both Left-Handed Twin and Right-Handed Twin are necessary for the world to be in balance.

This tension and struggle for balance between the two brothers and principles of life is incorporated into Iroquois festivals and cycles of life.
The Tohono O'odham Creation Story

In the Tonoho O'odham creation story, the reproductive powers of the universe give birth to the Papaguieria and the world thanks to I'itoi, the god who lives in Waw kiwalik, or Baboquivari Peak. This version is a close adaptation of one Bernard L. Fontana recorded in his book Of Earth and Little Rain.

Long ago, they say, when the earth was not yet finished, darkness lay upon the water and they rubbed each other. The sound they made was like the sound at the edge of a pond.

There, on the water, in the darkness, in the noise, and in a very strong wind, a child was born. One day he got up and found something stuck to him. It was algae. So he took some of the algae and from it made the termites. The termites gathered a lot of algae and First Born tried to decide how to make a seat so the wind could not blow it anywhere. This is the song he sang:

Earth Medicine Man finished the earth.
Come near and see it and do something to it.
He made it round.
Come near and see it and do something to it.

In this way, First Born finished the earth. Then he made all animal life and plant life.

There was neither sun nor moon then, and it was always dark. The living things didn't like the darkness, so they got together and told First Born to make something so that the earth would have light. Then the people would be able to see each other and live contentedly with each other.

So First Born said, "All right. You name what will come up in the sky to give you light."

They discussed it thoroughly and finally agreed that it would be named "sun".

Next First Born made the moon and stars, and the paths that they always follow. He said, "There will be plenty of prickly pears and the people will always be happy."

That's the way First Born prepared the earth for us. Then he went away.

Then the sky came down and met the earth, and the first one to come forth was I'itoi, our Elder Brother.

The sky met the earth again, and Coyote came forth.
The sky met the earth again, and Buzzard came forth.

Elder Brother, Earth Magician, and Coyote began their work of creation, each creating things different from the other. Elder Brother created people out of clay and gave then the "crimson evening," which is regarded by the Tohono O'odham as one of the most beautiful sights in the region. The sunset light is reflected on the mountains with a peculiar radiance.

Elder Brother told the Tohono O'odham to remain where they were in that land which is the center of all things.

And there the desert people have always lived. They are living there this very day. And from his home among the towering cliffs and crags of Baboquivari, the lonely, cloud-veiled peak, their Elder Brother, I'itoi, spirit of goodness, who must dwell in the center of all things, watches over them.

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