

Smoke Signals Radio Archive Episode 1999-04-17
Segment 1
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Dan Smoke tells listeners a creation story about Turtle Island. After, Dan teaches listeners about the importance of springtime and some of the celebrations that occur in order to give thanks to the Creator for the season of renewal and growth.

Host(s): Dan Smoke

DAN SMOKE: “[Inaudible] back of a turtle,” the turtle said to the Creator. When Sky Woman was falling from the sky and she was plummeting to Earth, and the whole world was water, was a water world, and she was plummeting to a watery grave. The creatures, the life support systems of the world came together in a council to decide how they were going to save the Sky Woman, and it was the turtle who volunteered to put the world on the back of the turtle. He said that “You can put the world on my back, and I will help to preserve the life support systems of the world, and she will be able to land softly on my back and from there, she can learn the harmony of creation, the balance of creation. And when she was falling, she had in her hands the medicines, she had...the first medicine she had was **tobacco**, which is the sacred **sema**, we call it in our language. And tobacco is the protocol of our people. Whenever we want to speak to the Creator, to the source of all life, whenever we want to acknowledge our gratitude for all the blessings we have received in our life, we offer this tobacco, and that tobacco is a sacred medicine.

And it's not like the tobacco that we see today in the stores that has all the chemicals which has been genetically altered over the course of time. This tobacco that was given to us was a leaf of the Creator, and that leaf of the Creator connected us to the Creator. And so, whenever we took that leaf and we spread some of it on our Mother the Earth, or we spread some of it on her lifeblood, the water, or when we spread it and offered it to a sacred fire, or in later years, when the **White Buffalo Calf Woman** came to the people, she brought the sacred White Buffalo Calf Bundle. That's the pipe to use to pray and to ask for help and to listen to all of creation, because we are praying with all life to the Creator. And we put the tobacco into the pipe, and we pray with it. So, this is our...tobacco is like our medium. It's what we use like a telephone to talk to the Creator, to pray to the Creator, to ask the Creator for help, to ask the Creator for help and forgiveness to help us to become humanized, to regain that human spirit.

On becoming human, to live in harmony, to live in peace with all of creation, with all of our relatives. And so this gathering of nations succeeded in allowing the Sky Woman to land on our Mother the Earth. And it was only after a number of the animals from the sea had died trying to get Earth from the bottom to bring and put on top of the back of the turtle, and in doing so they lost their lives in attempting to swim to the bottom and running out of breath. It wasn't until the muskrat, which was the only animal that was able to swim to the very depths and right down to the bottom, and grasp some of that Earth from the bottom of the waters and bring it to the surface. And in the process, the muskrat passed on, died, but in its paws was the Earth from the bottom. And that Earth was put on the back of the turtle, and that is the Earth which we have here today. And that's what our creation story says. And so, we...when we travel throughout Indian country, could be to the southwest, Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Arizona, to Oklahoma, to the west coast to the state of Washington or British Columbia, there's...a lot of the creation stories talk about Turtle Island. And so, this land we call Turtle Island and what the westerners call North America. And in our teachings, Turtle Island, we are put here to be caretakers of Turtle Island, to be stewards of the land, to live in harmony, to live in peace.

And over the years, we have nurtured a relationship where we have not forgotten the relationship that we have with Creation, with the land. We have not forgotten how to give thanks for the bounties, the fertility of our Mother the Earth. And we have not forgotten to give thanks to the Creator, that the Mother Earth is still providing through her fertility the bounties and the harvests that we are able to reap and to be grateful for so that we may eat, so that we may live. And so, this time, this springtime is a very special time because it's a time of that renewal of the cycles of life, that renewal that life is about to happen. The **Thunder People** have arrived. Last Sunday, I believe, was the arrival of the first thunders, I think. I was talking to some people from **Six Nations** who were at our house last night, and they were talking about hearing thunder a week prior to last week. So, when the Thunder People come, they announce their arrival, and they come with the purifying rain that purifies our Mother the Earth. And the Thunder People, it's their sacred duty, obligation, instruction to wake up and shake up creation and begin that renewal cycle, that new life. And as this new life, that new energy of that new life, it seems to come upon all of creation. And you can feel that in the air. You can feel that re-energizing in our bodies and our spirit because of this new life. So, this is a very sacred time. It's a very special time.

And it's one where we give thanks. We give thanks through many ceremonies. The **Maple Sap Ceremony**, which is the first one after the Midwinter. That Maple Sap, the first tree, the principal tree that is able to draw forth the medicine from creation, the first tree that gives up its medicine to the people, and we give thanks for that because that maple sap is a medicine to us. And then we will follow that with the **Seed Ceremony**, where we give thanks to the Creator that the seeds are still doing their job, their instructions in growing the new life, the plants, the vegetables, and that will be coming up in the next little while, usually in May. And the planting time begins. And all natural peoples will be beginning the planting phase, stage, of that new life. So, wanted to share that with you.

DS: And we want to now listen to a **Mi'kmaq** drum. The drum is known as the **Sons of Membertou**. They come from Cape Breton Island. And the name of the CD is **Wapana'kik, The People of the Dawn**. And this song that you're going to hear now is called "**Wejkwita'jik**," which means in the Mi'kmaq language, *our awakening. The People of the Dawn*, here on Smoke Signals.