

Who we are as Anishinabe: Mike Swan

***Aadizookaan* - Storytelling**

Traditional stories told by the Anishinaabeg are the basis for the oral legends. This is about the traditional Native American object. Known as the *aadizookaanan* ("traditional stories," singular *aadizookaan*), they are told by the *debaajimojig* ("story-tellers", singular *debaajimod*) only in winter in order to preserve their transformative powers.

Stories told in social situations were narrated during long winter nights, and these types of oral traditions served as entertainment for children and adults. The Ojibwa believed that since snakes and frogs were considered evil, they were not permitted to listen to stories, and so some types of oral traditions were related only when these animals were hibernating, that is, in the winter.

Good storytellers were esteemed for their excellence as dramatic entertainers, and their reputations travelled far. Some myths were long, often taking many hours to relate, and were often full of repetitious phrases that were well known to the listeners. It is not unusual for a story to come to an abrupt halt rather than a finished ending, occasionally with use of a phrase such as "That is as far as the story goes," or "That is the way they tell it."

Nanabozho stories

Nanabozho (also known by a variety of other names and spellings, including *Wenabozho*, *Menabozho*, and *Nanabush*) is a trickster figure and culture hero who features as the protagonist of a cycle of stories that serve as the Anishinaabe origin myth. In Anishinaabe mythology particularly among the Ojibwa, Nanabozho is a spirit and figures prominently in their storytelling including the story of the world's creation. In Anishinaabe mythology particularly among the Ojibwa, Nanabozho is a spirit and figures prominently in their storytelling including the story of the world's creation. In Mythology, and in the study of Folklore and Religion, a trickster is a God, Goddess, spirit, man woman or anthropomorphic. A culture hero is a Mythological Hero specific to some group (cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, etc). The word mythology (from the Greek, meaning "a story-telling a legendary lore"). The cycle, which varies somewhat from community to community, tells the story of Nanabozho's conception, birth, and his ensuing adventures, which involve interactions with spirit and animal beings, the creation of the Earth, and the establishment of the Midewiwin. Manitou is a term used to designate the spirits among many Algonquian groups.

The Role of Oral Tradition

Oral tradition is important in all societies, despite the reliance of some cultures on written records and accounts. These traditions account for the ways things are and often the way they should be, and assist people in educating the young and teaching important lessons about the past and about life. Because many oral traditions are highly structured and are told faithfully without alteration, they can be as reliable as other non-oral ways of recording and passing on experiences.

While oral traditions can vary from teller to teller, variations are also open to contradiction in the same ways that written accounts are. In this way, oral tradition can continue through generations although small details in the telling may change. Because of this, oral traditions which relate past events and have been passed down through time cannot be dismissed simply as “myth” in the sense that Western society polarizes the differences between “myth” and “science” or “fact.” Ideas about truth, rationality, logic, causality, and ways of knowing the world are not always true context within all societies: they are entirely valid within their cultural contexts and should be respected as such.

Baapaase

A woman wearing a red scarf, a black dress, and a white apron was cooking in her kitchen early one morning when an old man approached her. "May I have some bread, please?" he asked. "Sure," she said.

The woman had just prepared a big batch of dough to make fry bread, so she put a nice big piece of dough in the fry pan. It turned out to be a really nice piece and she thought, "I can't give him this one - it's much too nice." For the second piece, she put a smaller amount of dough in the pan. Well, this piece turned out much better than the first and she thought, "Oh, this one is also too nice to give to this old man." So, she started on a third piece. This time, she put barely any dough in the pan. When it was ready, she was very surprised, for this piece had turned out even more beautiful than the all the others.

Finally, the old man asked, "Is there any bread ready yet?" So she threw some crumbs in the pan and they produced by far the most beautiful piece of fry bread. This made her angry. "Quit begging," she cried. "Get out of here! You can't have any of my bread!"

The old man stopped begging all right. He stomped his foot a few times and said, "From now on you're going to have to hunt and search for your food." And he turned the woman into a woodpecker.

I enjoy sitting and listening to people tell different stories because of their meaning and teaching. It takes a gift within someone to sit in front of people and hold everyone interest in storytelling. There are some storytellers around the reservation; such as Andy Favorite. His stories all have meaning and can be applied to life situations, but also information about our culture and traditions.

When he shares a story to people, he is actually passing it on to the people who are listening, for them to share it with others, for future generations.