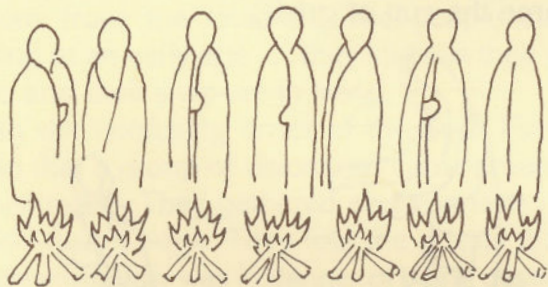


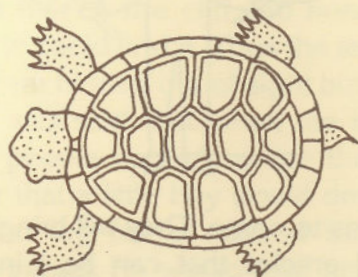
## Chapter 13

# The Seven Fires

The accounts of our life that have been handed down to us by our Ojibway elders tell us that many years ago, seven major nee-gawn-na-kayg' (prophets) came to the Anishinabe. They came at a time when the people were living a full and peaceful life on the northeastern coast of North America. These prophets left the people with seven predictions of what the future would bring. Each of these prophecies was called a Fire and each Fire referred to a particular era of time that would come in the future. Thus, the teachings of the seven prophets are now called the Neesh-wa-swi' ish-ko-day-kawn' (Seven Fires) of the Ojibway.



The first prophet said to the people, "In the time of the First Fire, the Anishinabe nation will rise up and follow the Sacred Shell of the Midewiwin Lodge. The Midewiwin Lodge will serve as a rallying point for the people and its traditional ways will be the source of much strength. The Sacred Megis will lead the way to the chosen ground of the Anishinabe. You are to look for a turtle-shaped island that is linked to the purification of the Earth. You will find such an island at the beginning and end of your journey. There will be seven stopping places along the way. You will



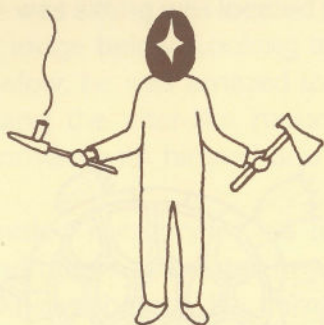
know that the chosen ground has been reached when you come to a land where food grows on water. If you do not move, you will be destroyed."

The second prophet told the people, "You will know the Second Fire because at this time the nation will be camped by a large body of water. In this time the direction of the Sacred Shell will be lost. The Midewiwin will diminish in strength. A boy will be born to point the way back to the traditional ways. He will show the direction to the stepping stones to the future of the Anishinabe people."

The third prophet said to the people, "In the Third Fire, the Anishinabe will find the path to their chosen ground, a land in the West to which they must move their families. This will be the land where food grows on water."

The Fourth Fire was originally given to the people by two prophets. They came as one. They told of the coming of the Light-skinned Race.

One of the prophets said, "You will know the future of our people by what face the Light-skinned Race wears. If they come wearing the face of nee-kon'nis-i-win' (brotherhood), then there will come a time of wonderful change for



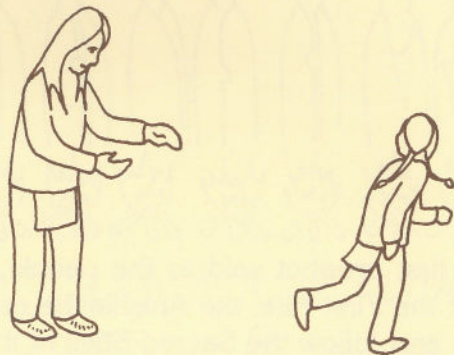
generations to come. They will bring new knowledge and articles that can be joined with the knowledge of this country. In this way two nations will join to make a mighty nation. This new nation will be joined by two more so that the four will form the mightiest nation of all. You will know the face of brotherhood if the Light-skinned Race comes carrying no weapons, if they come bearing only their knowledge and a handshake."

The other prophet said, "Beware if the Light-skinned Race comes wearing the face of ni-boo-win' (death). You must be careful because the face of brotherhood and the face of death look very much alike. If they come carrying a weapon . . . beware. If they come in suffering . . . they could fool you. Their hearts may be filled with greed for the riches of this land. If they are indeed your brothers, let them prove it. Do not accept them in total trust. You shall know that the face they wear is the one of death if the rivers run with poison and fish become unfit to eat. You shall know them by these many things."

The fifth prophet said, "In the time of the Fifth Fire there will come a time of great struggle that will grip the lives of all Native people. At the waning of this Fire there will come among the people one who holds a promise of great joy and salvation. If the people accept this promise of a

new way and abandon the old teachings, then the struggle of the Fifth Fire will be with the people for many generations. The promise that comes will prove to be a false promise. All those who accept this promise will cause the near destruction of the people."

The prophet of the Sixth Fire said, "In the time of the Sixth Fire it will be evident that the promise of the Fifth Fire came in a false way. Those deceived by this promise will take their children away from the teachings of the chi'-ah-ya-og' (elders). Grandsons and granddaughters will turn against the elders. In this way the elders will lose their reason for living . . . they will lose their purpose in life. At this time a new sickness will come among the people. The balance of many people will be disturbed. The cup of life will almost be spilled. The cup of life will almost become the cup of grief."



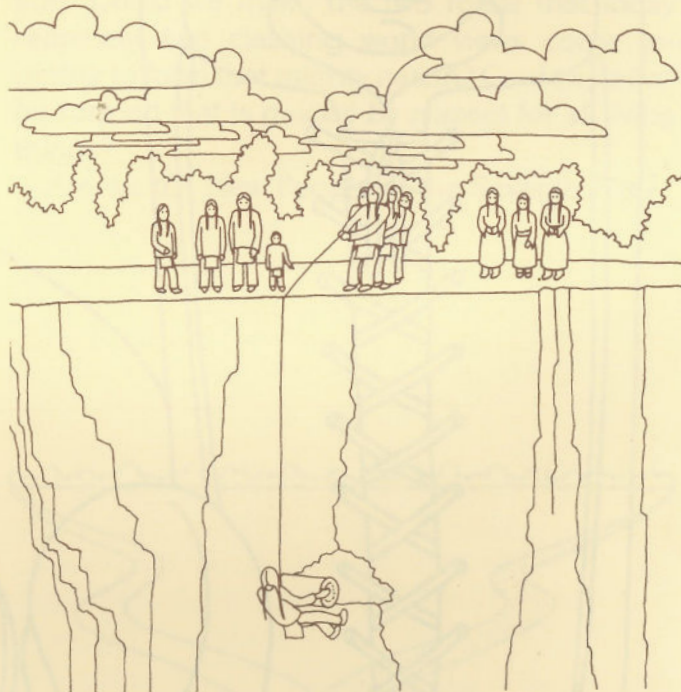
At the time of these predictions, many people scoffed at the prophets. They then had mush-kee-ki'-wi-nun' (medicines) to keep away sickness. They were then healthy and happy as a people. These were the people who chose to stay behind on the great migration of the Anishinabe. These people were the first to have contact with the Light-skinned Race. They would suffer the most.

When the Fifth Fire came to pass, a great struggle did indeed grip the lives of all Native people. The Light-skinned Race launched a military attack on Indian people throughout the country aimed at taking away their land and their independence as a free and sovereign people. It is now felt that the false promise that came at the end of the Fifth Fire was the materials and riches embodied in the way of life of the Light-skinned Race. Those who abandoned the ancient ways and accepted this new promise were a big factor in causing the near-destruction of the Native people of this land.

When the Sixth Fire came to be, the words of the prophet rang true as children were taken away from the teachings of the elders. The boarding school era of "civilizing" Indian children had begun. The Indian language and religion were taken from the children. The people starting dying at an early age . . . they had lost their will to live and their purpose in living.

In the confusing times of the Sixth Fire, it is said that a group of visionaries came among the Anishinabe. They gathered all the priests of the Midewiwin Lodge. They told the priests that the Midewiwin Way was in danger of being destroyed. They gathered all the sacred bundles. They

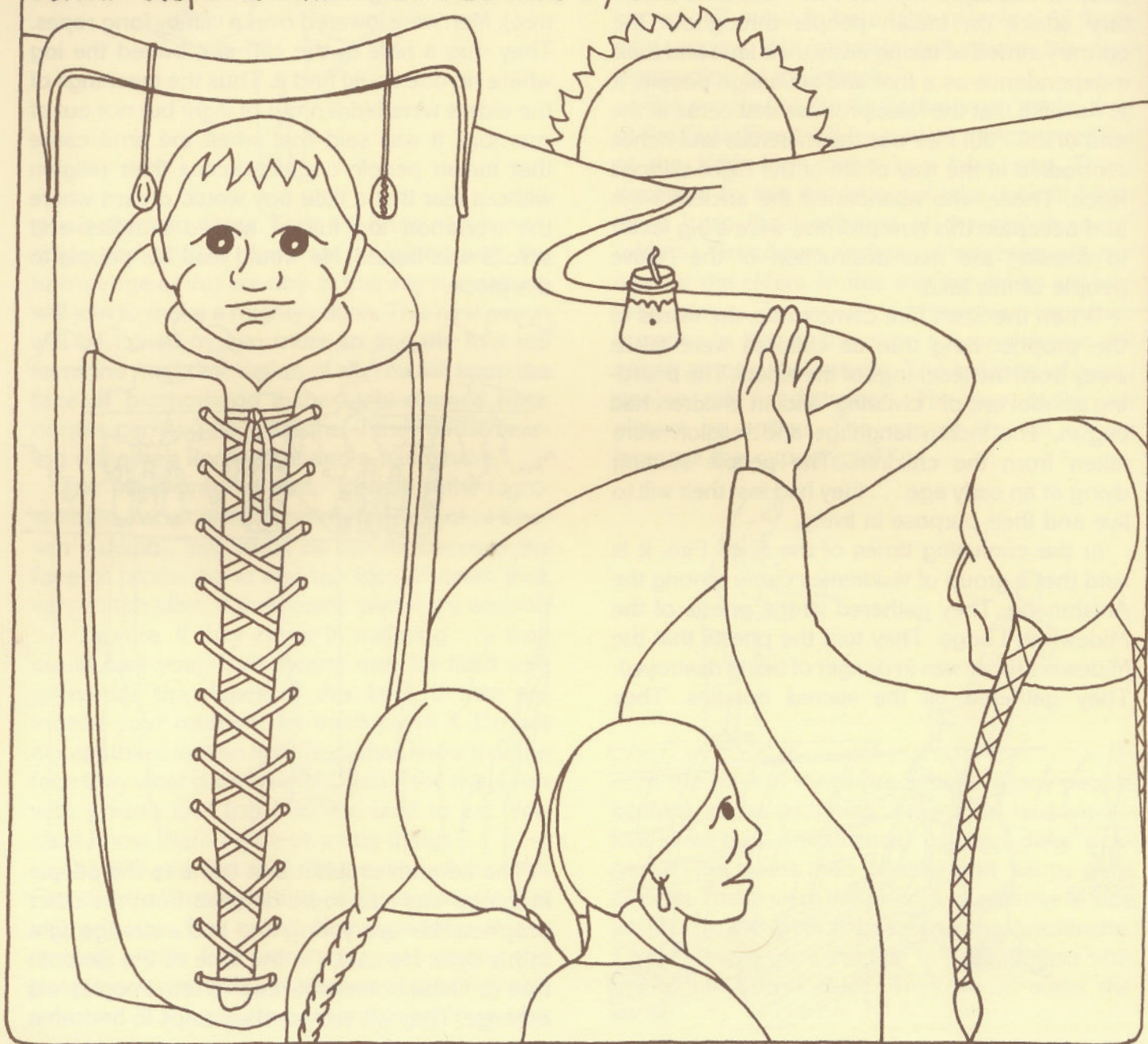
gathered all the Wee'-gwas scrolls that recorded the ceremonies. All these things were placed in a hollowed-out log from Ma-none' (the ironwood tree). Men were lowered over a cliff by long ropes. They dug a hole in the cliff and buried the log where no one could find it. Thus the teachings of the elders were hidden out of sight but not out of memory. It was said that when the time came that Indian people could practice their religion without fear that a little boy would dream where the ironwood log full of sacred bundles and scrolls was buried. He would lead his people to the place.



The seventh prophet that came to the people long ago was said to be different from the other prophets. He was young and had a strange light in his eyes. He said, "In the time of the Seventh Fire a Osh-ki-bi-ma-di-zeeg' (New People) will emerge. They will retrace their steps to find what



In the time of the Seventh Fire a New People will emerge to retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail.



was left by the trail. Their steps will take them to the elders who they will ask to guide them on their journey. But many of the elders will have fallen asleep. They will awaken to this new time with nothing to offer. Some of the elders will be silent out of fear. Some of the elders will be silent because no one will ask anything of them. The New People will have to be careful in how they approach the elders. The task of the New People will not be easy.

"If the New People will remain strong in their quest, the Waterdrum of the Midewiwin Lodge will again sound its voice. There will be a rebirth of the Anishinabe nation and a rekindling of old flames. The Sacred Fire will again be lit.

"It is at this time that the Light-skinned Race will be given a choice between two roads. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and Final Fire—an eternal Fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood. If the Light-skinned Race makes the wrong choice of roads, then the destruction which they brought with them in coming to this country will come back to them and cause much suffering and death to all the Earth's people."

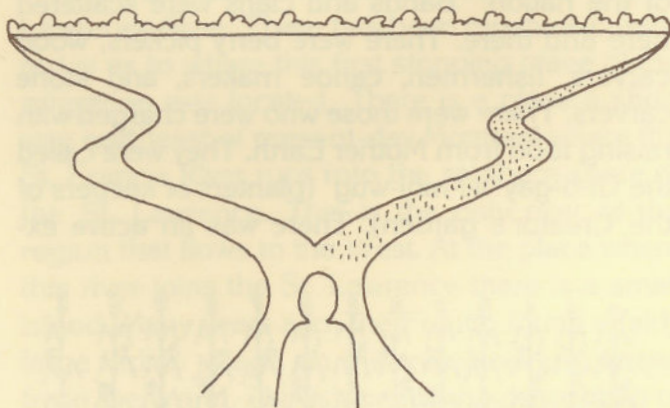
Traditional Mide people of Ojibway and people from other nations have interpreted the "two roads" that face the Light-skinned Race as the road to technology and road to spiritualism. They feel that the road to technology represents a continuation of the head-long rush to technological development. This is the road that has led modern society to a damaged and seared Earth. Could it be that the road to technology represents a rush to destruction? The road to spirituality represents the slower path that traditional Native people have traveled and are now seeking again. The Earth is not scorched on this trail. The grass

is still growing there.

The prophet of the Fourth Fire spoke of a time when "two nations will join to make a mighty nation." He was speaking of the coming of the Light-skinned Race and the face of brotherhood that the Light-skinned brother could be wearing. It is obvious from the history of this country that this was not the face worn by the Light-skinned Race as a whole. That mighty nation spoken of in the Fourth Fire has never been formed.

If we natural people of the Earth could just wear the face of brotherhood, we might be able to deliver our society from the road to destruction. Could we make the two roads that today represent two clashing world views come together to form that mighty nation? Could a nation be formed that is guided by respect for all living things?

Are we the New People of the Seventh Fire?

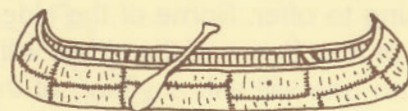
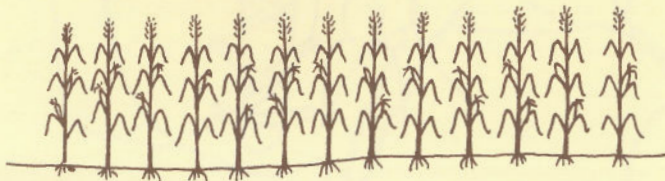


## Chapter 14

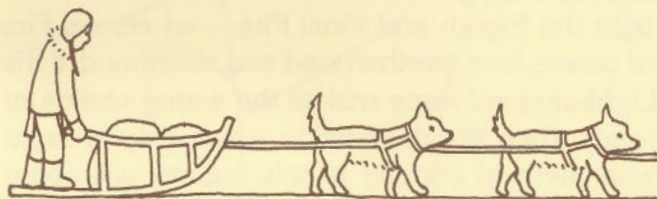
# The Migration of the Anishinabe

Boozhoo, I am going to try to reconstruct the chi-bi-moo-day-win' (migration) of my Ojibway ancestors. I will draw upon the words given to us by the prophets of the Seven Fires. I have also looked at old maps of North America that might give hints to places referred to by the seven prophets and by my grandfathers. Finally, I have listened to what the scholars have had to say about early written accounts of this country.

When the seven prophets came to the Anishinabe, the nation was living somewhere on the shores of the Great Salt Water in the East. There are many opinions about where this settlement was. It is generally agreed that the Ojibways and other Algonquin Indians were settled up and down the eastern shores of North America. We have some idea of the size of the nation from these words that have been handed down: "The people were so many and powerful that if one was to climb the highest mountain and look in all directions, they would not be able to see the end of the nation." Bands and clans were scattered here and there. There were berry pickers, wood carvers, fishermen, canoe makers, and stone carvers. There were those who were charged with raising food from Mother Earth. They were called the Gi-ti-gay'-wi-nini-wug' (planters or keepers of the Creator's garden). There was an active ex-



change and communication among all the groups of people. They used the waterways of the land to travel by canoe. They had a system of overland trails. They used sleds and dog teams to travel in the winter. Life was full for the people here. The Clan System and its government were strongly enforced. There was ample food from the land and sea, and there were fish from many rivers.



This fullness of life made many people doubt the predictions of the seven prophets. There was much discussion among all the Anishinabe about the migration and the prophecies of the Seven Fires. Huge gatherings were held to discuss the plans of the nation. Many people did not want to move their families on the journey to the West. Others were ready to follow the believers in the migration and give their unselfish support to what they felt was the Creator's plan. There was one group who supported the migration but who pledged to remain at the eastern doorway and care for the eastern fire of the people. They were called the Wa-bun-u-keeg' or Daybreak People.