

THUNDER BEINGS



BY *Gayle Mountain Dreamer*

Most people would agree that thunderstorms are awesome displays of nature. But I was reminded recently when my nine year old grandson was visiting me, that not everyone views them in quite the same way. My grandson, in fact, was rushing to a secure place in the house to escape them as I was opening doors and windows to become part of them!

There are many cultural and tribal explanations as to the events that take place in the Sky Nation but there does seem, however, to be certain common threads of belief that have been carried down throughout human history. All ancient cultures regarded spring as the return of life to earth. This is, sadly, of less consequence to us today as we never have a break in our food and fuel supply as they did in winter. Ancient cultures paid great attention to the events in the Sky Nation and put much faith and trust in Thunder Medicine. In all traditions it was the Thunder beings who were the Creators. They were the ones that governed Nature and all life by sustaining balance and destroying imbalance which is the cause of suffering. The storms, that are the gift of the thunder beings, wash away the negative energy and tensions of the world and the greater the world's need, the stronger the storms must be to clear away all the obstructions to peace and harmony. A rainbow always represented a clear path to renewed life on earth.



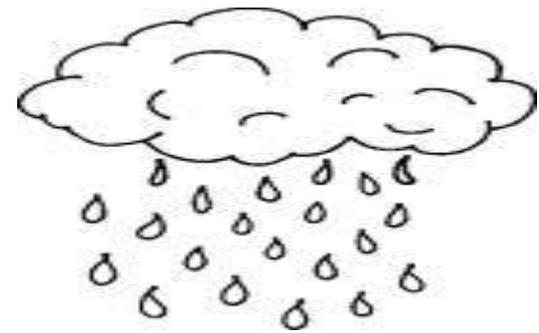
One cross-cultural element of all North American lore and Native belief was giving bird like qualities to thunder. Thus we have the Thunderbird as a constant totem among our tribal ancestors. Different tribes gave various attributes to the Thunderbird according to their geography and handed-down stories. Most tribes, however, agreed that when it winked its eye, flashes of light would burst forth bringing about lightning. And when it flapped its wings it created thunder. The Thunderbird pulled the clouds together to produce rain which was a symbol of power marking the separation of earth and sky. Many tribes also believed that the Thunderbird's bright eyes created dawn and when he closed them it was dusk.



The Cherokee gave human attributes to the Thunder God and called him "Asgaya Gigaei" which meant "Red Man". He is of a red color as it represents lightning. The Cherokee, being a mountain people, saw the heavy thunder clouds gather at the lofty peaks and the red lightning flash below in the valleys. To these ancient people the flashes seemed like the moving limbs of a giant half hidden human-like deity. Thus, the Red Man.

Some tribes believed that the Thunder Beings did great harm and were afraid of them. Others thought they brought the rain from the west and blessings from the south. For those of us who are consummate romantics, there is another way to look at the awesome activities of the Sky Nation. I love the story of the Thunder Beings as told by Jamie Sams, author and Medicine Woman of Cherokee and Seneca tradition. She speaks of the Thunder Beings calling out the love call of the Sky Nation announcing the Divine Union of Father Sky to Mother Earth. The Fire Sticks or lightning bolts are a gift from Father Sky to Mother Earth and represent a bridge between the

two lovers and are an expression of their love for one another. The Cloud People gather where the dance of union is to be held and house the Thunder Chief and Fire Sticks within their bodies until it is time for the joyous marriage. Through this mating dance, Mother Earth is re-energized and nurtured by the rain so that life may continue. Since she is magnetic in nature, she needs the electric energies supplied by the Thunder Beings and Fire Sticks. The Rain People recycle the moisture of the Sky World back to Mother Earth so that her body may feed all things green and growing.



This union between Father Sky and Mother Earth can be tender and gentle or torrid and passionate. We two leggeds experience these nuances as weather changes and climate shifts. All the floods, fires, hailstorms, tornados and hurricanes are the expression and freedom of the union between Father Sky and Mother earth. It is the fulfillment and balance of Earth

So the next time we experience a thunder storm, we have the choice of running for cover and being afraid or trying to tap into that Divine Union for our own revitalization and balance. The lessons we can learn from the Thunder Beings is not so much to fear them but to respect their power and to ask them for this power for ourselves. We can do this through meditation and ceremony. While experiencing a thunder storm it would be good to offer tobacco or cornmeal when asking for assistance. And when no thunder storm is present we can mimic the Thunder Beings with water and drumming. Nature always has answers to our most problematic questions. We must listen!

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