

Anishinaabe Teachings of the Turtle (Mikinaak/Mshiikenh)

In our Anishinaabe Creation story, there was a time long ago when Creator (Gchi Manido) saw that the Beings on Mother Earth (Akikwe) were living in great turmoil and fighting amongst each other. Creator (Gchi Manido) decided to send a great flood to wash away the evil and cleanse Mother Earth (Akikwe), for a new beginning. Oral teachings tell us of a time after this flood that Nanaboozho and the surviving animals searched for many days for land to begin again. Finally, the Muskrat (Wazhashk), swam to the greatest depths under the water, losing his life, and floated up to Nanaboozho with a handful of soil. With no land to be seen far and wide, Nanaboozho asked all of the animals who would carry the new land and all of Creation. After some time, the great Snapping Turtle (Mikinaak) offered its shell, and Turtle Island (Mikinaak Minising) was created. Then Creator (Gchi Manido) sent our Ancestors from the Stars to live in this new land on Turtle Island (Mikinaak Minising).



Turtle Clan (Mikinaak/Mshiikenh Dodem)

The Turtle Clan (Mikinaak/Mshiikenh Dodem) is part of the great Fish Clan (Giigoonh Dodem). The Turtle people are connected to Mother Earth (Akikwe) and represent our direct relationship with all of Creation. Members of this clan are determined, loyal, and goal oriented. The Turtle (Mikinaak/Mshiikenh) reminds us to be truthful in all that we do and in how we live our lives. We find that there is strong medicine among the Turtle Clan (Mikinaak/Mshiikenh Dodem), because of their connection with the Earth, Water, and Stars.

As Anishinaabe, we follow the Lunar calendar, based off of the 13 large scutes of the Turtle's back. Each scute represents one of our Grandmother Moons (Nookimis Giizis), and indicates seasonal changes and tasks that we as a people are to follow. There are 28 smaller scutes that represent the days in between each Grandmother Moon (Nookimis Giizis). We know that following our natural way of life (Biimaadiziwin) leads us to honor our Creator (Gchi Manido), our Mother Earth (Akikwe), our animal brothers and sisters, and all of Creation. It is our responsibility to remember these ways, and take care of our environment and our people. We know that our Turtles are slow and calculated in all that they do. Many of the habitats that they share within our Great Lakes areas are separated by roads and highways. Please remember to be kind and look out for our Turtles. If you see them in the road way, help them out of the way if it is safe to do so.

