

# *Tödawahsa:wë'*

When It Began



An Iroquois Creation Story

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Sandy Dowdy



# TÖDAWAHSA:WĒ'

(WHEN IT BEGAN)

Iroquois Creation Story  
Recorded by Sandy Dowdy

Hënödö:k gëöya'geh nödawahsa:wë' nä:h heniyo'dë:h neh  
yöëdzade'.

*(They used to say that it began in the Sky World, the way the earth is.)*

Otganö:ni:h gyö'öh gä:idowa:nëh ha'dewahsë:nöh gëöya'geh  
ne'hoh tgä:id .

*(It is said that there was a beautiful Great Tree that stood in the middle of the  
Sky World.)*

Ne'hoh gyö'öh he:adigwas nä: heni:yö:h hënöhehgöh näh neh  
gëöya'geh tēni'jö'.

*(It is said that it's where the people that lived in the Sky World got their  
sustenance)*

Da:h ne'hoh gyö'öh yada:tšo:' dosgëh hinö:gek.

*(It was said that a man and his wife lived near there)*

Hahsënöwa:nëh nä:h ne högweh.

*(The man was a leader)*

Goksa'dayëda'se' nä:neh yo:'.

*(His wife was going to have a baby.)*

Tiyo'dëhöh nä:shö:h yagö:gweh wa'öhsawë' wa'ehdogwa:d nä:neh  
gä:idowa:nëh!

*(All of a sudden the woman started digging up the roots of the tree of life!)*

**Deyagodë:jö:nih gi'sëh hëje:a' neh okde:ä'shö' ne'hoh hëjeyëto'  
hëöweh jenö:gek.**

*(Perhaps she wanted to take the roots home with her to replant them where she lived.)*

**Tiyo:we' nä:shö:h wa'aogaëda't höweh yeahtogwa:s!**

*(It only made a hole, where she was digging!)*

**Ne'hoh nä:gyö'oh wa'ötgato' hëö:weh wa'aogaëda't neh gëöyade'.**

*(It is said that she looked through the hole made in the Sky World.)*

**Nä:h gwisde' da'ago:gë:'.**

*(She didn't see anything.)*

**Gwa'heh ayë:' gotö:de' gatga'hoh we:ëh otgae'ni:h onegaga:h**

*(But it seemed like she heard water far away, it was loud)*

**Ga:nyo' nä:ne'hoh deyega:ne:' hö:weh aogaën,**

*(While she was looking through the hole,*

**Tiyo'dëhöh nä:shö:h oyadagö:h wa'eya'dë't!**

*(She suddenly fell into the hole!)*

**Wa'öjë:gwahshö:h yeya'döje' onö'gö:gwa:h nä:neh gëöyade'.**

*(She was surprised that she was falling underneath the Sky World)*

**Gaji'dowa:nës nä:h o'shagodi:gë' yeya'döje'.**

*(Some big birds saw her falling.)*

**Waënödiwis'a:' nä:h ëshagodiya'dageha'.**

*(They agreed to help her.)*

**O'shagodiye:nö:', ne'hoh koh o'shagoni'jö:' nä:neh ganyahdëgo:wa:h  
haswe'nö'geh.**

*(They caught her, and placed her on the Great Snapping Turtle's back.)*

**Ganyo' nä:h wa'öda'wä:do:k, wa'agojë:gwah nä:h okdeä'shö'öh  
deyagohtsi'doägö:je'.**

*(When she came to her senses, she was surprised that she was clutching some roots.)*

**Wa'ë:', "ne'hoh nö:në:h gäidowa:nëh tgä:id neh gëöya'geh  
nöda:we:h neh okdeä'shö'öh 'ika:'."**

*(She thought, "Maybe these roots I'm holding came from the Great Tree that stands in the Sky World.")*

**Ne:' ne:wa' wa'ë', "Ogwe:nyö:h nö:nä:h ëgyë:to' në:gë:h  
okdeä'shö'öh 'ika:'."**

*(Then she thought, "Maybe I can plant these roots I'm holding.")*

**Ojago'saëyëh wa'aesa:k gawedi'gwah ëyeyëto' neh okdeä'shö'öh  
ye:awi'.**

*(She quickly looked around for somewhere to plant the roots she brought with her.)*

**Gwa'heh wa'agoye:wa' nä:h a:ye:gë' neh 'oehda'.**

*(But she couldn't find any soil.)*

**Ne:' shö:h wa'e:gë' ganyo:' onegagö:h tgëöje's.**

*(She only could see animals in the water.)*

**Da:h wa'wöna:ödö:' adi'gwah ogwe:nyö:h a:shagodiya'dageha'  
a:di:go' neh oehda',**

*(She asked them if they could get her some soil,)*

**Ogwe:nyö:h dinä:h eyeyëto' ne okde:äshö'öh gööya'ge' nödaye:a'.**

*(so she could plant the roots she brought from the Sky World)*

**O'tgawënö'dihe't nä:h ënödënö'ge:ad oehda' hëödigwa:' heyö:dok  
onegagö:gwa:h nä:h heganegowa:neh.**

*(They agreed to try to get her some soil that was at the bottom of the Great Water.)*

**Sgahshö' nä:h dawadä:d waenödënö'ge:äd, onegagö:h o'wahdö'.**

*(One at a time they tried, disappearing into the water.)*

**Gagwe:göh nä:h waonöhda:go' a:shagodi:gwas neh oehda'.**

*(They all failed to get soil for her.)*

**Da:nënä:h jinodaga' o'shgo:wi', ëödënö'ge:äd.**

*(Then muskrat told her he would try.)*

**Onegagö:h häe'gwah o'wahdo'.**

*(He too, disappeared under the water.)*

**Ga:nyo' nä:h sadawä:ën, niyö:öh nä:h oehda' dohtsi'doägö:je'**

*(When he resurfaced he had a tiny bit of soil clutched in his paw.)*

**Ne:' o'shagaö', ne'hoh näh wa'e:yë:' ha'dahswe'nöeh neh  
Ganyahdëgo:wa:h.**

*(He gave it to her and she placed it on the middle of the Great Turtle's back.)*

**Ne'hoh nä:h wa'eyëto' neh okde:ä'sho', gödaje' näh o'wahsawë'  
o'wadoja:k**

*(That's where she planted the roots, they began to grow right away.)*

**Ne'hoh nö:në:h nöda:we:' ha'de:yö:h oji:ya'shö'öh näh o'wadoja:k  
tiyöëdza'gwe:göh.**

*(Perhaps that's where many kinds of fruits came from that grew all over the earth.)*

**Da'aonische'ö:' nä:h wa'agonökdë' neh yagöhgweh,)**

*(It wasn't long after that when the young woman got sick,)*

**Sa'nyagöhö'öh nä:h wa'agoksa'dayë:da't.**

*(she gave birth to a baby girl.)*

**Do:gwah nä:h niyoshäge:h o'tgyadawë:nye:' tiyöëdzagwe:göh neh  
gyadatawak.**

*(For many years the mother and daughter walked all around the earth.)*

**Ga:nyo' nä:h wa'ödoja:k neh yagö:gweh, wa'oyëde:te't  
ëyagoksa'dayë:da't.**

*(When the girl became a woman, it became evident that she was expecting a child.)*

**Ne'hoh gi'shëh neh deyäwë:nye:h nödawehdak.**

*(Perhaps it came to her in the wind.)*

**Ga:nyo' ho'ga:e', de:ni:këh nä:h wa'agoksa'dayë:da't.**

*(When her time came, she gave birth to twin boys.)*

**Da'ji:uh nä:shö:h wa:yahsawë' ha'de:yö:h wa:nihšö:ni', waya:tga'  
tiyöëdzagwe:göh.**

*(In just a little while, they began to create many things and put them on the earth.)*

**Ne:në:h neh gä:idö', koh neh gayëtwahsö', koh neh  
ha'deganyo'do'dë', ha'degaji'dodë'; ha'deyögwe'dage:h heyo:dok.**

*(They created trees, plants, animals, birds and even humans.)*

**Da:h ne:' dih agwe:h ahsöh në:gë:ne:wa' ne'hoh ga:yë'  
tiyöëdzagwe:göh**

*(We believe that all of these things are still here on earth today.)*





