

**A bit of History** - Marshak states in *The Roots of Civilization*. "Fire has been used for 1.5 million years." It is the one element that has been valued by all cultures. Indigenous cultures have used the family hearth as a focal point for teaching and nurturing. Located at the heart of each village was a central Fire." Nowaten Dale Thomas stated, "Fire is the one element that connects all cultures at the heart level."

Fire is a central part of the Irish culture. In 1992, the Sisters of St Brigid, in Kildare, re-lit and activated the perpetual flame of St. Brigid. At their center they have a peace candle continually burning. Fire is the focal point in the Beltane (bright Fire) Unification festival on May 1<sup>st</sup>. At one time all the Fires in Ireland were extinguished on the eve of this festival. The high king from each of the four provinces met on that darkened night at the 80-ton Cat stone. A natural stone marker located on the Hill of Uisneach that designates the exact center of Ireland. At dawn, the Fire was lit and the kings were given a flame to carry to their kingdoms. The flame was passed to every village and then to every home until all of Ireland was united from the same Fire. In 2004 the Fire was relit for the first time in centuries. David and Angela Clark, caretakers of the land, brought back the lighting of the Fire to celebrate, reactivate, and call back the people to this sacred site through the ancient traditions of the Beltane Fire Ceremony. In May 2017, Irish President Michael D. Higgins was the first Irish leader in nearly 1000 years to lite the Fire.

The Inuit Eskimos had a Fire ceremony to celebrate the first light for thousands of years. The Inuit of Igloodik in the Northwest Territories have lived on this island of ice in the Canadian arctic for more than 4,000 years. The time when the sun disappears for seven weeks is known as "the great darkness." The day the sun finally emerges from the horizon was the most important day of the year. A great igloo would be built in anticipation of the return of the light. The first person that saw the sun would rush back to the village to tell everyone. Traditional soapstone lamps, filled with lumps of pink seal blubber, that had provided the only illumination during the long night, would be ceremoniously extinguished, and then relit from a single wick, by a female elder. Rosie Igalliyug, a-96 year-old elder, said through a translator, "When the outsiders came from the south with their crosses, and their strange notion about chopping up the day into small pieces called minutes, the celebration stopped. This year, 1999, marks the seventh year since the sun ceremony was rekindled by Inuit leaders to help people remember its true meaning."

The Cherokee carried their Fire for the entire length of their forced relocation from 1838 to 1839. The story of the Cherokee Fire states a long, long time ago; the Cherokee high priest had the ability to generate heat and light from his own body. The Creator removed this "inner fire" from the priest when he abused it for hunting to extinction a sea animal that was used to make chemicals to kill the enemy during a time of war. The Creator gave the Fire back to the Cherokee people, and they have kept it burning ever since. Like the Irish, each year Cherokee families clean out their Fire hearths, and then restart their own Fire with a coal from the original one. It is the Fire that initiates a time of renewal and new beginnings. This Aniyunweya (Cherokee) Fire has burned for thousands of years.

The eternal Fire of the Potawatomi's was originally located here in the upper Midwest. Nowaten Dale Thomas brought the Fire back from Kansas to Sault St. Marie, Michigan, in the 1970's. Dale was a full-blooded member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi. The Prairie Band Potawatomi were established in Kansas, as a result of the Treaty of 1832 when the Federal Government uprooted them and over 100,000 other Native Americans. Numerous tribes were forcibly moved west of the Mississippi River, and this tragic event in American history has been detailed in books such as *The Trail of Tears* and several others. The Potawatomi are part of the Three Fires Confederacy (Nations) along with the Ojibwa and the Ottawa. The Confederacy, in the early 1800's, was actually a complex system of government that functioned long before the encroachment of European civilization. Each tribe had responsibilities to fulfill for the ongoing of the people. The Ojibwa are the "Keepers of the Knowledge," the Ottawa are the "Keepers of the Trading," and the Potawatomi are the "Keepers of the Fire."

Fire connects us to the past. It forges a reverence for the natural world and brings back feelings of interconnectedness that have been lost. Fire transcends any limitations we can place on it. Perhaps Fire is the one element that can help forge our energies in a more positive way to change the direction the world seems headed. The "old ways" are beginning to talk; it is time for us to sit and listen.

***The Mishomis Book – The Voice of the Ojibway*** by Eddie Benton Benay discusses the Seventh Fire. There is a passage from the text that explains the time of the Seventh Fire:

The accounts of our life, handed down to us by our Ojibway elders, tell us that many, many years ago, seven major neegawn-na-kayg' (prophets) came to the Anishinabe. 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-sw'-ish-kodaykawn' (Seven Fires) of the Ojibway.

In the time of the Seventh Fire a Osh-ki-bi-ma-di-zeeg (New People) will emerge. The task of the new people will not be easy. It will be a time that the light-skinned Race will be given a choice between two roads. Ojibway and people from other nations have interpreted the "two roads" as the road to technology and the road to spirituality. They feel that the road to technology represents a continuation of the headlong rush to technological development. This is the road that has led a modern society to a damaged and seared Earth. The road to spirituality represents the slower path that traditional Native people have traveled and are now seeking again (p. 93).

Basha "Barb" Emano, a committee member for the 1995 A.E.E. Conference and several T.E.A.M. Conferences, wrote this passage after our 1997 T.E.A.M. gathering:

"Each of us are from different backgrounds, some more similar than others. Each one of us represents the colors of the rainbow. The pot-of-gold at the end of the rainbow is the success of our gatherings. The coins in the pot are the gifts we individually carry with us from the experience. The shooting star attached to the rainbow is the power of our dream that we can make the world a better place for our children's children through this process. Our belief is that each Fire is like a pebble. When a pebble is dropped in a still pond it sends out gentle ripples. The ripples are the brotherhood, love, compassion, sense of community and hope for the future that bonded the participants at all these gathering. We believe the earth bundles and Fire coals represent the collective consciousness of all the participants who have gathered together. What we have started and continue to create, in my view, is subtle but powerful ripples. At times it may feel like we are not making a difference, but we are. I can feel it, and I can sense it because I know the spirit of the Fire is alive and breathing inside each one of us."

Muk-ta-thē Bruce Hardwick was asked, "Are we the people of the Seventh Fire?" He responded by saying, "Something very special happened at the 1995 AEE Lake Geneva gathering. A man came to me and shared a dream he had after that Fire was lit. He was standing on top of a mountain and as he looked in the valley below, there were Fires for as far as he could see." Bruce finished by saying, "The sacred Fires are the catalyst for change now and as we move into the future."

*The Mishomis* book states, "If we choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eight and Final Fire, an eternal Fire of peace, love, and brotherhood." Grandfather Commanda, from Canada, who was the caretaker of the 700-year-old beaded Seven Fires Prophecy Belt, stated, "I will know the time of the Eighth Fire. One day I will open the bundle and there will be eight Fires on that belt instead of the seven Fires which are on it now." Nowaten Dale Thomas, who gave permission for this Fire to be lit in Lake Geneva said, "I have seen the time of the Eighth Fire; it is about the children. Our work should be to create a better world for our children's children." Both of these elders have passed on and it is now our responsibility to use the Fires for peace, balance, and harmony.

Hope is eternal. It is the invisible umbilical cord that connects us from this moment to the future. Perhaps we can help this dream to become a reality. For over 20 years a world map hung in the Physical Education Complex at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. Pins were placed in the map when a new location for a Fire coal was identified. Go to the web sites to read the story. The energy from this ancient Fire continues to impact the world through a ripple effect. You are now part of the Fire. Pretty cool!

**You can read the full history and details of the Fire at:**

**[www.hmc1860.org](http://www.hmc1860.org) or [www.neiupeacefire.org](http://www.neiupeacefire.org)**

**E- Mail the who, what, when, where, or any additional information you would like to share to: [d-creely@neiu.edu](mailto:d-creely@neiu.edu)**