

# BEFORE THE SETTLERS

INUIT LIVED  
HERE LONG BEFORE  
THERE WERE  
PROVINCES AND  
TERRITORIES.

-MARY SIMON,  
INUIT JOURNALIST  
AND AMBASSADOR

THE LAND IS  
CONNECTED  
TO OUR PAST,  
OUR CULTURE,  
AND NOW,  
OUR FUTURE.  
-HAISLA NATION

## WHY IS NORTH AMERICA KNOWN AS TURTLE ISLAND?

I DO NOT SAY  
THAT I OWN THIS  
LAND; RATHER,  
THE LAND  
OWNS ME.  
- CREE AUTHOR  
HAROLD JOHNSON

Long ago, people lived in the sky world above us and our world was deep under water with only water animals living below. One day in the sky world, a young woman became ill. Medicine people said to dig up a tree and place it beside her. When people began to dig up a tree, a hole in the ground opened up revealing a world below and as the young woman crawled to the edge to see more, she slipped and fell into the hole and down toward the world below.

The animals living in our world saw her falling from the sky and wanted to help. The birds flew up, offering their wings to slow her fall. As most of the world was water, the turtle offered his back as a dry place for her to land. The animals dove into the water to find bits of earth from the tree to place on the turtle's back. Only the muskrat was able to bring bits of the tree earth to the surface. The animals patted the earth onto the turtle's back which grew into the world that we now know as Turtle Island.

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