

Commentary... The evil spirit of the Great North Woods

By Jim Cornelius
Editor In Chief

As the seasons turn into the waning of the year, October is the month for exploring the uncanny. Through this month, The Nugget will explore some spooky folk mythology from various cultures that make up the American quilt...

The Wendigo

An evil spirit of the Great North Woods, an eater of human flesh, a stealer of souls: The Wendigo. Whisper that name in the autumn twilight woods. “Weennndigooo...”

The word is enough all by itself to send shivers down the spine.

The Wendigo is a winter demon of Algonquin legend, and it seems that many cultures of that extensive American Indian language group across Canada and the U.S. knew him.

An Ojibwe scholar describes the demon thus:

“The Wendigo was gaunt to the point of emaciation, its desiccated skin pulled tautly over its bones. With its bones pushing out against its skin, its complexion the ash gray of death, and its eyes pushed back deep into their sockets, the Wendigo looked like a gaunt skeleton recently disinterred from the grave. What lips it had were tattered and bloody [...] Unclean and suffering from suppurations of the flesh, the Wendigo gave off a strange and eerie odor of decay and decomposition, of death and corruption.”

Many Algonquin peoples believed that the demon could turn “them” into Wendigos — a belief so strong that it is (somewhat controversially) considered a “culture-specific” psychological phenomenon — Wendigo Psychosis.



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In the 1870s, a Cree hunter and trapper named Swift Runner “went Wendigo” and killed and ate his family. From Murderpedia:

“Swift Runner was a Cree Indian who lived during the last century in what is now central Alberta. His background seemed not unusual. As a young man he received a solid useful Cree education; he married and had a family of six children; he traded with the Hudson’s Bay Company; and, in 1875, he served as a guide for the North West Mounted Police.

“But Swift Runner’s life ended in tragedy and notoriety. During the winter of 1878-79, a time of starvation and misery for the Cree people, he became possessed by the Windigo psychosis (an aberration characterized by grand delusions and cannibalistic impulses that anthropologists have identified in several Canadian Indian cultures). He murdered his wife and family and cooked and ate their flesh. Eventually he was arrested, brought to trial, and in December, 1879, hanged at Fort Saskatchewan.”

LETTERS

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This abusiveness must stop. An attacker slaps the face of a victim to stun them, freeze them into inaction. This is an intentional strategy of abusiveness to gain advantage and exploit the situation. At the deep level of survival, it creates a fight, flight, or freeze reaction. This dynamic does not belong in functional politics in democracy. We must break the freeze and act to stop this domestic violence at the spectacular scale of our national house.

Stop enabling this cycle of mental sickness and intergenerational trauma. Chaos is a strategy, a slap in the face, to disable the priceless gift of language and communication. Connecting needs equal parts of talking and listening, speech and space for silence. Communication is the channel back to trust, co-operation, respect and safety. Chaos is the sledgehammer the breaks it.

Recognize the danger. This is not entertainment reality TV, but the lives of *real* people who face death as a consequence of abusive dysfunction of President Trump and his enablers. It is who he is. Preventable pandemic deaths, genocide (our Gwi’chen people in Alaska), destruction of environmental life support systems, hateful divisiveness leading to violence — all are direct evidence of life-threatening choices with which this man assaults the American people.

Who are you in my community who support death to my fellow Americans? Who are you that have not the courage to face your inner darkness and who revel in the entertainment of suffering? Who are you, and will you not stand with me in defending life, something bigger than an ideology or an autocrat? Whoever you are, sick or healthy, addicted, discouraged, indifferent or on the fence, I will do my best to stand with you when you are scared,

sit with you when you are sick, and love you unconditionally as my country folk as we seek to heal and reunite. The first steps start right here, together. Speak up to stop abuse, national and domestic. Support healing and life.
Rachel Smith

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

This letter is written to thank those volunteers who participated in the final Crossroads Homeowners Association road cleanup for 2020 which occurred on Saturday, October 3. Volunteers included Gail Halley, Genevieve MacKensie, Amber Barton, Joanne Anttila, Sean Smith, Bill Anttila, Kerry Goff, Ron Thorkildson, Sharon Thorkildson, and Lucy Grittmann. There was more trash than anticipated, considering Highway 242 was closed due to recent forest fires. The next-scheduled road-litter cleanup for the stretch of road from Edgington Road to Cold Springs Campground will be in April 2021.

Bill Anttila

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

I believe this is by far the worst election in history since 1789.

No president since Abraham Lincoln has faced this much hatred and still achieved more. It cost Lincoln his life, and also John F. Kennedy; wounded Reagan.

I feel that Christians need to pray hard as Trump and Pence are in grave danger.

I think Trump will be re-elected and start bringing God’s light back to this country. If Christians fervently pray, we will drive darkness away and bring back light.

God had a plan for all humanity to live in peace, harmony, love one for another. We went off the plan; time to come back.

Chet Davis

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