The Ocean Giveth

“It will be tomorrow” the Great Spirits voice thundered into Musquot’s ears, stunning him, shaking him, wakening him from deep slumber. “Tomorrow Musquot, prepare for tomorrow” again the Great Spirits voice roared. Musquot leaped up, sleep still fogging his head. “Tomorrow” he whispered, “prepare for tomorrow”. Then as fast as he had jumped to his feet, this tremendous joy sprang from his heart. “Prepare for tomorrow”? Musquot had been preparing for this tomorrow for almost 400 years! “I am ready Great Spirit, I am ready for tomorrow” he bellowed from deep within his soul. Looking up to the sky, reaching out to the clouds, grasping at the winds as they blew across the spirit world, Musquot closed his eyes as he raised his fists in triumph “I am prepared” he shouted “Great Spirit, I am prepared”.

It had been four hundred years since the Great Spirit had called Musquot back into the spirit world. Musquot had not wanted to leave his beloved Musquantum, a place later to be renamed Squantum. The fertile earth there was perfect. The Great Ocean there was perfect. His life there was perfect. Musquot held a very high position within his Nation. He and his beautiful wife Squanit were given this honor direct from the Great Spirit. Musquot was a great teacher of skills and spirits as well as a master in hunting within nature and water. Squanit led all Nation squaws in life and survival, in childbearing and gathering. In life and beyond life Musquot and Squanit prepared the Nation of

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Massachusetts to live brave and respect nature. It was Musquot's greatest accomplishment and every day for the past 400 years his one and only dream was to someday return.

“Tomorrow will come fast” thought Musquot. The thought of laying his eyes on the Great Ocean that he loved so much made him shiver with excitement. This mighty ocean that had protected, cleansed, and fed his Nation Tribes since time itself had begun would once again be beneath his feet. Tomorrow the cold waters of the harbor would rise full to the edge of the giant rock he had placed there ages ago, the rock he named Squanit Rock for his beloved wife. He learned later that the white men renamed it Squaw Rock but it was a name he would never use. Squanit Rock was massive in size and not even the great ocean tides could wear it away. He would stand tomorrow on Squanit Rock and wait for the tide to come, wait for the ocean to greet him and welcome him back. Tomorrow he will feel the spray of salty mist and breathe the crisp ocean air from the waters of life. The Great Spirit had created that ocean without flaw. It was pristine and abundant and Musquot and his Nation did nothing to alter this. It was respected by all, enjoyed and feared by all, but mostly, it was loved by all.

Much of the enjoyment from the ocean came from the food it provided the Massachusetts Tribe. Quahog was one such food. Quahog not only filled the bellies of the villagers who lived on Squantum during the warm summer months, they were dried and stored away for the deep cold of winter as well. Quahogs were round shelled clams that the women would dig out of the sandy mud flats and shallow areas when the tides were low. The soft clam meat would be cooked and eaten while the pearly white and purple inner shell would be used to make rounded beads called Wampum. Wampum was treasured by the Tribes and used in important ceremonies as well as in trade. Musquot smiled as he remembered his Wampum belt that had been woven by the village women and presented to him in one

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such occasion. If he concentrated hard enough, he could still hear the beat of the drums and see the men with faces painted as they danced around the great fire that was ignited especially for him. It was a great day for Musquot, a proud day. A day he has dreamed about reliving for four centuries.

Another favorite food was Channeled Whelk, a sea snail that was so abundant like clams, oysters, mussels, and scallops that the great ocean provided. The Channeled Whelk, like the Quahog had an inner pearly white shell used to make Wampum. It was never over fished, never eliminated, and always abundant to support their needs. The Nations carefully consumed wide varieties of the oceans gifts so none would disappear. Musquot remembers with great pride how his people learned to balance the shell fishing and fishing within the waters. Even when the Great Spirit would enrage the ocean and send it into fury, no-one would ever curse the ocean.

The Massachusett, the Tribes who spoke Algonquian, all lived by the great sea. We heard rumors of other Nations who lived to the south of Squantum that only would stay close to the ocean in the summer months and move inland at the first sign of frost. But we, the tribes who spoke the Algonquian language, we stayed all year round. Squantum provided even in the cold winter months when all waters, even the banks of the mighty ocean, would freeze solid. There was no need to travel further, Squantum, with its fertile soil and Great Ocean was all that was needed for the Nation Tribes to survive. Fish was smoked and stored along with all the vegetables and herbs that the summer harvest provided. Wood was prepared and slowly burned in each wigwam when winter finally arrived.

“Mmmmm “Musquot moaned, “if only I was eating our succotash right now”. “If only...” Musquot felt his eyes close as drifted into a dream-like rest.

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“Musquot, Musquot, rise now” the Great Spirits voice again woke Musquots from deep sleep. “It is time for you to leave now”. Musquot lifted himself from the soft grass that had comforted his body thru the night and stood tall in the morning sunlight. “Great Spirit, tell me what I will see?” Musquot asked. There was a pause and quietly the Great Spirit answered in a soft almost sad voice. “You will see another place that will be hard to recognize, there will be other Tribes of people who live there now that do not remember us”. Musquot was confused. “Is there still the Great Ocean”? he asked. “Yes Musquot, the Great Ocean (another pause) still lives” “And the fertile lands that fed so many generations of Nation Tribes, are they still there? The Great Spirit again answered, “Yes, they are still there”. Then why Great Spirit do you answer in such a woeful manner? Another long pause filled the spirit world and finally the Great Spirit spoke. “Musquot, you will see many changes and you will not understand many things. You must not interfere with anyone one or thing. When you are ready to come home, you must call for me. You have been a worthy warrior and great teacher for hundreds of generations and I am granting your request with a heavy heart. You have dreamed for many years to ret urn to Squantum and today is the day I will make this happen”.

In an instant everything was dark; it was if all the stars and moon had been stolen from the sky. Musquot had never seen such blackness and he clenched his teeth to keep from screaming out. He felt his body moving yet saw nothing. Suddenly, as fast as it came, the darkness was over. Musquot was standing in the dawn of a beautiful sunrise. The glare from the fiery orb filled his eyes. He knew exactly where he was. Musquot gazed down to see; he was standing on his Squanit Rock. She still stood proud and as large as ever. The Great Ocean did not take her away. The elation Musquot felt at that moment took his breathe away. He stood in place not wanting to lift his feet from the jagged rock, not wanting to ever separate from it again. Then looking up to the horizon, everything changed.
“What am I looking at”? Musuot wondered to himself. “What is it that I see”? The Great Spirit told him that many changes had occurred. Musquot looked to his right where the wigwams\textsuperscript{11} of many families used to be and saw nothing. He looked to his left where the earth had provided all the fruits and vegetables his Tribe would need to live and saw nothing. He looked to the ocean’s horizon and saw many large grey monuments growing out of the ocean’s surface. He saw movement in the distant, lots of movement. He saw many colorful metal boxes on wheels rapidly moving across the ground. Musquot could hardly belief his eyes. Inside those metal boxes were people sitting down. They were moving so fast it was impossible to see or hear them. Nothing made sense at that moment. His mind was racing as fast as his heartbeat.

All of a sudden Musquot heard footsteps from his left. Around the corner walked a man, a young man. Musquot believed him to be of marrying age. He watched as the young man held a glass bottle to his lips and drank with such haste that he finished the liquid inside in seconds then dropped the bottle to the ground as he passed in front of Musquot. “Your bottle, it fell to the ground” the words came out of Musquots mouth before he could even realize he said them. “Oh” he thought, “the Great Spirit told me not to interfere”, I must not do that again”. “Shut up, it’s just trash now” the young man angrily shouted back at Musquot as he continued to walk away. “Trash”, thought Musquot, “this trash must be some kind of offering to the Great Spirit because it is everywhere”. Gazing around, Musquot realized he had never seen so much “trash offerings” before. Satisfied with his thoughts, Musquot turned his focus to the Great Ocean.

Something was strange. The ocean’s color was not the vivid deep blue-green he remembered from the past. It was not even green at all. It was a color unfamiliar to him; as if something was added into it that made the Great Ocean appear murky and thick. As hard as he tried he could not look into the

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water and see the white sandy and rocky bottom below. He could not see any movements of the ocean life that had been so abundant when he used to fish here. Many generations ago, he could stand right here on Squanit Rock and see so far down into the water that not even the lobsters could hide from his keen eyesight. If a crab twitched, Musquot eyes caught it. Now the mighty sea was so dark that no eyes could penetrate it. It was as if the Great Ocean chose to hide her abundance away from the world. How strange it was that the salty waters would be so modest, so secret. Musquot worried that no one ever again would know the beauty and bounty that he had witnessed on these shores so many years ago.

Then suddenly, his mind stopped racing. In an instant 400 years flashed inside his brain, grinding to a halt on Squanit Rock. He had seen it all, and now he understood.

A deep sadness overtook Musquot at this moment. It was as if blinders had been taken from his eyes, his mind. “This trash is not offerings to the spirit world” he thought, “and the Great Ocean is not hiding its beauty... she is dying”. Everything was clear now; neglect had taken over his perfect world from the past. The Great Ocean and fertile lands had not been cared for, had not been respected, had not been balanced. It hit him like a lightning bolt through the heart. The pain and anguish dropped Musquot to his knees. The soles of his feet lifted from Squanit Rock for the first time leaving only the tips of his toes on the precious rock. Even though Musquot had arrived only moments ago, he knew he must leave. The pain seeped throughout his body and the thought to remain was unbearable. “Great Spirit” He cried “Great Spirit take me home”. Musquot wept as he shouted again, “This is not the place of our ancestors Great Spirit, it cannot be”. Musquot felt all strength leave him as he knelt on Squanit Rock; his entire body shaking in anguish. He opened his eyes one last time as he faced his beloved ocean and wept so deeply, silently, that nothing, not even his breathe could escape his body. “If the Great Ocean dies” he cried to himself. “so too would mankind”. Musquot whispered a tearful plea “tell me there is hope Great Spirit, tell me the ocean lives”. Musquot felt the tips of his toes gently separate from Squaw Rock. His dream was now over.
WORK REFERENCED:


