

The Aonaka

Still under construction, much is incomplete/provisional.

Geography and Environment

Will hopefully have the time for a different document for geography/minor canon.

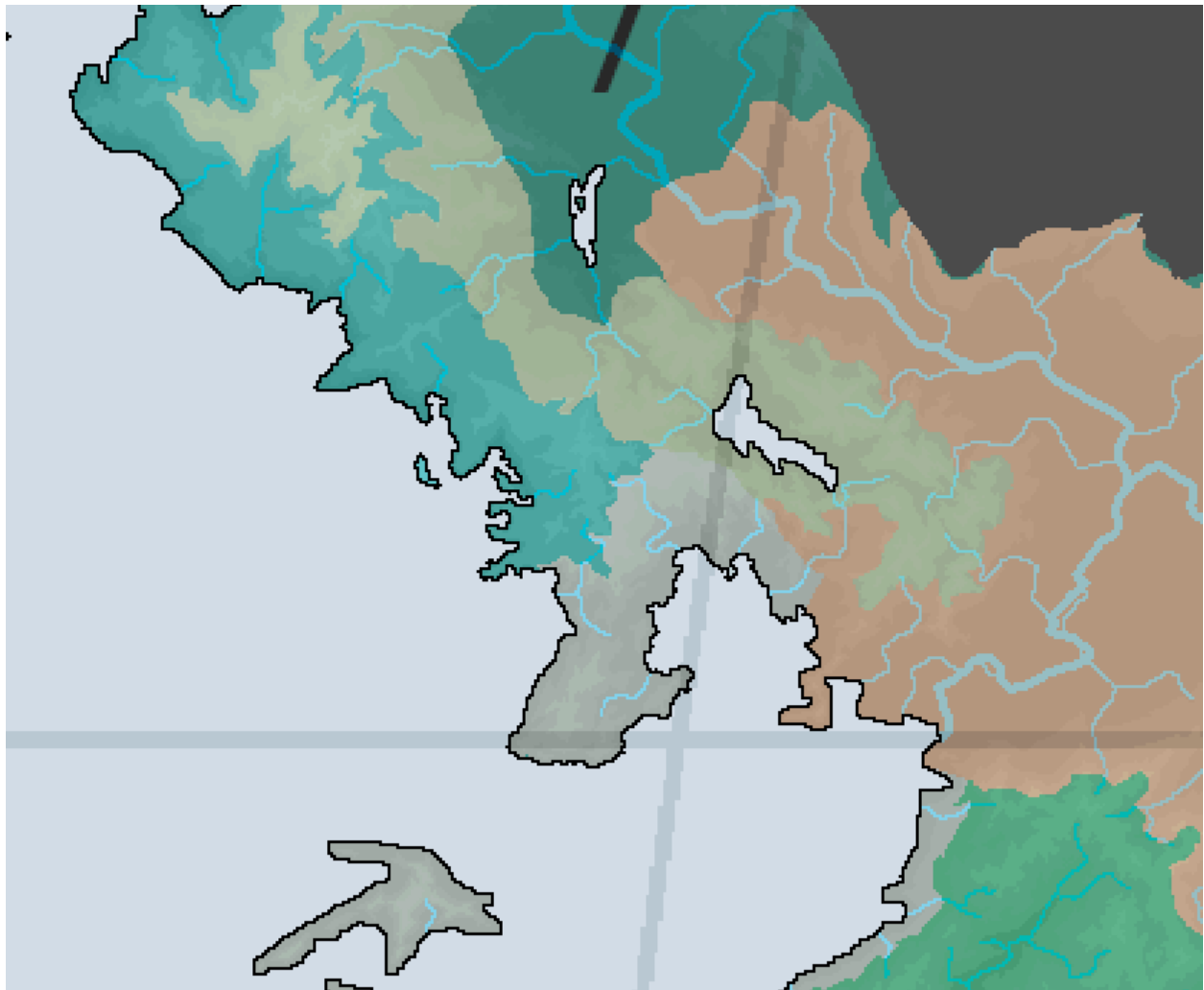
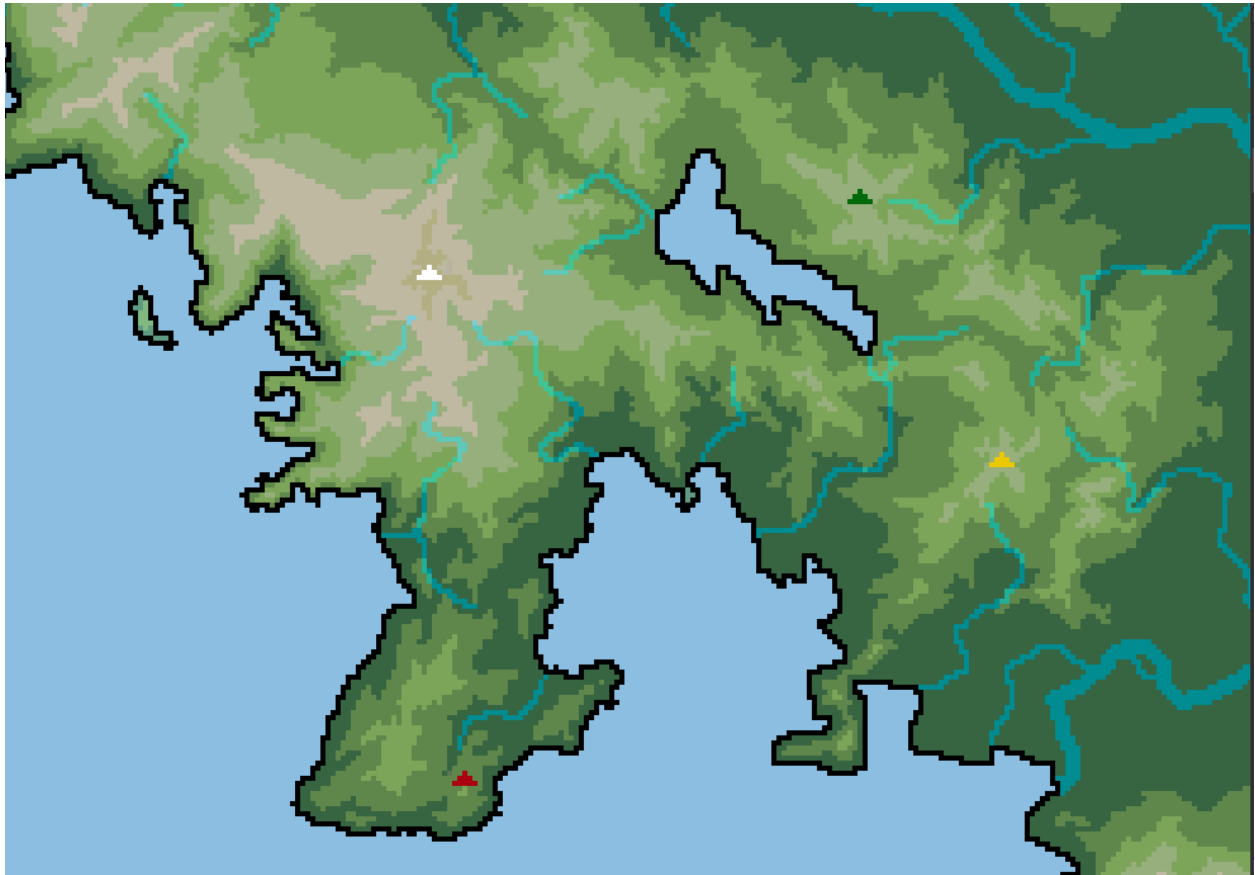


Figure 1: The ecoregions of Penaonaka, the land of the Aonaka. Orange is Chersonian semi-arid plains (semi-arid regions of the Great Plains irl). Light green is Voreian forested mountains (Northwestern cordillera forest) . Teal is Voreian temperate rainforest (Pacific northwest irl). Light grey is cool temperate forest (New England irl).

Pen Aonaka, the land of the Aonaka, is centered, at least in their consciousness around the great lake Jezeth (dʒɛzɛð), extending into the surrounding hills and mountains, down the _ river to the sea, the coastal plain over the ___ peninsula, and up along the coast and mountains to the north. The uplands around the lake are hilly and covered in forests similar to the northwestern cordillera, dominated by pines, with spruce, firs, and mixed deciduous trees (aspen, birch, western larch, etc.) Over the hills to the north, east, and southeast lie dry plains and the great flat floodplain of the Siné river. To the west lie mountains, including the holy peaks. Over the hills to the southwest different forests dominate, more similar to irl New England.



Topography and rivers of Penaonaka, with the four most sacred peaks marked.

Four sacred mountains:





Figure 3: The sacred peaks: Upper left: Upper right: Peak of Dunluanto poking slightly above treeline. Middle left: Middle right: View of Dunruath from afar in the fall. Lower left: Image of the distinctive red shale/argillite that gives Dunruath its name.

West-

Dunluanto (1511 m, 4986 ft), the wolf mountain, lies to the north of lake Jezeth in the Dunasluko, the northern mountains. Holy site to the Wolf great spirit. Associated with nighttime, the cold and the colors green and black.

East- Anudzir (), the dawn spear, rises above the forested hills on the eastern edge of Aonaka lands, by the edge of the great plains. Anudzir is where the great ancestors made the sun and is associated with worship of the sun spirit, _____.

Dunruath (1461 m, 4822 ft), the red mountain, is the farthest south and lowest of the four most sacred peaks. It rises up near the southern end of the _ peninsula, above the headwaters of the _ river. Dunruath was

Despite its relatively low elevation and southerly location, the influence of the sea means it has an alpine region on the peak. It is visible from the sea in some areas and is occasionally referred to as the Dunsle, or sea mountain. Dunruath is associated with the color red and the day. Its importance is especially great to those who travelled over the sea to the Anmitan, as it was the first land they would see on their return.

Appearance

Subsistence, Food, and Crops

The Aonaka cultivate wild rice on the lake margins and along the rivers and valleys where it can be submerged in water as necessary. Aonaka can often be found padding their canoes out along the lake margin, fishing and hunting and tending to their wild rice crop. Cattails are also grown and harvested from the lake and rivers and used for food and medicine and dried and woven into baskets, bedding, shelters, and many other uses. Sunflowers are another commonly grown crop, eaten raw and used for making flour and sunflower cheese. They also hunt in the landscape around and gather from local plants.

Hunters will return home with rabbits and hares, various birds, beavers, frogs, deer, elk, mountain goat, bison, wood or plains based on location, and turkeys in the coastal forests. Supplemented to this are the numerous wild berries, which are increasingly being grown and domesticated, such as strawberries, chokecherries, wild plums, huckleberries, kinnikinnick berries, blueberries, raspberries, elderberries, and gooseberries. Where they grow in the lower forests by the sea, acorns and chestnuts are gathered and eaten. A variety of other plants are gathered and used in seasoning and medicine.

Fishing along the lake, rivers, and sea is a common way to get food, including the construction of fishing weirs along the rivers to take advantage of sockeye and coho salmon runs, which often provide an important surplus of food before the long winter. Fish and meat are smoked and dried for storage.

The Aonaka have two main breeds of dogs which are kept apart to keep them specialized for their different purposes. There are the hunting dogs and wool dogs. Wool dogs have been kept as a separate population for many generations and are bred for producing long, high quality wool that can then be used to make garments. Both are fed offal and scraps from meals.

Along the coast, a distinct subculture exists in a different environment. These lowland forests have a different mix of flora and fauna. The sea provides abundant fish and shellfish, and these folk have turned their canoes and focus more onto the sea, which plays an important role in their lives.

Cuisine

Gathered wild rice is threshed and cooked and eaten with cooked meat and vegetables, if they are available. Stored wild rice gathered in the fall is a major part of the diet in the fall and winter. Sunflower seeds are cooked and eaten as a travelling snack and are ground into flour for unleavened breads. Acorn bread is also common in areas with more oak trees. Cattail roots and stalks are a major food, especially when they are still tender in the spring, when other crops are not ready for harvest.

The Aonaka smoke a lot of meat and fish for storage. This is eaten as a snack when on the move and as a basic staple. Dried meat is combined with various berries and rendered fat to produce a very energy dense food for travel and hunting.

Large salmon runs in the fall provide large food surpluses, much of which is smoked.

Miner's lettuce (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claytonia_perfoliata) is gathered and eaten raw, often with various berries and nuts, or combined with wild rice. Canadian wild ginger (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asarum_canadense), ramps (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allium_tricoccum), chives, american ginseng, juniper berries, sassafras (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sassafras_albidum) and spicebush are used in seasoning foods and as a medicinal herb. Berries are eaten raw or made into jams. Chestnuts and hickory nuts are eaten as snacks and as part of some meals. The Aonaka make herbal teas out of *Thelesperma megapotamicum* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thelesperma_megapotamicum) and spicebush. Sap from sugar maples and boiled to make a prized sweet syrup considered to be sacred. All members of a clan are entitled to a finger of maple syrup during the midwinter festival.

Craft and Industry

Antler and bone are used in the making of many tools and for artwork. Local flint is gathered and valuable obsidian is obtained via trade routes stretching far to the volcanic mountains in Southern Chersonisos. Copper beads and nuggets are traded for from the Northeast and are cold worked into a variety of shapes. Bows are crafted traditionally from ash, hickory, or yew. Bows are important for hunting and fighting, and archery is an important skill that children learn and many use for the rest of their lives.

The Aonaka weave baskets and thatching from cattails as well as clothing for warm temperatures in the summer. Cedar bark is gathered and used for making clothing and baskets. Birch bark is used for many crafting purposes, most importantly the construction of birch bark canoes. These canoes are highly important for the Aonaka, used for mundane tasks such as gathering wild rice and cattails, fishing, and hunting and for travel along the rivers, great lake, and sea. The harvesting of bark from a birch or cedar is a ritualized affair dictated by traditions that help minimize the risk of killing the tree and spiritual significance. It is considered a valuable skill to be able to do this well, as too many failures can get you banned from trying to harvest bark again. Along the coastline where larger trees are available, it is common to make larger dugout canoes from western redcedar or sitka spruce for use on the sea. These canoes tend to be larger and tougher and far heavier than birch bark canoes used inland and can carry more people and/or goods and do better at sea. However, they are far too heavy to portage efficiently.

Pinch and coil pottery is common and almost entirely locally produced, with little sophistication or trade.

Shells are traded inland from the ocean, where they are used to make rattling decorations on clothing and beads.

Skis are used for winter travel and hunting when the snow is deep. At this point they are just simple slats of wood.

Clothing

Clothing from animal hides and furs is common, with fur mantles being a major form of clothing in the winter.

Cedar bark mantles and cloaks are highly prized for being water resistant, often highly decorated with designs of animals. Wide-brimmed woven bark hats are often painted with a variety of designs. Cloaks and clothing from dog wool are valued for their warmth, which is needed in the long cold winters. A good wool cloak is a valuable possession for winter hunters. Ceremonial clothes are often decorated with feathers and beads made from shells and antler. Woven bark clothing is closed with bone, antler, or shell _ and wool is often pinned with carved antler pins.

Architecture and housing



a)



b)



c)

Figure _: Aonaka Longhouses a) Thatched longhouse partially sunk into the ground. b) Bark covered longhouse. c) Interior of a longhouse (without the metal pots).

Huts and longhouses are built in permanent settlements, with travelers or hunting camps made of hide covered wigwams. Longhouses are supported by sturdy wooden posts and covered in bark and/or thatching of various grasses and cattails. Bark is commonly used in the extremely rainy northwest, while thatching is more common in the east. In well drained areas, they are often sunk partially into the ground for better insulation in the winter. The longhouse is an important symbol to the Aonaka, with the population of an entire clan living in one large one, all together under the same roof. Aonaka social cohesion is mediated in part through this constant close contact.

Sweat lodges are another of the important buildings in villages. Here, people can gather for important rituals and cleansing. Stones are heated in a fire until they are very hot and carried into the building, where water is poured on them to boil into steam.

Society

Society is organized by tribal groups which communally own their territory. Warfare and raiding between these groups is common. Within the different tribes are distinct larger family groups referred to as yanadth (janadth) or clans. Clans are headed by their elders and a clan mother. The clan mother is responsible for overseeing the organization of the group and the storage of supplies for the winter as well as choosing who leads a major hunting expedition, raid party, or warband. These most skilled are typically chosen, but since the choice confers prestige, politics influence it as well. Membership in a tribe and a clan is gained through birth, marriage, or adoption. Children are given child names, which are supplemented with an adult name upon

reaching adulthood. [More on adulthood]. Using someone's childhood name after that is a sign of closeness among friends from childhood and parents, but is disrespectful for others to use.

Being Aonaka is seen as a distinction of culture primarily. Though people do think of the Aonaka as a cohesive group of common lineage, someone born outside of their culture who adopts their customs is seen as validly Aonaka, as long as they are formally adopted by one of the tribes into their family.

Shamans hold a prestigious role in society as intermediaries to the gods and spirits of the world, keepers of the people's traditions and stories, and advisors to those who would seek their counsel.

Gender

There are 5 genders among the Aonaka, women, men, feminine men, masculine women, and non-binary. Labor is typically divided by gender (between feminine women and masculine men), though this is by no means universal.

Marriage

The Aonaka are matrilineal and matrilocal, with men marrying into their wives families and moving to their village. Men have to show their worth to the new family, typically by showing hunting prowess or crafting skills. An unskilled man may have to bring a dowry to their new family, while competition between families for the most prestigious/skilled men may require payments in the other direction. However, politics often plays a role as marriages are used for alliances between groups. Marriages are typically monogamous, though polyandry is occasionally practiced by powerful enough clan mothers who can convince enough other clan mothers that a marriage with them is worthwhile.

People are expected to marry, though some with particular skill in a certain area can dedicate themselves to it and a particular god and not face much pressure. Since they are not expected to marry and have children, these people are freed from many of the constraints and can. Typically, love is not a major concern in choosing marriages, as they are economic and political decisions. Marriages are arranged by the clan mothers and parents involved, yet typically won't proceed over the strong objection of either spouse-to-be. Same-sex relationships are seen as allowed as long as they do not prevent those involved from doing what they need to in their marriages. They are often encouraged over heterosexual relationships among the young and are seen as a way for people can sate their desires for sex and love without risking bearing children or threatening their clan's arranged marriages. These lovers are referred to as faeolin.

Disputes are settled by the adults of the community together, in accordance with the traditions and customs known by shamans as part of their role. Punishments include being forced to

spend nights sleeping outside of the longhouse, being physically and symbolically separated from the clan.

Death

Upon death, people's souls are thought to go live in the spirit realm in the sky, but can return to this world in the aurora. The dead are cremated, so that their spirits are free to return to the heavens. This is also symbolic of being removed from the tribe and clan itself, physically separated.

Canoe racing and archery are popular sports and pastimes

Subcultures

The Aonaka, while considering themselves all of one people, are also aware of the subcultures present among their kin. These represent differences in subsistence, different dialects/mutually intelligible languages, minor differences in societal structure coinciding with subsistence and population density, and minor differences in cultural practices.

Lake culture

Lake Jezeth and its surrounding lands are the home of a subculture of Aonaka of greatly mixed subsistence. They practice horticulture around the lake and rivers like the Aonaka to the South, hunt and gather in the woodlands and hills, and fish in the lake and rivers

Southern Maritime

These Aonaka live closer to the sea and are primarily maritime, taking advantage of the great wealth of the sea they live along. The forests in this region are different than the mountains above, containing a different mix of plants and animals for the locals to utilize. With the rich seas and forests and relatively favorable lands for the cultivation of crops, these lands support the densest population and the most complex societal/political systems to deal with greater numbers of people. This region is also where most of the population centers of Aonaka big enough to be considered towns are.

Northwestern Maritime

Along the Northwestern coast and mountains, the environment is different. It is far more wet, yet the temperature is moderated more by the sea. The people here are focused on the ocean and on the bounty it brings, with less horticulture. Major food sources in the south, like sunflowers and wild rice, do not grow locally. Limited wild rice is grown in the southern parts of this region, but it is not as major a part of their diet. The temperate rainforests of this region grow massive

trees that are made into large dugout canoes. This region has more varied and different religion and mythology than the more southerly Aonaka, as they are too far from the main holy sites for the pilgrimages and mixing of shamans found farther south. The people here are influenced by the Anthir to the north.

Northern Mountains

Far enough from the sea in the mountains above the northwestern coast and on the other flank of the mountains, the Aonaka cannot take advantage of the sea in the same way as their coastal brethren and share the limited horticulture. These folk are thin on the land, with smaller clans and tribes and less complex society than their kin in other regions. They are hunter-gatherers, mobile on the land and dwelling in mobile shelters constructed out of branches, bark, and/or skins. The Aonaka here also have more varied and different religion and mythos, as there is not the same pilgrimages and meetings of shamans that unify the beliefs of the south. They are influenced by the Hwistexmextegen people to the northeast.

Northern Plains

Some Aonaka live on the plains to the north, where trees are rarely found away from the rivers and streams. The northern branch of the great Sine river flows through this region. Though they fish in the rivers, fishing is a much less significant food source. These Aonaka are culturally influenced by the Yiu Linaté to the south and the Hwistexmextegen to the north. It is from this region and trade with the Hwitstexmex that the copper used by the Aonaka is sourced, and the people of this region trade copper beads and nuggets south over the mountains to the rest of the Aonaka and along the river to the Yiu Linaté.

Mythos and Religion

The Aonaka worship a variety of great spirits described in the tales as different animals. These figures took it upon themselves to govern (save?) the world as the first world tree died and in the process are responsible for major parts of the world as caretakers with egos. In addition to these, the Aonaka worship the world-spirit (the vague, pantheist sum of all the spirits in the world) and the various lesser spirits, those of animals and plants, mountains, lakes and rivers. The spirits of people.

The most commonly worshipped great spirits include Raven, Wolf, Eagle, Bear, Beaver, Elk, Salmon, Owl, and Moth, though many others play roles in myths and attract some worship and offerings.

Prayers and sacrifices to the great spirits are meant to keep them strong and helping us. Offerings of food and votive carvings are made to them. In times when the Aonaka think they need a major offering, people are sacrificed, typically captured prisoners or those who have

been judged to have broken a major law of our people. Those sacrificed are often strangled or beat over the head and throat slit before being cast into a bog.

The aurora borealis and rainbows are very important, as both are thought to be manifestations of the world spirit moving through our world, containing the spirits of their ancestors

An important oral tradition of myths and stories about great spirits and ancestors keeps everyone sane during the long winters.

Important religious sites attract many Aonaka, both shamans and regular people, seeking to gain something from proximity to the great spirits. These are especially important for shaman apprentices to increase how legitimate they appear. These tend to reduce differences in religious practices

Seasonal festivals

The Aonaka celebrate eight seasonal festivals at the solstices, equinoxes, and midpoints between them. During these, juniper branches or sage are burned and the smoke wafted through buildings to symbolically clean them. Major festivals, weather permitting in the winter, involve a bonfire being built and the tribe engaging in ritual dancing and singing around it.

Midwinter - Honor the dead, honor the seed. From death and pain, comes rebirth and life

The midwinter festival is about death and the potential for rebirth. The first day is a

This one the most associated with human sacrifice, as the Aonaka ask the great spirits to help bring life to the world again.

Spring - Rebirth, renewal

Summer-

Fall-

Mythos

This world is ancient, far older than a thousand generations, than a thousand thousand generations, but as all things, had a beginning. First was as the winter, cold, dark empty, without a living thing. It was only cold winds through the foggy air. But it held the potential for life, the potential for light. And when the time was right, like the seed after the long winter, our world sprouted. When the seed opened, there came out a rainbow/aurora bearing all the colors of

light, pushing back the darkness. The fog gathered into clouds and the first rain fell, filling the emptiness with an ocean. The first ocean was deep and wide and the seedling could find no ground to sink its roots into, so they reached down and down. Finding no bottom, they grew out to the edges of world. And thus, there was land under the sea and the sea could not fall away. In the long ages since, these first roots have hardened into stone. The first leaves, brilliant green unfurled to feed the world-tree. The tree grew upwards into the sky, its branches growing far and wide. But this dawn could not last forever, and a gust of cold wind came down from the edges and blew the light away. At this, the world first knew mortality and feared it. Some of the branches threw down their leaves, fearing the worst, while others preserved. Those kept leaves shrunk in the cold and hardened to survive and became the needles of evergreens. The fallen leaves decomposed and formed a rich soil across the land. But all the branches knew that they would not live forever, and that they must create more to replace them, so when the light and warmth finally returned, they set about creating seeds of their own. Cones and flowers grew across the tree in perfusion and their seeds fell or were carried by the wind, but there were no bees to pollinate the flowers, so the first forest across the land was solely of evergreens.