

Long ago there was a man who was known as Notkikad. This man was a good husband and father and worked hard for his family. He planted a great deal every year and cared for his gardens so that there would be plenty of food. He was always grateful to Tabaldak, The Master of Life. And gave thanks each harvest. One year, though, things did not go well for him. There was a late frost and his garden was killed. He planted it again and then there came a drought. Again he planted, but now it was the autumn and the cold weather came and killed the plants before they were ripe. Notkikad was very troubled. His wife and children had gathered berries and other foods from the forest, but without the dried corn and squash and beans for them to keep over the long cold time, he was afraid they would not survive.

Now the cold season was here and the leaves were falling from the trees and the freezing winds blew. What could he do? That night, before he slept, he made a small fire and offered tobacco to The Master of Life. "I have never asked for help," he said, "I have always been thankful for the blessings given to me. But now I am troubled, not so much for myself as for my wife and children. I want to know what I can do." Then he went to bed and dreamed. In his dream, The Master came to him. "I am giving you these special seeds," The Master said. "I am also giving you a time in which to plant them." When Notkikad awoke he found the seeds were there beside him. He went outside and though the leaves were still falling from the trees, the weather was now warm and pleasant as if it were the summer.

With the help of his wife and children he prepared the soil and planted all the seeds. The sun set and rose and the seeds had already germinated and lifted green shoots out of the earth. The sun rose and set again and now the young plants were already waist high. So it went from day to day as the special seeds given to him grew rapidly in only a handful of days. Then Notkikad harvested his crop and dried the corn and beans and squash for the winter. He and his family stored all of the food within their wigwam. Then, as suddenly as it had gone away, the cold winds returned and that special season given by The Master of Life was gone. To this day, the people say, that special time is still given to us each year, even though we have none of the magical seeds.

That time, which people call Indian Summer today, was called Nibubalnoba or “a man’s summer” by the Abenaki. It reminds them to always be thankful.