

FOUR DIRECTIONS LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Elder Nation	Tom Porter Mohawk
Lesson Plan Grade Level	Intermediate (Grades 7-9)

Subject Strands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Studies • Social Studies
Traditional Teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving Thanks • Thanksgiving Address • Morning Prayer • Mohawk Creation Story

Student Summary

Giving Thanks

Giving thanks for the blessings of life, health, food, shelter, family, friendship and so on is an ancient practice shared by cultures around the world. Whereas some cultures celebrate thanksgiving as an annual one-day event, others celebrate numerous occasions throughout the day and the month and the year to give thanks to God – who is often referred to in English as “the Creator” by many Aboriginal peoples. Traditional indigenous cultural practices typically include prayers of thanksgiving at sunrise to show *gratitude* for the gifts of the Creator that make life possible, such as the sun. Other ceremonies may honour and give thanks for the plant life, the water, the moon, and so on. Through the ceremonial practice of giving thanks, one remains *aware* and *appreciative* of the gifts and the people that make life meaningful, with the hope of never taking them for granted. Giving thanks for the various elements of the world should never be confused with “worshipping” those elements in the sense of idolatry. All prayers recognizing elements like the sun, moon, or plant life, for example, are a thanksgiving to the Creator for the gifts of these elements, and the Creator’s existence is recognized as existing within these elements.

Thanksgiving Address

In traditional Mohawk culture, the Thanksgiving Address is a prayer of *reconciliation* with the universe. It pays tribute to multiple forms of life such as plants and animals, the natural elements, the four directions, the four seasons, and everything that exists. Giving thanks is a way to acknowledge all the energy forces that work together to *sustain* life, including those that are seen and unseen and heard

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop some awareness of people and things that make life meaningful <p>Inquiry/Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explain the concept of giving thanks in contemporary society and in traditional Mohawk culture • To relate the importance of showing respect to others and to one's belongings • To identify the source of three life forces that unite at the moment of birth and separate at death <p>Skills/Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To practice giving thanks • To make corn soup
Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generate a discussion on the origin of life. What are some of the beliefs that people have about how earth was first created, by whom, and when. 2. Introduce Tom Porter as a Mohawk elder who has traditional teachings to share on how the earth was created from a traditional Mohawk view. 3. Visit www.fourdirectionteachings.com and listen to the teachings how earth was created. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Go to "Creation of the Cosmos" to hear the Mohawk Creation Story. b) Go to "Creation of Humans" to hear about the creation of humans. 4. Discuss the story in parts. Who were the main characters? Why did Sky Woman fall to the earth? Why did the birds come to her aid? Why did the turtle help her? Who else helped her? What gifts did she bring and why were they so important to the Mohawk? Was this story meant to be taken literally? What is the significance of dancing on the back of the turtle? What was the lesson in this story? 5. In groups, discuss the point that Mohawk continue to dance in the counterclockwise direction, as they were taught through this story. Discuss how cultural traditions originate. How do peoples learn cultural dances? How do they keep their cultural languages? How are traditions passed down from generation to generation? 6. Discuss the concept of thanksgiving of all that sustains life. The Mohawk have traditional teachings on giving thanks. Like many cultures, the Mohawk people have a practice of giving thanks to all the people and things that make life possible. 7. Visit www.fourdirectionteachings.com and listen to the elder's teachings on giving thanks. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Go to "Morning Prayer" to learn about how traditional Mohawk people greet the day. b) Go to "Outcircle Prayer" to learn about giving thanks throughout the day. 8. Discuss Mr. Porter's teachings on the rays of Brother Sun coming up every day to watch over us, shedding light to make trees grow, corn grow, and so on. Without this light we would not survive as we need the sun, so this is why thanks are given. What other things did he mention that Mohawk people are thankful for? What are you thankful for today? Who are the people in your

	<p>life who are important to you? What are the things that you have in life that you enjoy? Why is it important to give thanks to these people and to respect your things and others' belongings?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Working in groups, assemble the ingredients necessary to make corn soup as practiced by Mohawk people (see recipe below). 10. Arrange table settings in class and practice giving thanks for the food and companionship, etc. while enjoying the soup. 11. Wrap up the lesson with a reading of the summary and a selection of discussion topics and optional exercises below. <p>Discussion Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The turtle figures prominently in the Mohawk Creation Story. It was the turtle who provided Sky Woman with a comfortable place to rest when there was no land for her to stand on. Today Aboriginal people refer to North America as Turtle Island. In what ways did the animals help Sky Woman to create life? What does this kinship with animals say about the Mohawk relationship with animals today? • Sky Woman is a mythological being from another planet who came to create earth and subsequently, people. How does this story compare to other Creation Stories? What does she represent? <p>Option Exercises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a beaded object to symbolize one of the elements in the Mohawk Creation Story such as the turtle or corn (see link below for instructions). • Make a sculpture of a turtle representing North America. Using papier mache or other objects create a symbol for the turtle as it relates to the Mohawk Creation Story. • Make a journal entry on the Mohawk Creation Story. What did you think of Sky Woman? Look at a map of North America. Can you picture North America as a giant turtle? If North America was formed on the back of a turtle, would that change how you treat the earth? • Write a report on how the concept of thanksgiving impacts on Mohawk culture and how it impacts on contemporary society. What can be adapted from traditional Mohawk thanksgiving practices?
<p>Vocabulary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gratitude • Reconciliation • Aware • Appreciative •

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counterclockwise • Sacred • Soul • Mound
Materials Required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food ingredients as per corn soup recipe below 2. Table settings
Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher evaluation of student discussion responses 2. Peer evaluation of soup

STUDENT SUMMARY

Giving Thanks

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Thanksgiving Address

In traditional Mohawk culture, the Thanksgiving Address is a prayer of *reconciliation* with the universe. It pays tribute to multiple forms of life such as plants and animals, the natural elements, the four directions, the four seasons, and everything that exists. Giving thanks is a way to acknowledge all the energy forces that work together to *sustain* life, including those that are seen and unseen and heard and unheard. Saying prayers of thanks in Aboriginal cultures is a practice to remind oneself of the interdependency of these energies, and the need to be *respectful* of these life forms.

Morning Prayer

Mohawk Elder Tom Porter describes a morning prayer, thanking the Creator for creating life and for sustaining and embracing us through the sun. He then describes how traditionally Mohawk people will continue to express gratitude throughout the day: for their

Diagram for

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