

Thanksgiving Address:
(Words Before All Else).

These words of thanksgiving come to us from the Native people known as the Haudenosaunee (also Iroquois or Six Nations – Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca, Tuscarora) of upstate New York and Canada.

The Thanksgiving Address has ancient roots dating back over one thousand years to the formation of the great law of peace by a man called the Peacemaker, and perhaps before that. Today these words are still spoken at the opening and closing of all ceremonial and governmental gatherings held by the Six Nations.

A speaker is chosen to give the Thanksgiving Greetings on behalf of the people. They choose their own words, for we all are unique and have our own style, but the general form is traditional. It follows an order in which we can relate to all of the Creation. The Address is based on the belief that the world cannot be taken for granted, that a spiritual communication of thankfulness and acknowledgement of all living things must be given to align the minds and hearts of the people with Nature. This forms a guiding principle of culture.

We believe that all people at one time in their history had similar words to acknowledge the works of the Creator. With this in mind, we offer these words in a written form as a way to reacquaint ourselves with this shared vision. Our version of the Thanksgiving Address has been modified for a young, general audience – it has been shortened and many specific references to the culture of the Six Nations has been generalized. We hope this will enhance the accessibility of the words for readers around the world.

It was Jake Swamps original vision that this Address would go out to the children of the world, “so that later in life, when they go out and meet one another, they will find that they are all coming from the same place.” This booklet is printed in the Mohawk and English languages. Other editions are available in Mohawk/German, Japanese, Portugese, Spanish, Swedish, Bisayan and French and future editions are planned in Hawaiian, Chinese...

You are invited – encouraged – to share in these words, that our concentrated attention might help us rediscover our balance, respect, and oneness with Nature. Now our minds are one.

John Stokes, The Tracking Project.

THANKSGIVING ADDRESS

The People

Today we have gathered and we see the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People.

Now our minds are one.

The Earth Mother

We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginning of time. To our Mother we send greetings and thanks. *Now our minds are one.*

The Waters

We give thanks to all the waters of the world for quenching our thirst and providing us with strength. Water is life. We know its power in many forms – waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans. With one mind we send greetings and thanks to the spirit of Water. *Now our minds are one.*

The Fish

We turn our minds to all the Fish life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that we can still find pure water. So, we turn now to the Fish and send our greetings and thanks. *Now our minds are one.*

The Plants

Now we turn toward the vast fields of Plant life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working many wonders. They sustain many life forms. With our minds gathered together, we give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come. *Now our minds are one.*

The Food Plants

With one mind, we turn to honour all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the grains, the vegetables, beans and berries have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them, too. We gather all the Plant Foods together as one and send them a greeting and thanks. *Now our minds are one.*

The Medicine Herbs

Now we turn to all the Medicine Herbs of the world. From the beginning, they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are happy there are still among us those special few who remember how to use these plants for healing. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the Medicines and to the keepers of the Medicine. *Now our minds are one.*

The Animals

We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests. We are glad they are still here and we hope it will always be so. *Now our minds are one.*

The Trees

We now turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things. Many peoples of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind, we greet and thank the Tree life. *Now our minds are one.*

The Birds

We put our minds together as one and thank all the Birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them beautiful songs. Each day they remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader. To all the Birds – from the smallest to the largest – we send our joyful greetings and thanks. *Now our minds are one.*

The Four Winds

We are all thankful to the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds. *Now our minds are one.*

The Thunderers

Now we turn to the west where our Grandfathers, the Thunder Beings, live. With lightning and thundering voices, they bring with them the water that renews life. We bring our minds together as one to send greetings and thanks to our Grandfathers, the Thunderers. *Now our minds are one.*

The Sun

We now send greetings and thanks to our eldest Brother, the Sun. Each day without fail he travels the sky from east to west, bringing the light of a new day. He is the source of all the fires of life. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Brother, the Sun. *Now our minds are one.*

Grandmother Moon

We put our minds together and give thanks to our oldest Grandmother, the Moon, who lights the night time sky. She is the leader of women all over the world, and she governs the movement of the ocean tides. By her changing face we measure time, and it is the Moon who watches over the arrival of children here on Earth. With one mind we send greetings and thanks to our Grandmother, the Moon. *Now our minds are one.*

The Stars

We give thanks to the Stars who are spread across the sky like jewellery. We see them in the night, helping the Moon to light the darkness and bringing dew to the gardens and growing things. When we travel at night they guide us home. With our minds gathered together as one, we send greetings and thanks to all the Stars. *Now our minds are one.*

The Enlightened Teachers

We gather our minds to greet and thank the enlightened Teachers who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind we send greetings and thanks to these caring Teachers. *Now our minds are one.*

The Creator

Now we turn our thoughts to the Creator, or Great Spirit, and send greetings and thanks for all the gifts of Creation. Everything we need to live a good life is here on this Mother Earth. For all the love that is still around us, we gather our minds together as one and send our choicest words of greetings and thanks to the Creator. *Now our minds are one.*

Closing Words

We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way. And *Now our minds are one.*

Given to the DUCC gathering at Five Oaks, Paris, ON, on Fri., Apr. 17th, 2009 by Francis Sandy Theological School, Elders, Staff and Students. (Peggy Monague, Lee Claus, Brenda Simpson, Susan Beaver, Brenda Duckworth, John Finlay, Mo Pigeon, Angela Whitwell).