

FOUR DIRECTIONS LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Elder	Tom Porter
Nation	Mohawk
Lesson Plan Grade Level	Junior (Grades 1-6)
Time Required	1 - 2 hours
Subject Strand Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Studies
Traditional Teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving Thanks • Thanksgiving Address • Morning Prayer
Teacher Summary	<p><u>Giving Thanks</u> 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 <i>gratitude</i> 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 <i>aware</i> and <i>appreciative</i> 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.</p> <p><u>Thanksgiving Address</u> In traditional Mohawk culture, the Thanksgiving Address is a prayer of <i>reconciliation</i> 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 <i>sustain</i> 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 <i>respectful</i> of these life forms.</p>

	<p><u>Morning Prayer</u> 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 family members, by greeting them each day; and after eating and drinking water; after feeling the breeze of the wind; after stepping on Mother Earth, and so on. Thanking the sun each morning pays respect to the energy force that provides warmth and makes our plants grow, which we need to survive. In respect for all these things, the traditional practice is to say, “Nya weh,” which means “thank you” in Mohawk. Showing gratitude creates positive relations with others and makes it easier to communicate. The traditional Mohawk mindset is focused on the spiritual, constantly paying respect to all these things.</p>
<p>Learner Objectives</p>	<p>Knowledge/Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify occasions in which social custom calls for giving thanks • To describe the benefits of demonstrating gratitude to others • 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 <p>Skills/Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To practice giving thanks
<p>Strategy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open a discussion on manners. Why do people say “please” and “thank you”? Which kinds of occasions call for people to say these words? What happens when you use these words in speaking to people? How is this different from when you don’t? Explain that the Mohawk people have traditional teachings on giving thanks. Like many Aboriginal cultures, the Mohawk people have a practice of giving thanks to all the people and things that make life possible. Introduce elder Tom Porter who will describe the Mohawk practice of giving thanks. 2. Visit www.fourdirectionteachings.com and listen to the 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. 3. Discuss Porter’s teachings. He spoke of 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 Porter mention that Mohawk people are thankful for? What are you thankful for today? Who are the

	<p>people in your 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"> 4. Shift the discussion to address how to show gratitude. In what ways do people show their thanks to others? How do they show their respect for things? How do people celebrate thanks? 5. Work in groups to make a list of things to be thankful for. List as many people and things as possible that contribute to your life, things that make you happy, things that keep you safe, things that nourish you and keep you warm, etc. Think of things that you have which others less fortunate do not have. For each item on the list, think of some way that you can show your gratitude. Perhaps you could make thank you cards for people you love and tell them why you love them. You could put your toys away after playing with them so that they don't get lost or broken. You could say "please" and "thank you" at dinner time when you want someone to pass you a plate of food, etc. 6. Wrap up the lesson with a guided reading of the summary above and a selection of discussion topics and optional exercises below. <p>Discussion Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange table settings in the classroom to learn about table manners. Practice eating together using "please" and "thank you" when appropriate. How do table manners compare in different countries? In different cultures? • There have been many world disasters recently in which many, many people have lost all their belongings. Earthquakes, hurricanes, and fires cause tremendous damage, often leaving people homeless. What are some of the things people can do to assist those less fortunate? <p>Optional Exercises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a class collage of things to be thankful for. Use paint and other objects for illustrations. • Role play scenarios in which manners are used properly and when they are not. Discuss the outcomes of the situations. Eg. How did you feel when the person took your gift and walked away without saying anything?
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gratitude • Reconciliation • Aware • Appreciative

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustain• Respectful
Materials Required	Table settings
Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teacher evaluation of student discussion responses.2. Self evaluation of charts

Elder	Tom Porter
Nation	Mohawk
Lesson Plan Grade Level	Intermediate (Grades 7-9)
Time Required	3 – 4 hours
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	<p><u>Giving Thanks</u> 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 <i>gratitude</i> 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 <i>aware</i> and <i>appreciative</i> 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.</p> <p><u>Thanksgiving Address</u> In traditional Mohawk culture, the Thanksgiving Address is a prayer of <i>reconciliation</i> 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 <i>sustain</i> 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 <i>respectful</i> of these life forms.</p>

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 family members, by greeting them each day; and after eating and drinking water; after feeling the breeze of the wind; after stepping on Mother Earth, and so on. Thanking the sun each morning pays respect to the energy force that provides warmth and makes our plants grow, which we need to survive. In respect for all these things, the traditional practice is to say, "Nya weh," which means "thank you" in Mohawk. Showing gratitude creates positive relations with others and makes it easier to communicate. The traditional Mohawk mindset is focused on the spiritual, constantly paying respect to all these things.

Mohawk Creation Story

In the Mohawk Creation Story, a woman came from another planet, helped by birds to travel to Earth, but this planet was covered in water. A turtle appeared to this woman and she landed on its back as there was no other place for her to stand. The woman was the great, great, Grandmother of the Mohawk and she brought gifts of food with her. Walking in a *counterclockwise* direction on the turtle's shell, she created the miracle of birth, turning the seeds of the fruits into humans and into corn. Singing songs from this other planet, the woman continued to dance in a counterclockwise motion, making a *sacred* circle, turning the turtle into earth and growing to form North America. The more she danced, the more the earth grew.

People of the Longhouse continue to dance in the counterclockwise direction as taught by this woman, their great, great, Grandmother. Sky Woman taught the Mohawk to dance this way although many other Aboriginal cultures dance in a clockwise direction. Longhouse people continue to dance in the sacred circle to keep the corn growing and to keep beans growing and to keep the culture alive as taught by Sky Woman.

Sky Woman had a daughter, and this daughter had two sons: Brother Sun (Daytime), who gives life, and Night time; but the Sky Woman's daughter died in childbirth. The Mohawk believe that in birth each of us is given three spirits, or *souls*: three sources of energy that make a person who he is, which come together as one. At death, these three parts of the spirit are unraveled with each returning to its place of origin. One returns to the sky while the other two return in the direction of the earth. So at death, Sky Woman's daughter was covered with earth, to make a *mound*, not buried

	below. Today you can visit sacred mounds in Mohawk territories in the USA.
Learner Objectives	<p>Knowledge/Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate understanding of the Mohawk Creation Story • To describe the benefits of demonstrating gratitude to others • 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.
 - 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 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?
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.

Discussion Topics:

- 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?

Option Exercises:

- 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

	<p>was formed on the back of a turtle, would that change how you treat the earth?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gratitude • Reconciliation • Aware • Appreciative • Sustain • Respectful • 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

Elder	Tom Porter
Nation	Mohawk
Lesson Plan Grade Level	Senior (Grades 10-12)
Time Required	3 – 4 hours
Subject Strand Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History
Traditional Teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Sky Dwellers • Tree of Peace
Student Summary	<p><u>The Four Sky Dwellers</u> The number four has great significance for the Mohawk peoples. Like many other Aboriginal peoples, the Mohawk respect the four directions as messengers from the Creator, sent at the beginning of time. The Mohawk refer to the four directions as the Four Sky People, the Four Sky Dwellers, or the Four Brothers: East, South, West and North. Some believe that the North and East are twins and the South and West are twins. Together the four directions have the job of helping Mother Earth. South and West provide the climate for the growth of food for nourishment and survival, whereas North and East provide the relief and rest through cold and snow to allow Mother Earth to <i>rejuvenate</i>.</p> <p>Four is also a number representing the four seasons, the four winds. All of these forces are intertwined to represent completion and wholeness, <i>interconnectedness</i> and <i>interdependency</i>, as none of these elements can be removed from the others; all work in unison to sustain life. As we need them for our survival, we are obligated to respect them and treat them with great sensitivity.</p> <p>The Four Directions are considered to be messengers, as they help to communicate with people, as direct communication from the Creator would be so powerful it would overwhelm. Traditionally, the Mohawk believe, therefore, that important messages are received from nature, from plants and animals, from the wind and the water, and so on, as they see these energies as coming from the Creator. The messages are for protection and are taken seriously as having great importance.</p> <p><u>The Tree of Peace</u> The Four Sky People are powers that dwell in the Sky World and can <i>manifest</i> themselves as people when necessary in order to communicate with people. Mohawk believe this happens at critical times in history when extremely significant events are to take place with great impact on this nation. The interpretation of the messages is considered to be a responsibility of only the most respected individuals in the community. The visit of the great Peacemaker was one of these times, a spirit who</p>

	<p>came to give five warring Iroquois Nations (of whom Mohawk are one) a <i>constitution</i> of peace, as symbolized by the Tree of Peace, with four white roots reaching out to the Four Directions, and a bird on top keeping watch. The Peacemaker explained that all who committed to peace could take shelter under the tree, under which the warring nations buried their weapons (hachets).</p> <p>By the time of the <i>Declaration</i> of Independence in the USA, the Iroquois had been living peacefully for many years. This peace inspired European philosophers to such as Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Locke to learn more about the Great Law of Peace, using it as a basis for the formation of a new American government constitution. The Tree of Peace became the Tree of Unity and the bird on top the tree became the eagle, symbol of the American government. “Of the People, For the People, and By the People” became the motto of the government, based on the governing structure of the Iroquois.</p> <p>The Tree of Peace has since come to receive the attention of the United Nations as a profound model of peaceful disarmament, garnering international acceptance as a symbol of peace, and the Iroquois are termed the “oldest living participatory <i>democracy</i> on earth.”</p>
Learner Objectives	<p>Knowledge/Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate understanding of peacemaking • To identify the roles of the Four Directions as understood by traditional Mohawk people • To relate the receiving of messages from the Four Directions as a means of spiritual communication and unity between people, plants and animals • To relate the Iroquois governance structure as a model for early American governance <p>Inquiry/Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To relate the symbolism of the Mohawk Tree of Peace • To identify the significance of maintaining respect for nature and the four directions <p>Skills/Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To articulate ideas and opinions effectively
Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using an American coin, explain that the eagle is a symbol of American government. Brainstorm ideas on what the eagle represents to Americans. Why is it such a strong symbol? Where else would you find the eagle used symbolically? Does anyone know how the American people came to use the eagle as its symbol? Do other cultures revere the eagle as well? Why? 2. Introduce Mohawk elder Tom Porter who has traditional teachings to share on the Four Directions and the Tree of Peace. His teachings explain how when five Iroquois nations were

fighting with each other, the Creator sent a messenger, a peacemaker to teach them how to live peacefully. It was the Iroquois who formed a participatory democracy and set an example for the Americans to follow when they were forming their government following the American Revolution.

3. Visit www.fourdirectionteachings.com to hear traditional Mohawk teachings.
 - a) Go to “Introduction” to hear a brief background on the Mohawk people.
 - b) Go to “Four Sky Dwellers” to hear teachings on the Four Directions and the Tree of Peace.
 - c) Go to “Peacemaker Prophecy” to hear the prophecy of the future of the Mohawk.
4. Discuss Porter’s teachings on the four directions. He explained how closely intertwined the forces of nature are and how completely dependent people are on nature, the four seasons, and the four directions. What is the meaning of four, and how does it exemplify completion?
5. Discuss the concept of relating to the four directions as people, as brothers. Was this story meant to be taken literally? How could the four directions manifest themselves into people?
6. It was through this closeness to nature and spirit that Mohawk people came to communicate with the Creator through plants and animals, at one time receiving the Great Law of Peace from the Peacemaker. How could they receive a message from a spirit? In what ways have spirits sent messages to people on earth in the past? Do they continue to communicate messages? How can you receive messages from spirits? What is their purpose? What must you do to demonstrate thankfulness to spirits who provide messages?
7. Discuss the Great Law of Peace and “burying the hatchet.” Why is this a timeless model for people to follow worldwide?
8. Working in groups, research how Iroquois governance has become a model for participatory democracy worldwide.
9. Wrap up the lesson with a reading of the summary above and a selection of discussion topics and optional exercises below.

Discussion Topics:

- “The Art of Peace begins with you. Work on yourself and your appointed task in the Art of Peace. Everyone has a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained in some manner, a suitable path to follow. You are here for no other purpose than to realize your inner divinity and manifest your innate enlightenment. Foster peace in your own life and then apply the Art to all you encounter.” This quote is by Morihei Ueshiba, Founder of the martial art Aikido, from the Art of Peace. Discuss. What do you believe your purpose on earth to be? Are you aware of your peacefulness? Can you feel the difference between being at peace and at odds with

	<p>others? How do you control conflicting situations so as to maintain peace? Aikido is a martial art based on peace; what is the irony in that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Peacemaker came to teach the Six Nations how to live in peace, as symbolized by the Tree of Peace. What are symbols of peace used in other cultures? What does “peace” really mean? How can people live in peace today? Is this any more difficult a process than it was hundreds of years ago? • The Tree of Peace was a triumph sent by a spiritual leader to bring peace to fighting nations. How does spirit accomplish what the physical cannot? • During traditional ceremonies it was not uncommon for Mohawk to receive unusual messages from plants and animals. This practice continues today as younger generations learn about their cultural traditions. How does this relationship with nature compare with how modern society views plants and animals? How can people learn to become more aware of plants and animals and the role nature plays in our lives on a daily basis? <p>Optional Exercises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a tree planting exercise as a way of paying respect to Mother Earth. • Conduct a research project on the “Faithkeepers” of the Mohawk nation who believe that following the Great Law of Peace is a spiritual practice. Whereas contemporary society upholds the separation of church and state, traditional Mohawk society does not. Explain how the Faithkeepers maintain a balance between good governance and spiritual expression. • Research a contemporary leader recognized for working towards peace (eg. the Oslo Peace Accords made in the Middle East through the assistance of former US President Bill Clinton. How was Clinton able to bring leaders of warring Palestine and Israel together to establish agreements? What qualities did he demonstrate in this process?)
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration • Constitution • Rejuvenate • Interdependency • Interconnectedness • Democracy • Manifest
Materials Required	
Evaluation	1. Teacher evaluation of student discussion responses

	2. Teacher evaluation of research projects
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