

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</p>

	<p>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 "Daily Thanksgiving" 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 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? 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

	<p>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.</p> <p>6. Wrap up the lesson with a guided reading of the summary above and a selection of discussion topics and optional exercises below.</p> <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 • 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

Diagram for MOHAWK Curriculum

