

October 18, 2020

Tessa and Hañwakañ Blaikie Whitecloud share a reflection on giving thanks

Jesus was once asked about people should give to Caesar, the ruler, and what they should give to God.

Jesus replied, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.”

One thing we give to God is “thanks”.

Last weekend we celebrated Thanksgiving – giving thanks. When we say thank you to God, we remember that all things really belong to God, and that we are part of God’s creation.

We want to share with you a form of thanksgiving that comes from the Indigenous tradition of the Haudenosaunee, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy or Six Nations – (the Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca and Tuscarora people). They have a custom, before they do anything important, of saying The Thanksgiving Address, giving thanks for life and for the world.

There are several expressions of thanks in this address, all concluding with the words “Now our minds are one.” We want to share a few of the thanksgivings from this address, as an expression of the gift of our Creator’s creation:

The Earth Mother

We are thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk 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 Plant Life

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 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 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.

The Stars

We give thanks to the Stars who are spread across the sky like jewelry. 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 the Stars.

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.

We encourage you to google the Thanksgiving Address and read it in its entirety. We give to God, the Creator, for what is God's – life and all creation. AMEN