

Before 1600's

Thanksgiving Address

Greetings to the Natural World

Ohên:ton Karihwatêhkwen

Words Before All Else

Native Self-Sufficiency Center

Six Nations Indian Museum

Tracking Project

Tree of Peace Society

Thanksgiving Address

(*Ohén:ton Karihwatêhkwen — 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 and Tuscarora) of upstate New York and Canada. The Thanksgiving Address has ancient roots, dating back over 1,000 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 are all 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 principal 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 re-acquaint 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 have been generalized. We hope this will enhance the accessibility of the words for readers around the world.

It was Jake Swamp's 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. Future editions are planned in Mohawk/German, Mohawk/Spanish, Mohawk/Hawaiian, Mohawk/Japanese...

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 People

Today we have gathered and we see that 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.

Onkwehshôn:ʔa

Onwa wenhniserâ:te ionkwakiaʔtarô:ron ne.
iorihwâ:ke ne aitewakaʔenionnion tsiniihtônâ:kie
tsinaʔtitewâtere ne onkwehshôn:ʔa tânonʔ tsinî:iot
tsi rokwatâkwen ne ohontsiâ:ke. Ne ne â:ienreʔk
akwê:kon skên:nen tsitewanonhtôn:nion ne
tsiniiionkwè:take kenhnoh:we iahitewaiaʔtaiê:ri
oni tsi ionkwataʔkarî:te iah thahò:ten
tekionkwakiaʔtônkion ne kanonhwaʔktenhtsheraʔ.
Ne kati ehnôn:we iorihwâ:ke tsi entewâtkaʔwe ne
kanonhwaratônhtshera.

Êhtho niihtônhaʔk ne onkwaʔnikôn:ra.



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.

Iethi'nistênha Ohôntsia

Onen nô:n:wa ehnôn:we
nentsitewate'nikonhraiê:ra'te Iethi'nistênha
Ohôntsia tsi ne'e taiakohtka'wenhâ:kie
tsinaho'ten'shôn ionkionhêhkwen. Iotshennôn:nia't
tsi shê:kon teionkhihsniêkie tsinî:iot tsi
shakohrienaiên:ni ne shahakwatâ:ko ne
tsiionhontsiâ:te. Ne ionkhihawîhshon ne
onkwehshôn:'a tânon' kario'ta'shôn:'a tsinikarî:wes
ohontsiâ:ke teionkwatawên:rie. Ne kati ehnôn:we
iorihwâ:ke tsi entewâtka'we ne
kanonhwaratônhtshera.

Êhtho nîiohtônha'k ne onkwa'nikôn:ra.



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.

Ohneka'shôn:ʔa

Onen ehnôn:we ientsitewakiê:raʔte ne
ohneka'shôn:ʔa tsi rawê:ren tsi enkahnekônionke
ne tsiionhontsiâ:te. Ne ehnôn:we nitewêhtha ne
aionkwahaʔtanâ:wen nô:nen enionkwaniaʔtâthen.
Niaʔtekaʔsatstenhserâ:ke tewaiëntê:ri—tsi
ieiohnekeñ:shon, tsi iokennô:res, tsi iaonhawî:nes
tânonʔ tsi kaniatarahrôn:nion. Khênska tsi
entewahweʔnôn:ni ne onkwaʔnikôn:ra ne iorihwâ:ke
tsi entewâtkaʔwe ne kanonhwaratônhtshera.

Êhtho niihtônhaʔk ne onkwaʔnikôn:ra.



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.

Kentsionshôn:ʔa

Tânonʔ kati ehnoñ:we nikonti:teron ne
khiaʔtekêntsiake tânonʔ otsiʔnonwaʔshôn:ʔa. Neʔe
teshakô:wi ne takontohtârho tsi kahnekarôn:nion.
Ne oni taiônatkaʔwenhâkie ne onkwatennâ:tshera
ne ionkwaiaʔtahnirâ:tha. Ne ne iotshennôn:niaʔt
tsi shê:kon iorihwatô:ken ionkwatshenrionhâkie
ne ne kahnekî:io. Ehnonkwâ:ti entewakiê:raʔte ne
entewâtkaʔwe ne kanonhwaratônhtshera.

Êhtlio niiohtônhaʔk ne onkwaʔnikôn:ra.



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.

Tsi Shonkwaienthô:wi

Ne onen ehnôn:we nentsitewakiê:ra?te ne tsinî:iot tsi tekahentaiên:ton. Ia?teiotkahrôktha ohontsiakwê:kon taiohnio?onhâkie ne shonkwaienthô:wi ne niatekonti?satstenhserâ:ke ne ohonte?shôn:?a. Aiâ:wens kiôtikon aitewatkahthôhseke ne tsinî:iot tsi rowinentâ:?on. Enska tsi entewahwe?nôn:ni ne onkwa?nikôn:ra tânôn? tsi ia?teiotihtehrôn:ton entitewahawihâtânion ne kanonhwaratônhtshera.

Êhtho niihtônha?k ne onkwa?nikôn:ra.



The Food Plants

With one mind, we turn to honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the grains, 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.

Kaien'thôshera

Enska tsi entewahwe?nôn:ni ne onkwa?nikôn:ra
tânon? ehnoñ:we nentsitewakiê:ra?te ne ne
onkwatennâ:tshera tsinî:iot tsi shonkwaienthô:wi.
Ne teionkwahsniêkie ne kaienthôshera tsinikarî:wes
ohontsiâ:ke teionkwatawên:rie. Nia?teiotikiôhkwake
ne kâ:nen, osahê:ta tânon? kahi?shôn:?a
tewaienthôkwas ne ionkwaiatahnirâ:tha. Ne oni
iononhêhkwen ne kwah tsinaho?tên:shon rôhshon
ne ohontsiâ:ke. Ne tsinentewâ:iere ne kati
enkiethihwe?nôn:ni ne kaienthohshera?shôn:?a
tsi wa?tiethinonhwarâ:ton.

Êtho niihtônha?k ne onkwa?nikôn:ra.



The Medicine Herbs

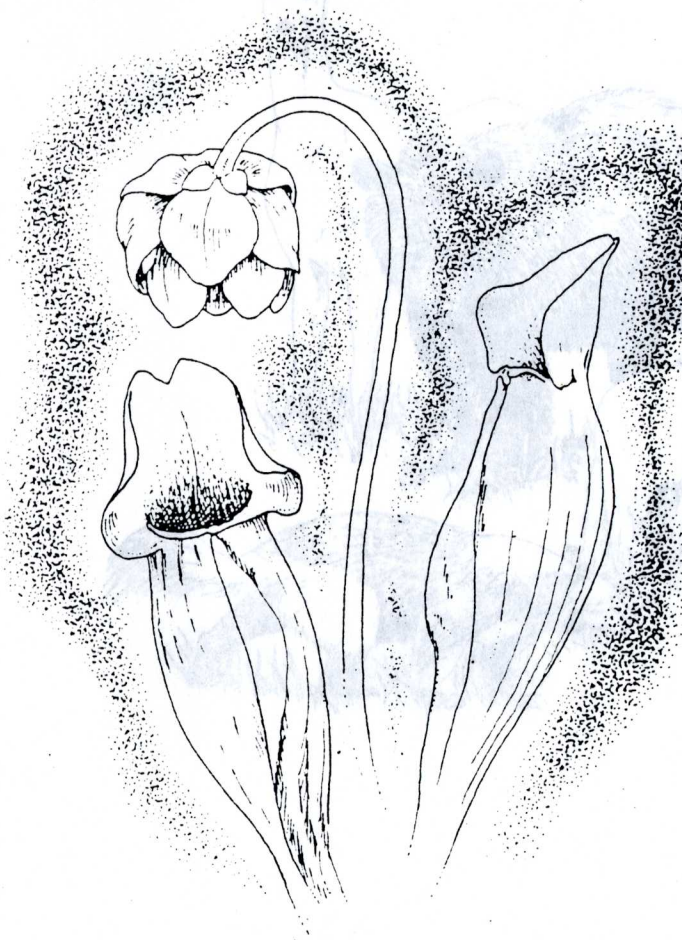
Now we turn to all the Medicine Herbs of the world. From the beginning, they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are happy there are still among us those special few who remember how to use these plants for healing. With one mind, we send greetings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

Now our minds are one.

Ononhkwa'shôn:ʔa

Ne onên ehnoñ:we nentsitewakiê:raʔte ne
ononhkwa'shôn:ʔa iorihwâ:ke. Ne tsinihoiê:ren
ohontsiakwê:kon tethohrâhthon ne ononhkwa'shôn:ʔa.
Ne ionaterihonte aʔê:ren kontihawîhtha ne
kanonhwa'ktenhtshera. Kiôtikon iotiharêkies tânon?
ionataewinentâ:on aiakôtsienʔteʔ. Iotshennônñaʔt tsi
shê:kon teiontonkweʔtaiestâhshion ne ronnê:iahre
tsiniiotianerenhsheroʔtên:shon ne ononhkwa'shôn:ʔa.
Onen kati nenʔne tentsiethinonhwarâ:ton ne
ononhkwa'shôn:ʔa tânonʔ tsiniionkwè:take neʔe
tehotîhkwen tsi rontenonhkwâ:tsheanonhne.

Êltho niiohtônhaʔk ne onkwaʔnikôn:ra.



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.

Otsi'ten'okôn:'a

Enska tsi entewahwe'nôn:ni ne onkwa'nikôn:ra
tânôn' teniethinonhwarâ:ton ne otsi'ten'okôn:'a
tsiionkwatenontsistatênion kontikienônkie's. Ne
kati ne'e shakorennâ:wi ne akonterennô:ten ne ne
skên:nen akaiên:take tsiionhontsiâ:te. Ôkia'ke oni
ne entewatekhwaiêstahkwe. Oni ne rorâkwen ne
tsinikâ:ien entkonwatikowanenhâke ne ne â:kweks
nihohshennô:ten. Iotshennônnia't tsi shê:kon
iêthî:kens akwê:kon ne otsi'ten'okôn:'a ne
nihonnâ:sa oni ne raktikowâ:nens. Onen kati
tentsiethinonhwarâ:ton ne otsi'ten'okôn:'a.

Êhtho niihtoôhha'k ne onkwa'nikôn:ra.



The Trees

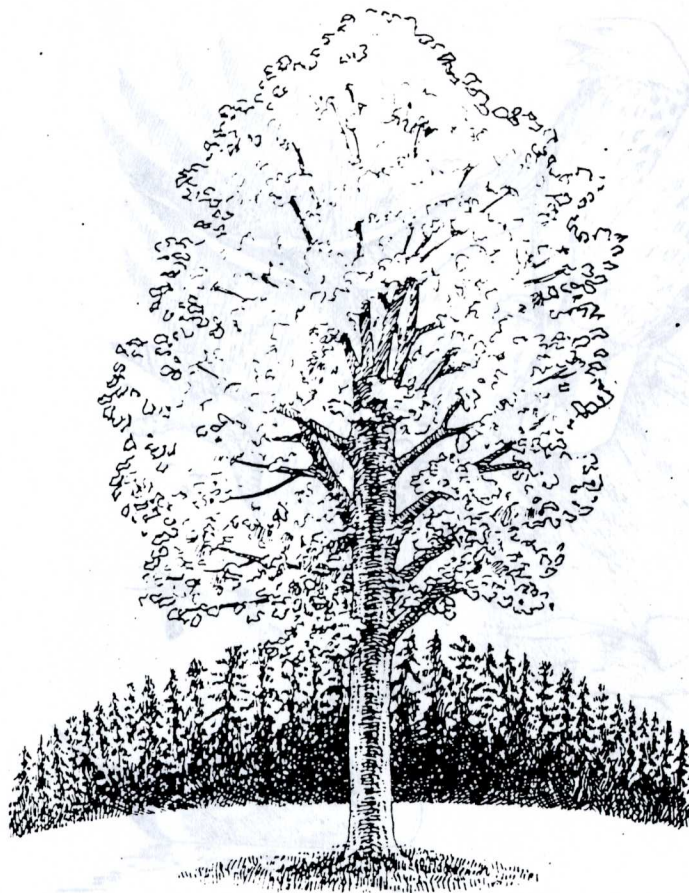
We now turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things. Many peoples of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind, we greet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

Now our minds are one.

Okwire'shôn:ʔa

Onen nôn:wa ehnôn:we nentsitewateʔnikonraiê:raʔte
ne iorihwâ:ke ne okwireʔshôn:ʔa. Ohontsiakwê:kon
kahwatsirakê:ron iotihniô:ton ne ne khiaʔtekakwî:rake.
Ne ne tsinahoʔtên:shon ionaterihôn:te ne khiaʔtekaiên:take
ôkiaʔkeʔ thonôn:we nütewaterahkwawehosthâkhwa tânônʔ
ôkiaʔkeʔ iohienʔtôn:nion oni-tsi ne
iontenonhshatarihaʔtâkhwa tânônʔ oni ne ionniâ:ton ne tsi
ionkwataskwahrôn:nion. lotkaʔtâkie ronatkwirarâkwen ne
onkwehshôn:ʔa ne ne ohontsiakwê:kon kahwatsirakê:ron
tsi neʔe shonehiaʔrâkhwen ne skenenʔkô:wa tânônʔ
kaʔsatstênhsera. Enska tsi entewahweʔnôn:ni ne
onkwaʔnikôn:ra tsi waʔkiethinonhwarâ:ton ne
okwireʔshôn:ʔa.

Êhtho niihtônhaʔk ne onkwaʔnikôn:ra.



The Four Winds

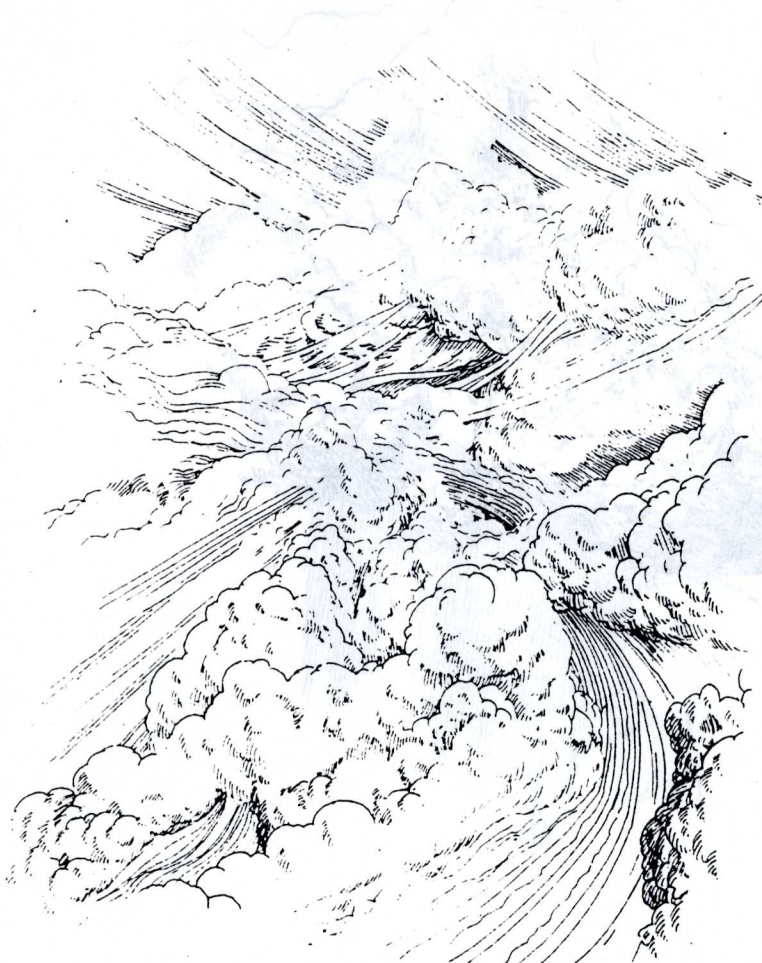
We are all thankful to the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind, we send our greetings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

Now our minds are one.

Owera'shôn:ʔa

Onen nô:n:wa ehno:n:we nentsitewateʔnikonraiê:raʔte
ne tsinî:iot tsi rokwatâ:kwen rawê:ren enkaiên:take
ne kaʔsatstenhseraʔshôn:ʔa ne ne kaiê:ri nikawerâ:ke.
Ne iethiwennahrônkha ratiwerarâstha ne
tsiionhontsiâ:te â:se shonnôn:nî ne tsinî:iot tsi
tewatôn:rie oni tsi ne tehotitenionhâkie ne tsi
niionkwakenhôtens. Kaiê:ri nîokwên:rare tsinôn:we
thatiienhthâkhwa tsi ionkhiʔsatstenhsheâ:wis. Ne
tsi nentsitewâ:iere enska tsi entewahweʔnôn:nî ne
onkwaʔnikôn:ra tânonʔteniethinonhwarâ:ton ne ne
kaiê:ri nikawerâ:ke.

Êtho nîiohtônhaʔk ne onkwaʔnikôn:ra.



The Thunderers

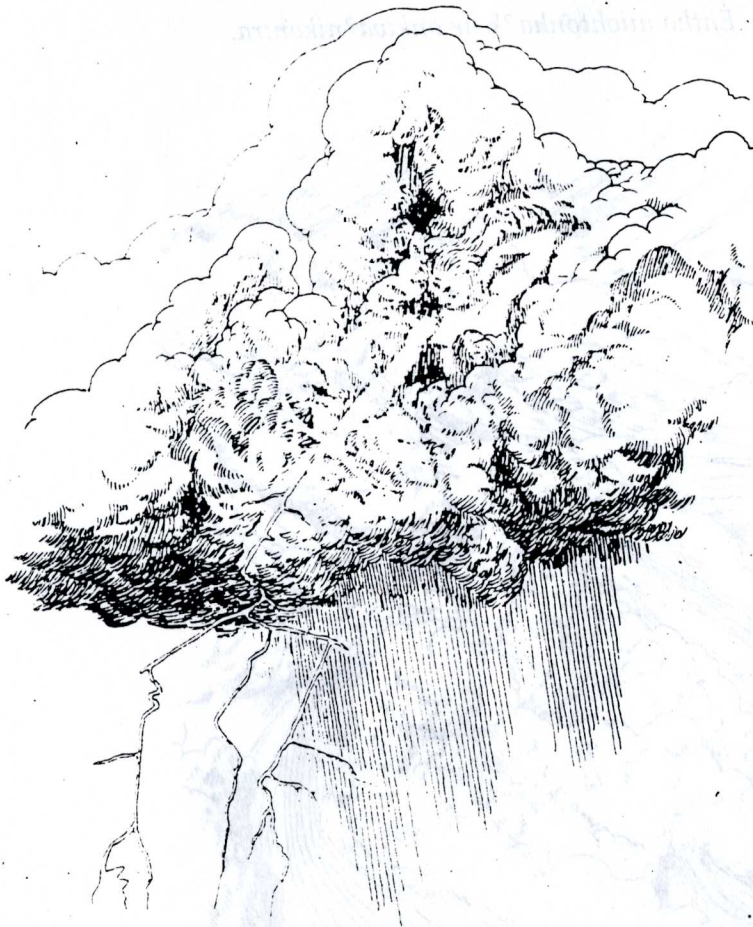
Now we turn to the west where our Grandfathers, the Thunder Beings, live. With lightning and thundering voices, they bring with them the water that renews life. We bring our minds together as one to send greetings and thanks to our Grandfathers, the Thunderers.

Now our minds are one.

Ratiwê:ras

Onen ehnoñ:we ientsitewakiê:ra?te ne tsi
ia?tewa?tshénthos nón:we thatiienhthâkhwa ne
ionkhisho?thokón:ʔa ratiwê:ras.
Tewahni?nakara?wânions nô:nen â:re
tontaiaonharê:re tahatihnekenhâ:wi ne â:se
enshonnoñ:ni ne tsi ionhontsiâ:te. Ne tsi nentewâ:iere
enska tsi entewahwe?nón:ni ne onkwa?nikón:ra
tânon? teniethinonhwarâ:ton ne ionkhisho?thokón:ʔa
ratiwê:ras.

Êhtho niihtônha?k ne onkwa?nikón:ra.



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.

Kionhkehnêkha Karâhkwa

Onen nô:n:wa ehno:n:we nentsitewate?nikonraiê:ra?te
ne tsikaronhiâ:te rorihwatô:ken êhtho tehaiahiâkhons
ne tshionkwahtsi:²a kionhkehnêkha karâhkwa. Ne
tehoswa?thê:ton tsiniaonkwenonhâkie tânon?
ne ro²tariha²tonhâkie ne tsi ionhontsiâ:te ne ne
skên:nen tsi akontonha²tên:ti ne tsinahô:ten
shonkwaienthô:wi. Ne tsi nentsitewâ:iere enska
tsi entewahwe²nô:n:ni ne onkwa²nikôn:ra tânon?
tentshitewanonhwarâ:ton ne tshionkwahtsi:²a
kionhkehnêkha karâhkwa.

Êhtho niihtônha²k ne onkwa²nikôn:ra.



Grandmother Moon

We put our minds together and give thanks to our oldest Grandmother, the Moon, who lights the nighttime 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.

Ahsonhthenhnêkha Karâhkwa

Ne tsi nentsitewâ:iere enska tsi entewahwe?nôn:ni ne onkwa?nikôn:ra tânon? teniethinonhwarâ:ton ne ne ahsonhthenhnêhshon? êhnôn:we kiekonhsarâkies ne ne ionkhihsôtha karâhkwa. Ohontsiakwê:kon ne tekontatenen?tshî:ne ne tsiona?thonwî:sen. Oni tsinî:iot tsi wat?nekorîâ:nerens ohontsiakwê:kon akaônha ne ehnôn:we iakorihwaientâhkwen. Akaônha iakote?nientensthonhâkie ka?nikahâ:wi tsi tehotita?onhâkie ne ratiksha?okôn:ʔa. Oni ne tewatenientenstâhkhwa tsinî:iot tsi teiakotenionhâkie tsi nikiakotkonhsaierâ:ton ne?e onkwatenhmi?ta?shetâhtshera. Onen kati enska tsi entewahwe?nôn:ni ne onkwa?nikôn:ra tânon? teniethinonhwarâ:ton ne ionkhihsôtha karâhkwa.

Êtho niihtônha?k ne onkwa?nikôn:ra.



The Stars

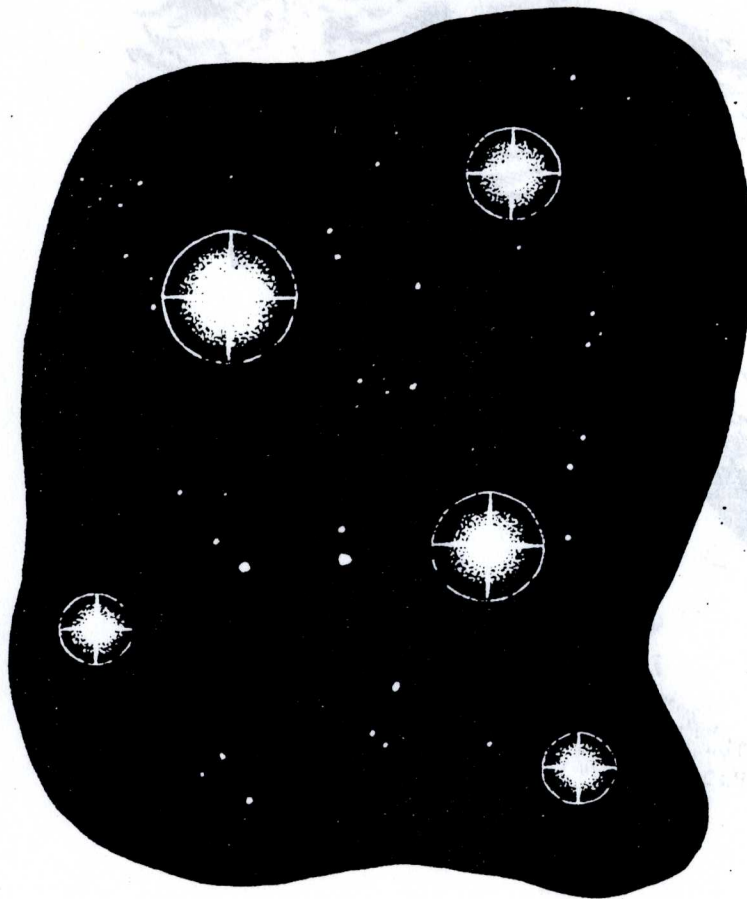
We give thanks to the Stars who are spread across the sky like jewelry. We see them in the night, helping the Moon to light the darkness and bringing dew to the gardens and growing things. When we travel at night, they guide us home. With our minds gathered together as one, we send greetings and thanks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

Now our minds are one.

Otsistanohkwa'shôn:²a

Ê:neken nentsitewakiê:ra²te ne ne
otsistanohkwa'shôn:²a tentsiethinonhwarâ:ton.
Ahsonthenhnêhshon iethî:kens shakotiiēawâ:se
ne ionkhihsôtha karâhkwa tehotihswathê:ton.
Oni tsi ne²e ron²aweiâstha ne ne skên:nēn tsi
akontonha²tên:ti ne tsinahô:ten shonkwaiēthô:wi
tânôn² tsi ionkwa²thehtakê:ron. Ne oni
tewate²nientensthâkhwa tsi iah thaitewakia²tâhton
tsi niahonkwēnonhâkie. Enska tsi
entewahwe²nôn:ni ne onkwa²nikôn:ra tânôn²
teniethinonhwarâ:ton ne otsistanohkwa'shôn:²a.

Êhtho niihtônha²k ne onkwa²nikôn:ra.



The Enlightened Teachers

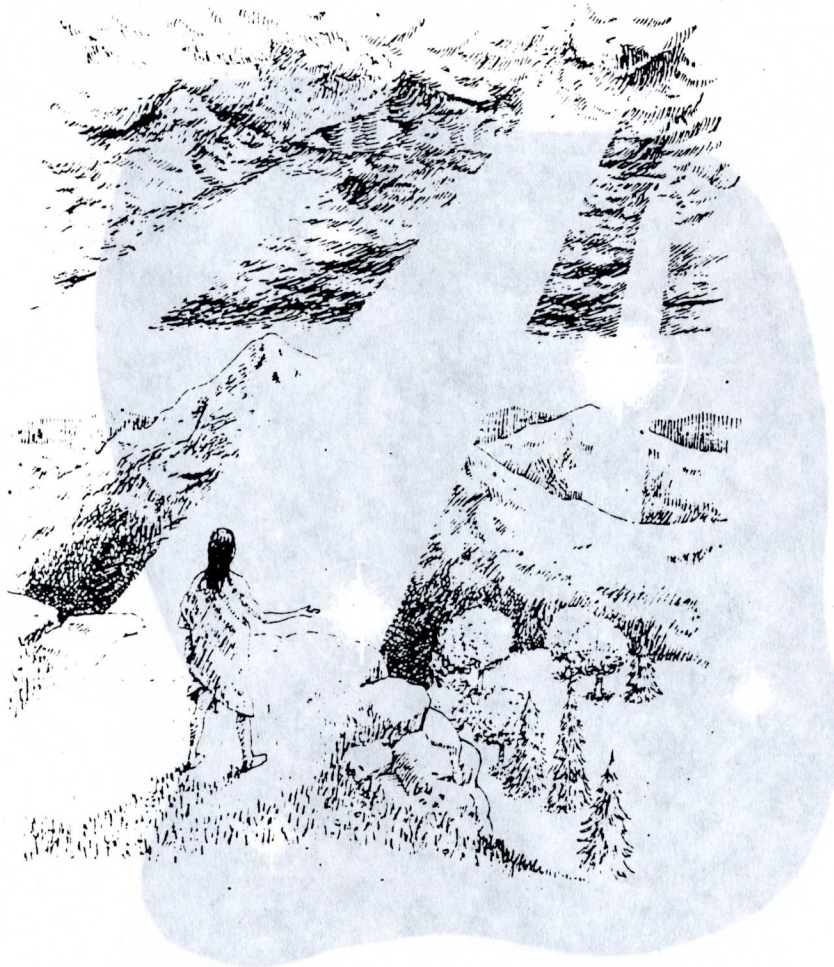
We gather our minds to greet and thank the enlightened Teachers who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to these caring Teachers.

Now our minds are one.

Shonkwaia?tison Raonkweta?shôn:?a

Enska tsi entewahwe?nôn:ni ne onkwa?nikôn:ra
tânon? teniethinonhwarâ:ton ne tsi nikâ:ien ne
ronaterihonte ne ahonten?nikôn:raren ne tsi
kahwatsirakê:ron ne tôhsa? thê:nen ne akierôntshera
ahonataweiâ:ten. Ne tsionkhiiehiahrahkhwa tsinî:iot
tsi rawê:ren ne taiontawên:rië ne onkwehshôn:?a.
Entewahwe?nôn:ni ne onkwa?nikôn:ra tânon?
teniethinonhwarâ:ton ne Shonkwaia?tison
Raonkweta?shôn:?a.

Êhtho niihtônha?k ne onkwa?nikôn:ra.



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.

Shonkwaia'tison

Onen ehñôn:we iatitewawennanihâ:rane ne tsi
nôn:we thotatenaktarakwên:ni ne Shonkwaia'tison.
Akwê:kon ehñôn:we nikiawê:non ne ka'shatstênhsera.
Akwê:kon ne tahotka?wenhâkie ne tsi nahò:ten ne ne
skên:nen tsi iaitewanonhtonñionhâ:ke tsinikarî:wes
ohontsiâ:ke teionkwatawên:rie. Iotshennônñia't ne
taiontkahthônñion ne orihwakwê:kon â:ienre?k
shonkwanorônñkwa tsi shê:kon iotiio?tâkie ne
tsinî:iot tsi shakorihwaientâkwen tsi naho?tên:shon
rôhshon ne tsi ionhontsiâ:te. Entitewateweiên:ton
ehñôn:we entewatewennaiê:rate ne ne îsi na?karôn:iat
ne kati wahi entewâtka?we kanonhwaratônhtshera.

Êltho niihtônha?k ne onkwa?nikôn:ra.



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.

Sakarihwahô:ton

Onen ehnoñ:we iahê tewawe ne ieiôhe
onsaitewarihwahô:ton. Ne tsi naho?tên:shon
wetewana?tônnion, iah ki teionkwanîkonhrôn:ni toka
nahô:tenk saionkwa?nikônhrhen. Tsisewaiatâtshon
ki ne onen wakwarihwaiëntâhkwen ne
entisewatka?we kanonhwaratônhtshera.

Êhtho nîiohtônha?k ne onkwa?nikôn:ra.

