

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.

From the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address



Jake Swamp (Tekaroniankeken), a traditional Mohawk spiritual leader, and his wife Judy (Kanerataronkwes) in their home with their grandsons Ariwio, Aniataratsion, and Kaienkwironkie. Jake and Judy feel that it is very important for grandparents to ensure the future of their people by instilling their beliefs and traditions in their grandchildren.

NMNI photo by Katherine Rodgers, P26530

Dear Educator,

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian is pleased to bring this guide to you. It was written to help provide teachers with a better understanding of the Haudenosaunee. It was written by staff at the Museum in consultation with Haudenosaunee scholars and community members. Though much of the material contained within this guide may be familiar to you, some of it will be new. In fact, some of the information may challenge the curriculum you use when you instruct your Haudenosaunee unit. It was our hope to provide educators with a deeper and more integrated understanding of Haudenosaunee life, past and present. This guide is intended to be used as a supplement to your mandated curriculum.

There are several main themes that are reinforced throughout the guide. We hope these may guide you in creating lessons and activities for your classrooms. The main themes are:

- The Haudenosaunee, like thousands of Native American nations and communities across the continent, have their own history and culture.
- The Peacemaker Story, which explains how the Confederacy came into being, is the civic and social code of ethics that guides the way in which Haudenosaunee people live — how they are to treat each other within their communities, how they engage with people outside of their communities, and how they run their traditional government.
- Haudenosaunee people give thanks everyday, not just once a year. The Thanksgiving Address, or Ganonyok, serves as a daily reminder to appreciate and acknowledge all things. The Ganonyok reinforces the connection that people have to the world around them. Portions of this address are introduced in this guide.
- Haudenosaunee culture, like all cultures, is dynamic and has changed over time.

Together, these four themes are reminders that the Haudenosaunee worldview is guided by specific principles that have endured through the generations.

Finally, though each of the Six Nations speaks a distinct language, there are many words that are the same in all languages. We have included several Haudenosaunee words throughout this guide. We have also provided pronunciations. Please note that all pronunciations are in Seneca, though the words sound similar in the Mohawk, Cayuga, Tuscarora, Oneida, and Onondaga languages.