

## OHEN:TON KARIHWATEHKWEN; THE "WORDS BEFORE ALL ELSE"

—from the Thanksgiving Address, Iroquois tradition

*"The first thing that's done is you give thanks to everything. You thank the waters beneath the Earth, the stones, the soil, all the way up to the stars. It's just a reminder of where we are. We should never forget that.."*

—Kahionhes John Fadden, Turtle Clan of the Mohawk Nation.

*"If all of the children of the world were to be a part of this kind of Thanksgiving each day, I believe that the problems of the world would start to go the other way."*

—Mohawk Sub-Chief Tekaronieneken Jake Swamp

Today we have gathered and have come from many different places. We have all arrived safely at this place to share with each other our gifts from the Creator. So we bring our minds together as one in Thanksgiving and Greetings to one another.

We send greetings and thanksgiving to our Mother the Earth who, like our own mother, continues to give for our well-being. She continues to care for us and has not forgotten her instructions from the beginning of time. We now bring our minds together in Thanksgiving for the Earth.

Now, as one mind, we turn our thoughts to the Waters of the Earth, that continue to flow beneath the ground, in little streams and in rivers, in lakes and wetlands, and in the great seas. They quench our thirst and help us to keep clean. We now bring our minds together in Thanksgiving to all the Waters of the Earth.

With one mind, we send our Thanksgiving and Greetings to all the Beings that dwell in the Water which provide for us in many ways.

Now we direct our thoughts to the many kinds of plants that live low upon the Earth—the mosses, the grasses, the herbs, the food plants and the flowers, for they too have not forgotten their Original Instructions. There are many members of this Nation who sustain those who walk upon this Earth and take away the sicknesses of the human family. With one mind we send our thoughts and Thanksgiving to the Plant Nations.

We now gather our minds together and send Greetings and Thanksgiving to all the Animal Life in the world, for they continue to instruct and teach us even today. We are happy that many still walk us with although their natural world has been changed and life has become very difficult for them at times. Sometimes we may see a fox or a deer eye to eye and we are reminded of that feeling of kinship we get when we see the animals. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving to all the Animal Life in the world.

With one mind we now think of the Trees. According to their Original Instructions the Trees still give us shelter, warmth and food, and keep the air clean. When we see the trees we are reminded of the beauty and power of the natural world. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving to all the members of the Tree Nation.

We now bring our minds together to send our Greetings of Thanksgiving to the

Birds. At the beginning of time the Birds were given a very special duty to perform. They were instructed to help lift the minds of the Human Family. Many times during the day our minds are lifted by their songs. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving to all the Birds of the world.

We are thankful to the Four Winds who continue to blow and cleanse the air in accordance with their Original Instructions. When we listen to the Winds it is as if we are hearing the Creator's breath, clearing our minds as it blows through the Trees. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving to the Four Winds.

Now we turn our attention to the Thunderbeings. They welcome the springtime with their loud voices. Along with the lightning, they carry the waters of Spring on their backs. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving and Greetings to the Thunderbeings.

Our minds are one as we send our thoughts to our oldest brother the Sun. Each day the Sun continues according to his original instructions, bringing the light of the day, the energy source of all life on Earth. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving and Greetings to our oldest brother the Sun.

We now gather our minds together and give Thanks to our oldest Grandmother, the Moon who holds hands with all of the women of the world, binding all of the cycles and rhythms of the Waters. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving and Greetings to our Grandmother the Moon.

With one mind we send our thoughts to the Star Nations who continue to light our way during times of darkness to guide us home, and who hold the secrets of many forgotten stories. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving and Greetings to the Star Nations.

With our minds as one mind we think of the Four Spirit Beings who live in the Four Directions. We know that they are helping us when we are moving through life and a feeling tells us not to go a certain way, or that we are on the right path. And now we gather our minds together as one and send our special Thanksgiving Greetings to the Four Spirit Beings.

Now we have arrived in a very special place where dwells the Great Spirit that moves through all things. As one mind we turn our thoughts to the Creator with Thanksgiving and Greetings.

We have now become like one being, with one body, one heart, one mind. We send our Prayers and special Thanksgiving Greetings to all the unborn Children of all the Future Generations. We send our thoughts to the many different Beings we may have missed during our Thanksgiving. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving and Greetings to all of the Nations of the World.

Now our minds are one.