Activities for Grades K–2

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Activity Overview

This activity sequence allows teachers and students to learn about some of the beliefs and food traditions of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people through investigations of the Thanksgiving Address and Haudenosaunee White Corn. The Educator’s Guide offers a Haudenosaunee 101 overview, as well as general background about the hall and the approach that informed the creation of this lesson. There is a list of recommended resources at the end of this document to provide both teachers and students with more background information.

This unit has three components:

1. **Before the Visit:** The teacher will begin this unit by telling students that they will be studying aspects of Haudenosaunee culture to prepare them for a trip to the Hall of Eastern Woodlands at the American Museum of Natural History. This pre-trip lesson will introduce students to an important part of Haudenosaunee worldview through the Thanksgiving Address, a speech offering gratitude for important elements within nature. The teacher will do a read-aloud of the Thanksgiving Address and display nine of the elements on the board. Students will make connections between the elements acknowledged in the address and an image of a contemporary Seneca family preparing a meal. The connections students make can be part of an oral exercise or can be made into an interactive classroom display that they build on with subsequent work.

2. **At the Museum:** A self-guided tour in the Educator’s Guide (downloadable at amnh.org/ewi-educators), organized around the themes of Haudenosaunee agriculture and food, will help teachers facilitate their class visit to the Hall of Eastern Woodlands. While in the hall, students will fill out worksheets that support a more detailed investigation into various objects of Haudenosaunee origin related to the harvesting and preparation of corn for cornbread.

3. **Back in the Classroom:** After the Museum visit, students will watch a slideshow that shows the steps of cornbread making that will explain the connecting thread for all the objects they will be looking for at the Museum and read a brief article, “Cornbread Connections,” to develop more context for the significance of cornbread in Haudenosaunee culture. Students will then read and share the worksheets they completed at the Museum, making connections between the historic objects and the contemporary practices. Students will then respond to the final prompt: “The process of making Haudenosaunee-style cornbread today is different than it was hundreds of years ago. Which elements of the Thanksgiving Address apply to both, and why?” They will draw on their learning from all prior activities to inform their answers.
Correlation to Standards

This activity supports the following National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies and the National Museum of the American Indian Native Knowledge 360° Essential Understandings about American Indians.

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies:

Theme 1: Culture

- Human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture. The study of culture examines the socially transmitted beliefs, values, institutions, behaviors, traditions and way of life of a group of people; it also encompasses other cultural attributes and products, such as language, literature, music, arts and artifacts, and foods.
- Through experience, observation, and reflection, students will identify elements of culture as well as similarities and differences among cultural groups across time and place.

Theme 2: Time, Continuity and Change

- Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.
- Studying the past makes it possible for us to understand the human story across time.
- Knowing how to read, reconstruct and interpret the past allows us to answer questions such as: [...] Why is the past important to us today? How has the world changed and how might it change in future? How do perspectives about the past differ, and to what extent do these differences inform contemporary ideas and actions?

National Museum of the American Indian Native Knowledge 360°:

Essential Understanding 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

- American Indian history is not singular or timeless. American Indian cultures have always adapted and changed in response to environmental, economic, social, and other factors. American Indian cultures and people are fully engaged in the modern world.
- Hearing and understanding American Indian history from Indian perspectives provides an important point of view to the discussion of history and cultures in the Americas. Indian perspectives expand the social, political, and economic dialogue.
Background Information for Educators

Summary of the Thanksgiving Address

The Ganö:nyö:k or Thanksgiving Address is a Haudenosaunee offering of gratitude for the elements in nature that support human life and collectively make up the surrounding natural world. Also known as “The words that come before all else,” it is spoken in one of the six Native languages of the Haudenosaunee at the opening and closing of all important gatherings, especially those of political, ceremonial, or social significance. It is an enduring example of an oral tradition that has been passed down through countless generations. Though the main elements acknowledged and the order in which they are spoken are fairly consistent, each speaker can offer a slightly different version of the Ganö:nyö:k. For example, certain communities typically acknowledge maple trees or fish, while others do not. The Thanksgiving Address is not a prayer and has no connection to the holiday. It is an expression of gratitude and as such is something that Haudenosaunee people allow non-Native people to hear and learn from, with the understanding that everyone can benefit from developing a frame of mind that is appreciative of the natural world.

All sections of the Thanksgiving Address close with the expression that loosely translates as “And now our minds are one.” Some see this as a way to assure that all participants carry a “good mind” in the forthcoming activity, that they will have a point upon which they can all agree before proceeding to an area of potential conflict or debate. Fundamentally, the Thanksgiving Address teaches good values. It reminds us that humans are one element in a larger web that they are dependent upon for their existence. It acts as a reminder that humans should be reverential and appreciative of all that nature provides.

The Thanksgiving Address mentions elements of the ecosystem from the Haudenosaunee homelands, so it can serve as an introduction to familiarize students with some of the flora and fauna of the region. Feel free to use this lesson as a jumping-off point to incorporate the study of indigenous plants and animals that are significant to Haudenosaunee people. The following table has some examples of natural materials needed to create traditional Haudenosaunee items.

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## Natural Materials from Haudenosaunee Homelands

Below is a short list of natural materials from Haudenosaunee homelands that were used to create the objects that are displayed in the Hall of Eastern Woodlands.

### TREES
- **Maple**: Provides sap to make into maple syrup; the wood is used to make the base, or pestle, of corn pounders.
- **American Elm**: Used to make folded bark baskets and shingles on longhouses.
- **Basswood**: The inner bark can be made into fiber that is then twisted and woven into straps called burden straps (also known as tumplines) or lashings, for carrying large items; the fiber is also used to sew the edges of bark baskets.
- **Birch**: Used to make folded containers for seeds.
- **Black Oak**: Used to make wooden mortars for pounding corn.
- **Black Ash**: The main tree traditionally used to make splint baskets; it is still in wide use among Haudenosaunee basket makers.
- **Hickory**: Used to make lacrosse sticks and other durable tools such as pestles.

### PLANTS
- **Corn**: Used as food for people; husks used to make dolls, corn husk bottles, and many other things.
- **Dogbane**: Fiber used to make nets for fishing.

### ANIMALS
- **White-Tailed Deer**: A staple meat source; sinew used for sewing, skins used to make clothes and moccasins, bones used to make tools.

### EARTH
- **Clay**: Used to make pots.
- **Flint (and other stones)**: Used to make tools.
Before the Visit

In these pre-trip lessons, students will be introduced to an important Haudenosaunee cultural practice: The recitation of the Thanksgiving Address. The activity that introduces the Thanksgiving Address emphasizes a fundamental aspect of Haudenosaunee worldview that is both ancient and contemporary by connecting its concepts to historical and contemporary images of a Haudenosaunee home.

**TIME**  One 45 minute-class period

**PREPARATION**  For the first lesson, teacher will:

- Project the [Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address](#) video

- Print or project the full text of the Thanksgiving Address for the read-aloud (pp. 11–12; also available as a slideshow, downloadable at amnh.org/ewi-educators)

- Print, select, cut out, and display the Thanksgiving Address elements found on pp 11-12 that students will be focusing on (may choose from The People, The Waters, The Plants, The Food Plants, The Animals, The Trees, The Sun, The Enlightened Teachers, The Earth Mother, and Closing Words)

- Print or project the image of a contemporary Haudenosaunee home for students to observe (downloadable at amnh.org/ewi-educators)

**PROCEDURE**  1. Teacher introduces the topic

   The teacher will tell students that they will be learning about some of the traditions of the Haudenosaunee, a group of six Native Nations from New York State that includes the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and Tuscarora Nations. For background information about Haudenosaunee culture and history, see:

   - [The Hall of Eastern Woodlands Educator’s Guide](#)
   - [Haudenosaunee Guide for Educators](#)

2. Teacher explains the Thanksgiving Address and shares it as a read-aloud

   The teacher will explain the significance of the Thanksgiving Address, a speech made regularly by Haudenosaunee people at the opening and closing of all important gatherings to offer thanks for all the elements in nature. It may be necessary to explain that the address has no connection to the Thanksgiving holiday; it is an expression of
gratitude for all that allows humans to live. For a background understanding of the significance of the Thanksgiving Address from a Haudenosaunee perspective, the teacher can show this video of a Haudenosaunee child and adult from the Onondaga Nation talking about what the Thanksgiving Address is and why it is important:

- Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address (video)

After watching the video, the teacher will ask the children what they learned from the conversation, clarifying any ideas or vocabulary that might have been unclear.

Additional Resources:

- Skä•noñh - Great Law of Peace Center - Thanksgiving Address (video):
- Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message (book): This optional resource can also serve as a read-aloud to open the lesson

The teacher will explain that students will focus on just nine elements of the Thanksgiving Address for the duration of the unit: The People, The Waters, The Plants, The Food Plants, The Animals, The Trees, The Sun, The Enlightened Teachers, and The Earth Mother. The students will also make connections between those elements and everything that they will learn about at the Museum.

The teacher will share the full text of the Thanksgiving Address as a read-aloud. Suggestions for prompts to use with students during the read-aloud are included in the speaker notes. At the end, the teacher will post the elements they choose onto a chalkboard or bulletin board, stating that these will be the ones that the students will focus on for the remainder of the activity.

NOTE: A PDF of the Thanksgiving Address translated in both English and Mohawk can be downloaded at amnh.org/ewi-educators

3. Students observe an image and make connections to the Thanksgiving Address

The teacher will introduce an image of a contemporary Haudenosaunee home scene, ideally projected so everyone can see the details. The teacher will explain that the photograph shows a contemporary Seneca family preparing food in their kitchen on the Allegany reservation.

Students will make connections between the things they see in the image and the elements in the Thanksgiving Address that one might be thankful for. This can be done orally, with the teacher taking notes, or each student can write observations on a sticky note and post it on the images displayed.

NOTES: For reference, see the “Sample Classroom Set Up” and “Sample Student Observations” on the next page. The teacher should save the board display and materials for the post-visit activity (pp. 10–11).
4. Prepare for the Museum visit

The teacher will tell students that during the Museum visit, they will be using worksheets to learn about a food plant called Haudenosaunee White Corn, and how Haudenosaunee people used it to make cornbread hundreds of years ago.

Sample Classroom Set Up

In this sample lesson, eight elements of the Thanksgiving Address are cut into strips and displayed on a chalkboard, bulletin board, or white board. The teacher then prints the image of the Seneca family and posts it onto the board. Students will use chalk or markers to draw lines connecting elements of the address to objects that they see in the images and will write out the connections they see on sticky notes.

Sample Student Observations

Students might observe any of the following reasons to be grateful for these elements of the Thanksgiving Address, and will likely make other connections as well. The teacher may contribute some of the connections the students have trouble finding:

- **The People**: the people gathered together are alive, seemingly in good health, and at peace
- **The Trees**: the trees provide material for the family’s house and items in it, such as their table and cutting boards
- **The Food Plants**: the food plants are the ingredients that become the meal the family is preparing—we can see strawberries and potatoes—as well as the corn on the counter in the background
- **The Animals**: the animals are a food source, and are used for leather clothing and can be seen on the lacrosse stick and rattle
- **The Sun, and the Water**: both of these are necessary for all living beings to survive, including all the plants and animals
- **The Plants**: plants (especially cotton) are used to make the clothes that the people are wearing
At the Museum

In the Hall of Eastern Woodlands, teachers will use the “Teaching in the Hall” section of the Educator’s Guide to lead students through a Haudenosaunee agriculture-themed tour that starts at the longhouse model. When the tour is complete, students will use worksheets to investigate a few objects more thoroughly. This work will extend their prior classroom learning and inform their culminating writing piece.

TIME 45 to 60 minutes

PREPARATION Teacher will:

● Read the entire Educator’s Guide for the background information needed to lead students in the hall, as well as to review any procedural details

● Review the four two-page worksheets and answer keys that cover seven different objects in the hall (downloadable at amnh.org/ewi-educators)

● Divide the class into four groups; assign each group to one of the four worksheets

● Print one set of worksheets per student

PROCEDURE 1. Teacher leads students on a curated tour in the hall

Using the “Teaching in the Hall” section of the Educator’s guide, teachers will lead students on a tour of Haudenosaunee agriculture and food, which will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

2. Students explore objects in the hall using worksheets

Each student will use one of the two worksheets to investigate specific objects in the hall. Students can explore on their own, in pairs, or in small groups.

NOTES:

● Teachers or chaperones may use the worksheets to guide student observations and take notes for them in lieu of students taking their own notes if needed.

● Teachers, chaperones, and students can use the map to help find the objects.
Back in the Classroom

Students will learn about the centuries-old practice of making boiled cornbread through images and text. They will find evidence from both the information and the physical displays they started during their pre-trip lesson and their Museum visit to answer the questions: “The process of making Haudenosaunee-style cornbread today is different than it was hundreds of years ago. Which elements of the Thanksgiving Address apply to both, and why?”

**TIME** 45 minutes

**PREPARATION** Teacher will:
- Print or project “Haudenosaunee Voices: Cornbread Connections” text
- Provide students with lined paper for observations and expository writing

**PROCEDURE**

1. **Explore contemporary Haudenosaunee cornbread making**
   The Teacher will present the slide show “Contemporary Cornbread Making,” a series of photos that show the steps of making cornbread to their students from beginning to end, reading the captions aloud. The teacher will lead a discussion with students comparing and contrasting the steps they observed in the slideshow to the models and objects they saw in the Museum hall.

2. **Read about the cultural importance of cornbread**
   To develop more context for the significance of cornbread in Haudenosaunee culture, the teacher will conduct a read-aloud of “Haudenosaunee Voices: Cornbread Connections,” or give the text to students as an independent reading assignment.

3. **Continue class collage**
   Add the hall images, along with select cornbread images.

4. **Culminating discussion**
   Drawing from all of the above activities and resources, including the Thanksgiving Address video, the Thanksgiving Address text, the collage activities, worksheets from the Museum visit, and the “Haudenosaunee Voices: Cornbread Connections” text, lead a discussion with the following prompt: “The process of making Haudenosaunee-style cornbread today is different than it was hundreds of years ago. Which elements of the Thanksgiving Address apply to both, and why?”
Instructions for Educators: Read the following text aloud to the class or make copies and have students take turns reading each of the passages in order. Take one copy of the text and cut the elements into strips to stick up on a board. You can include as many as you like, but the following nine elements work effectively for this exercise.

NOTE: You can also download a slideshow of the Thanksgiving Address, as well as a PDF of it translated in both English and Mohawk, at amnh.org/ewi-educators.

1 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.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 The Animals
We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests. We are glad they are still here and we hope that it will always be so.
Now our minds are one.
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.

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 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.

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.

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.

Thanksgiving Address © 1993 Six Nations Indian Museum and The Tracking Project
Contemporary Cornbread Making

Steps for Making Boiled Cornbread

Haudenosaunee White Corn

Throughout this activity, one of the main subjects is referred to as Haudenosaunee White Corn. This is a flour corn that has been grown by Haudenosaunee people for thousands of years, and which they continue to grow today. Its original names are still used within their respective communities: for example, onëögë:n in Seneca and onnenhstakén:ra in Mohawk. There are also other, similar flour corns like Tuscarora White corn, which Tuscarora people primarily grow, that are processed and cooked the same way. Haudenosaunee White corn has been known for several decades as Iroquois White Corn, but as we shift from using the word Iroquois towards Haudenosaunee, the name that people from the six Native Nations that make up this confederacy call themselves, it seemed fitting to update what we call the corn that bears its name as well.

Haudenosaunee White Corn is known as a flour corn because each kernel is filled with a powdery corn flour that is protected by a hard outer shell. Through a variety of processing techniques, from cooking in wood ash to pounding or grinding the kernels, this corn type can be turned into a myriad of dishes, from corn soup to corn puddings. Instead of rotting, as sweet corn does when left out, Haudenosaunee White Corn naturally dries at the end of the growing season. When Haudenosaunee White Corn was braided and hung from the rafters of a longhouse until the 18th century—or today, when it is hung in a barn or garage—this corn can last up to a decade. It has sustained Haudenosaunee communities for thousands of years and remains a central part of the culture today.

Photo Slideshow

Downloadable at amnh.org/ewi-educators, this slideshow of 18 contemporary photographs illustrates the process of making a Haudenosaunee style of cornbread, also known in some communities as corn wheels. This bread bears little resemblance to the baked cornbread non-Native people may be familiar with. It is a round, boiled bread that is dense and moist, and which emits a distinct white-corn smell. There is no wheat flour nor leavener used in this recipe, only corn, water, and beans as ingredients and wood ash that is used for processing the corn. Other cooks will choose to add nuts, berries, maple syrup, and a variety of other bean types to their cornbread. This cornbread is considered a delicacy because of the many hours of preparation needed to make it. You can use this slideshow to show students the steps Haudenosaunee people use to make cornbread from Haudenosaunee White Corn. On the next page are thumbnails of images in the slideshow.
At a Glance: Steps for Making Boiled Cornbread

1. Gather the ingredients.
2. Preheat the oven.
3. Boil the beans.
4. Drain the beans.
5. Sauté the vegetables.
6. Mash the beans.
7. Add the mashed beans to the vegetables.
8. Pour the batter into the oven.
9. Bake the cornbread.
10. Remove from the oven.
11. Let cool.
12. Serve hot.
Additional Resources

Articles

- “Tuscarora White Corn Nourishes the Body, Mind and Spirit” from Buffalo News

Videos

- Jake Swamp’s version of the Thanksgiving Address
- Frieda Jacques (Turtle Clan Mother) describing the meaning of the Thanksgiving Address
- Skanoh center video of the meaning of the Thanksgiving address

Books

- Iroquois Corn in a Culture-Based Curriculum by Carol Cornelius
- Traditional Iroquois Corn: its History, Cultivation, and Use by Jane Mt Pleasant
- Giving Thanks by Jake Swamp