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# GIVING THANKS: A NATIVE AMERICAN GOOD MORNING MESSAGE

Author: Chief Jake Swamp  
Illustrator: Erwin Printup Jr.  
Publisher: Lee & Low Books

## THEME:

People of the Earth have different ways of showing their appreciation for nature's gifts, but one of the best ways to say "thanks" is to take care of the Earth.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY:

The feature book is a prayer of the Iroquois Indians celebrating the precious and rare gift of the natural world—and the resources of the earth.

On a fall day, LeVar stops to express appreciation for the gifts of the earth. This show connects to the earth with a visit to a family who grows and harvests cranberries, then on to a pueblo where native artists use clay from the earth to make pottery, and finally to a group of children who are planting trees in their neighborhood. Children sing "Come You Dreamers," a song about taking care of the earth.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Brainstorm with students ways in which they can be responsible for caring for the Earth.

Discuss ways in which people, animals, and plants are connected to and dependent upon each other.

The morning message of thanks is a ritual of many Native Americans. Discuss with students some of the rituals that are part of their lives.

Discuss different actions that people might take to show their gratitude or to say "thank you."

## CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

The story mentions gifts we receive from water, trees, birds, stars, and many other aspects of our world. Identify several living things from the natural world and have students brainstorm the variety of gifts we enjoy from those things. Encourage them to think of scientific contributions, such as: trees help provide necessary oxygen, in addition to their aesthetic contributions.

Have students research the importance of the natural world to Native American culture.

The story is a message of thanks from the Six Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora) or Iroquois Confederacy. Contact a local Native American Center for information about similar traditions among Native peoples in your area. If possible, invite members of these nations to the classroom to teach students different versions of a "Thanksgiving Address."

On a map of the United States, locate where people from the Six Nations live.

Enlarge a map of the United States on a sheet of bulletin board paper. As the students conduct their research, have them label areas of the country in which different Native American nations live. Also have them illustrate these regions with pictures of plant and animal life that is representative of the area.

Have students compose their own messages of thanks for nature's gifts.

Instead of giving thanks daily in a morning message, most people of the United States set aside one day a year for Thanksgiving. Have students research the origins of the Thanksgiving festival. Invite them to share the Thanksgiving traditions of their own families.

Research how to say "Thank you" in different languages.

Have students investigate problems and solutions associated with protecting the environment in these three areas: air, water, and land. Start a chart called "Saving the Earth" by brainstorming, and complete the chart through research. The chart has two columns—"Problems" and "Solutions." The "Problems" side has "Causes" and "Effects" sections. For example, a "Cause" might be "car exhaust," the "Effect" might be "air pollution," and the "Solution" might be "more people could carpool."

## RELATED THEMES:

ecology  
Native American traditions  
Thanksgiving  
life cycles

## RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #99 — And Still The Turtle Watched  
Program #103 — Summer  
Program #104 — Once There Was A Tree  
Program #73 — The Legend Of The Indian Paintbrush  
Program #10 — The Gift Of The Sacred Dog

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Chief Jake Swamp was born on the Akwesasne Mohawk Reservation in New York. He is the founder of the Tree of Peace Society, an international organization promoting peace and conservation, and has delivered the Thanksgiving Address all over the world. *Giving Thanks* is his first picture book.

**ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:**

Erwin Printup Jr. was born in New York, a member of the Cayuga and Tuscarora nations. He has a degree in fine arts from the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He presently lives in New York. *Giving Thanks* is the first picture book he has illustrated.

**BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:**

THE TREMENDOUS TREE BOOK

by Barbara Brenner and May Garelick, illus. by Fred Brenner (Boyd's Mills Press)

MY FIRST GREEN BOOK: A LIFE-SIZE GUIDE TO CARING FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

by Angela K. Wilkes (Random House)

A RIVER RAN WILD

by Lynne Cherry (Harcourt Brace)

**SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:**

THE WAY TO START A DAY

by Byrd Baylor, illus. by Peter Parnall (Scribner)

THE CIRCLE OF THANKS: NATIVE AMERICAN POEMS AND SONGS OF THANKSGIVING

told by Joseph Bruchac, illus. by Murv Jacob (BridgeWater Books)

THE EARTH UNDER SKY BEAR'S FEET:

NATIVE AMERICAN POEMS OF THE LAND

by Joseph Bruchac, illus. by Thomas Locker (Philomel)

DID YOU HEAR WIND SING YOUR NAME?

by Sandra De Coteau Orie, illus. by Christopher Canyon (Walker)

GOING GREEN: A KID'S HANDBOOK TO SAVING THE PLANET

by John Elkington, et al., illus. by Tony Ross (Puffin)

SCHOOL OF NAMES

by M. B. Goffstein (HarperCollins)

THE LAND OF THE GRAY WOLF

by Thomas Locker (Dial)

MOTHER EARTH

by Nancy Luenn, illus. by Neil Waldman (Atheneum)

EARTH ALWAYS ENDURES: NATIVE AMERICAN POEMS

edited by Neil Philip, photographs by Edward S. Curtis (Viking)

EARTHDANCE

by Joanne Ryder, illus. by Norman Gorbaty (Henry Holt)

**READING RAINBOW TEACHER'S GUIDE**

Program #129—Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message