

The Seneca Thanksgiving Prayer, written below, was given to Hazel Archer Ginsberg, who shared it with her e-mail list, which is how it crossed my path. Take some time to either be alone and give this prayer, or be with someone who would appreciate it, any time of the year.

Instructions for today's ceremony, depending on what would cultivate the spirit of gratitude in you most strongly, you may want to close your eyes and listen deeply to the words as I speak them or you may want to read along silently or aloud.

Call/response: In those sections that are underlined that begin with **"We give thanks..."**, we will have a call/response. I will say the line, you will repeat the line and I'll join you as well. Even though you'll hear my voice and yours, know that there are others who are speaking the same words simultaneously. **In the closing**, we will also have a call/response.

Expressing gratitude: When you are prompted to express gratitude for other aspects of your life there will be a pause so that you may think or say them aloud.

Before she shares the prayer, Hazel writes:

"This Thanksgiving Prayer comes from the Seneca Nation & is at least 500 years old. It is traditionally done around a fire, with spiritual food on the altar.

Giving thanks is common to all spiritual & religious groups. Native Americans had entire ceremonies just for the purpose of expressing thanks – sometimes lasting for days."

With Love,

Sandy

Seneca Thanksgiving Prayer

And now we are gathered together
to remember the **Great Mystery's first instruction to us: to
love one another always**, we who move
about on this earth.

And the Great Mystery said that
when even just two people meet, they should first greet each other by
saying: "**Nyah Weh Skenno**" which translates to "**thank you for being**" and
then they may take up the matter with which they are concerned.

**[Nyah Weh Skenno more literally means: "thank you for being alive in the here and now
and not adding to the confusion of the world."]**

The Great Mystery gave us our
lives and requires in return only that we be **grateful** and **love one another**. The purpose of this
prayer is to pass
on those instructions and give us the opportunity to express our gratitude.
So the first thing we will do is
give **thanks for our lives.**

And the Great Mystery gave
us **the Earth** on which to live and roam. We refer to
her as "**Our Mother, Who Supports Our Feet.**"

And
our mother gives us everything we need in order to live and be happy. She
teaches us to be generous and nurturing, yet strong.

Let us be of one mind that we
may do this properly. **We give thanks for Our Mother Who Supports Our Feet.**

And the Great Mystery decided to have **Plants** growing on the earth. They are available in abundance as **Medicines** to heal us and **Food** to sustain us.

And we have **Berries** which come back every year when the winds turn warm again. In giving thanks for them, we give thanks for the warm winds that usher in the season of abundance.

Let us be of one mind that we may do this properly. **We give thanks for Plants and Berries.**

And the Great Mystery gave us the life's blood of our mother to sustain us. When the new day dawns, the first thing we use is **Water** and it's the last thing we use at night. It comes from the **springs, brooks, ponds, lakes and rivers**. It is found not only on the earth, but even falls from the heavens in the form of blessed rain.

Let us be of one mind that we may do this properly. **We give thanks for Sacred Water.**

And the Great Mystery decided to put **Forests** on the earth. The trees of the forest provide warmth, fuel and protection. We call them our **Tall Standing Brothers** and they live their lives drinking in the sun.

When they die and give themselves for the fire, they represent the **Sun here on earth.**

One tree was created to remind us of the Great Mystery. The **Maples** stand on the earth and drip sweet liquid when the cold wind blows. Our elders called this

“wood juice” — it gives us energy and lightens our spirits during the long cold winters and is a great gift.

Let us be of one mind that we

may do this properly. **We give thanks for Our Tall Standing Brothers, the Trees.**

And the **Animals** are a great gift – they are our friends and relatives upon the earth. The four leggeds test us and amuse us; they’re our teachers and companions. And they **provide food and clothing** for the people.

And there are **Birds** with outstretched wings who dance upon the air and sing a beautiful song that ushers in the warm spring. And they also provide us with food.

Let us be of one mind that we

may do this properly. **We give thanks for the Animal and Bird Nations.**

And the Great Mystery gave the people another gift, to sustain them: the **Three Sisters: Corn, Beans And Squash**. The people are to take care of them, plant them in the earth, tend them as they grow, and harvest them. This will strengthen the hearts and sustain the bodies of the people.

Let us be of one mind that we

may do this properly. **We give thanks for the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash.**

The **Wind** strengthens the people as they move about on the earth. It strengthens our breath, clears the air as well as our minds and carries the voice of the ancient ones all over the earth so that, even in the desert, the smallest whisper reminds us we are never alone.

Let us be of one mind that we

may do this properly. **We give thanks for the Wind.**

And the Great Mystery fashioned
a sky above us and put a helper in the sky who moves about across the earth,
yet lives in the sky. This helper always comes from the east and
travels to the west. His heart is so big and strong, and his love for his
relations so great, that he lights the entire sky when he passes by. This light
is our **Elder Brother, The Sun.**

The Sun takes that obligation seriously and with great regard, for he never misses
a day of this journey. He brings us light, and warmth and allows growing things
to flourish.

Let us be of one mind that we
may do this properly. **We give thanks for our Elder Brother, the Sun.**

But there is also a time when
the earth is in shadow so the Great Mystery gave us another helper for this
time: the **Night Circle Of Light**, our **Grandmother, the Moon.** Our grandmother is a measure
for
us up to this present time. She changes her form daily: she regulates the tides
on our mother the earth and also in the bodies of women. She also taught us how
to measure through the cycle of the seasons.

Let us be of one mind that we
may do this properly. **We give thanks for the Night Circle of Light, Grandmother Moon.**

And the Great Mystery also put the **Stars** in the sky while it is dark. They are **indicators** and we
can find our way by them. Each

one has a name, and there is one for every human on the earth, those living now
and those who have passed on.

Let us be of one mind that we
may do this properly. **We give thanks for the Star Nation.**

The **Four Winds**, the directions, are our **protectors**. Wherever we go, wherever we stand, we
Are at the center of the four winds, and we want to speak good words to them so
that they may bless us with their protection.

Let us be of one mind that we
may do this properly. **We give thanks for the Four Winds.**

And the Great Mystery saw that
the people also needed guidance so he sent **Clan Ancestors to teach understanding** of the
Great Mystery.

Our clan ancestors teach us how to love one another and give guidance to our
minds. They hold great knowledge and our future depends on how well we listen
to them.

Let us be of one mind that we
may do this properly. **We give thanks for our Clan Ancestors.**

And the Great Mystery, told us
this: **“I shall continue to dwell above the sky, and that is where those
on the earth will end their thanksgiving. I shall always be listening carefully
to what the people are saying and shall always be watching carefully what they
do. They will begin on the earth, giving thanks for all that they see. They
will carry that gratitude upward, ending where I dwell.”**

We
want to live well to earn that right.

Let us be of one mind that we
may do this properly. **We give thanks for the one who gives us our lives, the Great Mystery.**

[At this time express gratitude for other aspects of your life]

Closing:

May our grief be lifted,

Our hearts be open,

Our stomach be full,

Our bones be braced,

And our will be calmed.

It is spoken, it is beautiful.