

# We Are All Related

## Native American Lessons to Care for Our Mother Earth

Perhaps you live in a home with your family. Are you ever asked to do chores to help your family members, or to keep your home nice and clean? You are also part of a larger home called Earth. For many Native Americans, the Earth, our home, is alive. We inhabit this home called Earth with all our Relations. Our relatives on this home called Earth are not just other people, but the finned ones (fish), the four legged (animals), the winged ones (plants), and the standing tall ones (the trees). Indeed, each being has its own role; every living being whether it's a wolf, or an ant, a raccoon, a spider, or a plant, each has a role to carry out and fulfill in this home called Earth.

Native Americans and other Indigenous people value all Life forms. This is because Native Americans and Indigenous people have had such close relationships with the Earth for generations. Native Americans call her Mother Earth, because she is one who nourishes all with Life. The soil of our Earth nurtures us with food, the water quenches our thirst, the air allows us to breathe, and fire allows us to cook our food. Earth is life-giving.

Even today, many Native Americans take their role very seriously and pass along traditional ecological knowledge, or knowledge about the relationships between all living things. Just like your parents or teachers might give you instructions, many Native Americans listen to their Elders for instructions on how to interact with their relatives. This knowledge and instruction from the Elders often comes in the form of storytelling, song, dance, and ceremonies. They teach about how to care for the Earth.



Part of this Respect for all Life forms includes a word called "Reciprocity," which means giving back and giving thanks, for all that the Earth provides us with. We can all do this in the form of planting trees, planting a garden, picking up trash, or not littering in the first place. We can learn how to care for our Earth from the teachings of Native Americans and other Indigenous people and their time-honored wisdom that has been passed down for thousands of years.

They have come to understand that our own well-being can only be achieved through the well-being of the entire Earth which includes us. The Earth and the environment, or what some people call nature, is not "out there." We are a part of the Earth and so we must care for the Earth.

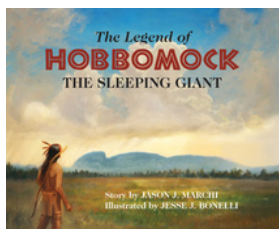
Perhaps you are thankful for a family member, friend, or teacher who cares for you. How do you show that person that you are thankful? We can also show that we are thankful for our relationship with the Earth by giving thanks and being grateful for clean drinking water, the food we eat and the air we breathe. We are ALL interconnected in the great Web of Life. In times of great challenges, fear, and uncertainty, just as in times of security and happiness, we can show our thankfulness by cooperating with all of our relatives. This means working together for a common good or benefit, and not competing with others or being selfish. Most animals and plants cooperate, both with other members of their own species, and with members of other species. Many Native Americans believe that people can learn lessons from how these beings work together to survive.

What lessons could you learn from your relatives, the plants and animals, on this planetary home called Earth? What are some things you can do to take care of our Earth? We only have one home so let's take care of it!

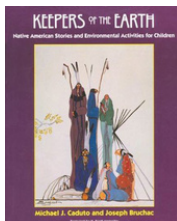


## Further Learning/Further Exploration

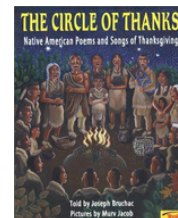
**"The Legend of Hobbomock: The Sleeping Giant"** includes Native American history and ecology in Connecticut, with a story about the Sleeping Giant of the Quinnipiac River Valley, in present-day Hamden. Link to video on Youtube, by Christopher Dobbins and Omicron World Entertainment, based on a book by Jason J. Marchi, illustrated by Jesse J. Bonelli:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sgaGWMAf38&t=2s>



**"Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children"**  
by Michael J. Caduto  
This book "promotes understanding and appreciation of, empathy toward and responsible action for our Earth and its people." The activities in this book are perfect for elementary students and teach lessons and concepts about natural history and traditional ecological knowledge. Link to resource on Internet Archive:  
<https://archive.org/details/keepersofearthna00cadu>.



**"The Circle of Thanks: Native American Poems and Songs of Thanksgiving"**  
A collection of fourteen poems and stories, based on traditional Native American stories from across North America, as told by Joseph Bruchac and illustrated by Murv Jacob. Link to resource on Internet Archive:  
<https://archive.org/details/circleofthanks00bruc>.



THE INSTITUTE FOR  
AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES  
museum & research center

38 Curtis Road | Washington, CT 06793 | 860-868-0518

The Institute for American Indian Studies Museum & Research Center preserves and educates through discovery and creativity the diverse traditions, vitality and knowledge of Native American cultures.

[www.iaismuseum.org](http://www.iaismuseum.org)



online.courantnline.com  
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4.6, 7  
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.6.5.1