

Relationships for Learning

Joe Brant – Traditional Mohawk Opening and Closing

>> Today, what I would like to challenge us all to do is just to start in a really good way. And I'm going to ask that, while I start in the best way that I know how, that you join me. And, on each and every one of the tables that we have here, you have Post-It Notes. And what I would like to do is let's have a Thanksgiving, a time for reflection together. So, as I start in a more traditional Gunagriha opening, what I ask you to do is to use a Post-it Note and just maybe reflect on one or two things that you're thankful for in your life. And what we could do is maybe post 'em up on these folding walls at some point today. Take that Post-it Note and post it up on those walls and what we'll get to see is how we can come together with one good mind. [Foreign] As we gather each and every day, it's our responsibility that we give greetings, love and thanks to each and every one of us as people, that we gather every single day and we respect how fragile life is but understand how lucky we are to be walking the earth that we're on today and that we're in good health. We gather today to share as colleagues and to learn from each other. And it's important for us to come to one mind and understand that, each and every day, when we meet up with someone that's a ceremony. And we need to honor it as that. So, today, we gather our minds together as one. And we give greetings, love and thanks to all of the people that walk this earth. [Foreign] Now, we just turn our minds to the Earth. And we recognize her as our mother and that we have a relationship with her that she takes care of us, as she's our mother. But we have a responsibility to give her the same love and respect that we give mothers in all of our nations. And we realize that everything that we need to live a good life, to have peace in our minds, to have a nice, strong and healthy body, it's all in front of us. And it's all coming from that entity that we refer to as our mother. And that our responsibility then is to give back and not take too much, but to use the things that are in front of us. So we gather our minds together as one and we give greetings, love and thanks to the sustainer of our lives, our mother, the Earth. [Foreign] And, as we direct our minds and attentions to the things that are above our Earth that we work together to make sure that the cycle of life continues. And, if we look towards the sky and we can hear these days the birds that wake up every morning and greet us with a song, the four winds that sustain life and bring new seasons. We also direct our attention towards the two suns, the daytime sun, who we'll refer to as our older brother that takes care of us in that way. He protects us and provides the earth with light and heat so that we can live in balance. And we can have this time to kind of use all the sustenance of life and all the fields of vegetables and fruit that we can harvest at this time. We appreciate the work that our elder brother does to give us that life. As well as our grandmother, the moon, that she's the leader of all life here as well. She's the one that helps bring babies to this world. She brings the dew to the grass and also is a very important part of our lives, all the way to the stars that are in the sky that help us understand when is harvest time and when is ceremony time, and shares with us all kinds of knowledge when it comes to our ceremonies and our traditions, some of the stories that we pass on to our children. So, right now, I would ask that we gather our minds together and we look towards the sky and give greetings, thanks and love to all of

the things that were put in the sky for our benefit. [Foreign] And I ask lastly that we gather our minds together as one and we thank the being that we know as [Foreign], the great and natural powers. Some people refer to that entity as the creator, or [Foreign], the person that finished the earth. But each and every one of us may have a different name for that entity. What we do understand is everything that we need to live a good life and to have good health and have peace in our minds is available to us because of all of the natural powers of this earth. And we're lucky that, each and every day, we get to join. We get to celebrate with our families. We get to join with our colleagues. We get to help shape the future of the next generations in the work that we do. And it's all because of the natural elements of this earth. They're still working, still doing their jobs. And our job, our foremost job, is to be thankful for those things that we have. So I ask us to gather our minds together to give greetings, love and respect to the natural powers of this earth that sustain our lives. [Foreign] As a tradition, you know, in each and every day when we work together, we open in a good way. And it's just like the door to your house that this morning. When you open that door, it's important for us to close it behind us. So, as we end our day, it's just important just to kind of bring our minds been together as one and be grateful for all the things that we do have in our lives. So, in closing, I'd just like to gather our minds again together and acknowledge that this morning, what normally would occur is a person would get up here and not be so nervous about the lights and give an address that brings our minds together and all the important things in life to be thankful for. But one of the things that I left out at the end is equally as important. And that's, and normally, a post script, that would state that, if there's anything that I left out in my speech, that it's up to each and every one of you to fill those voids. And I apologize for not giving you that opportunity and would like to invite you now to that opportunity. If there's anything that I've left out in my speech this morning or in closing that, please, each and every one of you, in your minds, make those corrections for me. [Foreign] In closing, just bringing our minds been together as one. And the first entity to be addressed in an opening or a closing is the people. And, today, we've worked hard with our colleagues and listening to various presentations about how we can ensure that the future generations, [Foreign], the coming faces, have an educational system that's appropriate to their needs and that we worked together today to take a stride or a step forward in that. And we appreciate the relationships that we built today and the speakers that have provided information for us so that we can move forward. It's also important for us to always remember the relationship that we have with the earth and the bounty that is in front of us for us to use each and every day. We have a specific responsibility to that in giving thanks and greetings and love to all of the natural elements of the earth and, again, directing our thoughts towards all the entities in the sky that help keep all creation in harmony. And we give greetings, thanks and love to all of the things that are in the sky that help sustain life and, once again, directing it to [Foreign], the natural powers that maintain our earth, in whichever form that you call your creator, that we give thanks and love in that direction as well. And, if there is anything that I've missed out, then, please, each and every one of you, in your own minds, please make those corrections now. Thank you for a great day. [Foreign]