

# Teaching Guide: Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén (Thanksgiving Address)

For Pre-K to Grade 6 | Kanien'kehá:ka Perspective | Canadian Context

Here are some pronunciation tips to help you and your students say Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén more accurately and respectfully in Kanien'kéha (Mohawk):

## Phonetic Breakdown

### Ohén:ton

**Pronounced: Oh-HEN-doon**

- "Oh" – like in open
- "HEN" – stressed syllable, like the bird
- "ton" – soft "toon" sound, not like "ton" in English

### Karihwatéhkwén

**Pronounced: Gah-lee-hwa-DEH-gwen**

- "Ka" – often sounds like Gah in fluent speech
  - "rih" – soft, like ree
  - "wa" – like wah
- "téh" – stressed syllable, like day but with a sharper "eh"
- "kwen" – like gwen, but with a "kw" sound

## Pronunciation Tips

### 1. Listen First

Hearing fluent speakers is the best way to learn. Use videos like:

- [Ocean School – Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén](#)
- [YouTube – Thanksgiving Address in Kanien'kéha](#)

### 2. Break It Down

Practice each word slowly, syllable by syllable. Use clapping or rhythm to help younger students.

### 3. Respect the Flow

Kanien'kéha is a tonal and rhythmic language. Try to keep the natural flow rather than over-enunciating.

### 4. Use Visuals

Pair words with images (e.g., sun, water, animals) to help students connect meaning and sound.

### 5. Practice Together

Recite the phrase as a class, starting with call-and-response or echo-style repetition.

## Overview

The Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen, or “The Words That Come Before All Else,” is a traditional Haudenosaunee address that expresses gratitude to all elements of creation. Spoken at gatherings, it brings minds together in peace and unity, and reflects the deep respect Indigenous peoples have for the natural world.

## Learning Goals

Students will:

- Understand the meaning and purpose of the Thanksgiving Address.
- Learn about Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) culture and language.
- Practice gratitude and respect for nature.
- Engage with Indigenous perspectives through storytelling, language, and art.

## Pre-K to Grade 2

Focus: Listening, nature appreciation, and simple gratitude

Watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqMomjdi-GQ>

Activities:

- Nature walk: collect leaves, stones, or feathers and say 'thank you' to each.
- Gratitude circle: 'What are you thankful for today?'
- Art: Draw the sun, moon, trees, or animals mentioned in the Address.

Resource:

<https://www.wearehawi.com/resources>

## Grades 3–4

Focus: Vocabulary, storytelling, and cultural understanding

Read:

[https://www.strongnations.com/store/item\\_display.php?ItemsID=6024](https://www.strongnations.com/store/item_display.php?ItemsID=6024)

Watch:

<https://oceanschool.nfb.ca/media/ohenton-karihwatehkwen-the-words-that-come-before-all-else>

Activities:

- Create a class 'Gratitude Tree' with leaves labeled with things students are thankful for.
- Learn Kanien'kéha words for nature using flashcards or the Kanehsatà:ke Mohawk Language App.

## Grades 5–6

Focus: Cultural respect, environmental stewardship, and reflection

Watch & Reflect:

<https://oceanschool.nfb.ca/media/ohenton-karihwatehkwen-the-words-that-come-before-all-else>

Lesson Plan:

<https://homeroom.earthrangers.com/k-3-classroom-activities/haudenosaunee-thanksgiving-address/>

Project Ideas:

- Write a personal Thanksgiving Address.
- Create posters or digital slideshows about elements of nature.
- Invite a local Kanien'kehá:ka speaker or Elder to share stories.

## Additional Resources

- Pass the Feather – Full Thanksgiving Address with Kanien'kéha phrases:  
<https://passthefeather.ca/thanksgiving-address-ohenton-karihwatehkwen/>
- Kanien'kehá:ka Language & Cultural Resources:  
<https://www.kanehsatakevoices.com/resources/>
- Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte – Short Version of the Address:  
<https://mbq-tmt.org/ohenton-karihwatehkwen/>