

## **Blessing for Rewilding Oregon Conference 2023**

*Some years ago, I had the unique opportunity to learn about the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address, originally created by Jake Swamp from the Wolf Clan of the Mohawk. Traditionally, this blessing, is offered before most gatherings as a way to bring the minds of the people together. Please join me now in gratitude.*

We give thanks for our deeply rich soils, home to the web of mycelium that are constantly communicating with each other and to all the worms and bugs that tend to that complex fungal network. We give thanks to the little ground hugging plants that help cool those soils and who provide food and shelter for shy rabbits, gentle skunks and fierce badgers.

We give thanks to the spectacular desert ecosystems, whose vast expanses bring us wide angled vision. Their thorny cactus plants and nocturnal reptiles show us the innate resilience and adaptability of our natural world.

We give thanks to the flowers; from our first tiny sand lilies to the showy, fragrant bitterbrush. Flowers entrance us with their beauty even as they dance in perfect rhythm with their pollinators. And we give thanks to the honeybees, functioning harmoniously with thousands of their kind.

We give thanks to all the carnivores: the bears, foxes, wolverines, cougars, rattlesnakes, eagles and wolves. These animals keep our ecosystems healthy by killing the weak and making their prey strong and aware. And we give thanks for the deer and the elk. May they continue to roam through these wild lands.

We give thanks to all of the birds who thrill us with their gorgeous melodies, who pull our attention upwards into the tree canopies and who show us the magic of flight. We are grateful for the vibrant hummers, flashy western tanagers and fierce goshawks

We give thanks to the trees who carry the memory of their ancestors thru their roots and have an inextricable relationship with each other. In some places, the DNA of salmon, delivered by bears, can be found hidden within their wood. In this region, we give thanks to our iconic yellow-bellied pines, born in fire. We give thanks to the trees for giving us the breath of life as they take in carbon and release oxygen.

We give thanks to the waters where we all came from. We give thanks to the oceans, to the rains and to the snows that grace our mountains and feed our rivers from deep underground springs. Here we are blessed by Lake Creek, Spring Creek and the magnificent clean and cold Metolius River. And we give thanks to the beavers who tend the waters making them rich with biodiversity.

We give thanks to the fish - some who journey many miles down rivers all the way to the oceans and back, finding the exact place where they were born, to spawn and then to die.

And we give thanks to all the mammals of the seas: the great whales who for millions of years have carried the songs of their ancestors around our world. (Evidence shows that the land mammals they descended from were once related to wolves.)

We give thanks to the winds that upwell cold water from the oceans and are the harbingers of springtime. We give thanks to the sun who gives us heat, grows the plants and changes our seasons. We give thanks to glorious sunsets and sunrises. And we give thanks to the moon, moving our tides and to the stars that glitter above us for our whole lives even as they no longer live.

We give thanks for our fellow humans who have the unique capacity to appreciate all that I have mentioned. We are the species most capable of being the caretakers of this amazing place, called Earth, and we give thanks to everyone who embraces that responsibility with grace and gratitude.

Whatever I have left out today, it was not intentional, and we throw a blanket of gratitude over that too. Now our minds are one.

## **Closing**

Today we have gathered together, sharing our knowledge and our dreams for supporting a more balanced relationship with our natural world. Please join me in giving thanks for the great mystery that is always unfolding and for being humble enough to understand that there is still much to be discovered when we allow ourselves to deeply feel our inseparable connection with Nature.

Until we meet again, our minds are now separated but our hearts remain connected.

Susan Prince  
Camp Sherman  
5/13/23