

# YOUTH PRACTICE INTERCONNECTIONS

## FEBRUARY 23, 2020: "GRATITUDE FOR THE EARTH"



This newsletter shares ideas from [Youth Practice at Clouds in Water Zen Center](#) with the community. We talk about basic Buddhist practice, using examples from daily life. Visit [cloudsinwater.org/youth-practice/interconnections](https://cloudsinwater.org/youth-practice/interconnections).

The first Buddhist *paramita* (heroic practice) is Generosity. The 'flip side' of generosity is Gratitude.



Gratitude is a way of opening our minds to the interconnection of all things on Earth and beyond.

Broadening our view tends to make us more grateful, as we realize our existence is only possible in connection with other people, animals, plants, and the Earth itself. When we feel gratitude or awe, we're closer to wisdom. And when we have wisdom or understanding, we tend to be grateful.

We are individuals, and also members of a community, and also we live on a planet. Understanding this is more and more important as technology makes the world "smaller" and more interconnected. We have responsibilities not only to our own family or country, but to the whole world. This comes back to self-interest: the way we treat the world comes back to us. That's karma. The unfolding story of climate change makes this more clear than ever.

Modern science shows us many ways that life on earth is interconnected. Astronauts who see the Earth from space come back with a new appreciation of how small and precious it is. But we don't need a rocket ship or technology to appreciate the Earth; people have been doing that for thousands of years. All we need to do is slow down and be mindful. Then gratitude may naturally arise, and with it, a more generous attitude.

### Full Group Activities

#### Game: Lotería

Let's play Lotería, a game from Mexico that's similar to Bingo. This will give us a chance to learn a few words in Spanish, and expand our view beyond the United States. It also connects with one of today's videos.

#### Song: "Monkey Mind!" - [Lyrics](#)

Let's keep working with our new song, practicing gratitude for our distracted, busy minds.

Imperfect as they are, they allow us to see the universe.



#### Song: Students' Choice

We'll do at least one other song by request. It's often "[Under That Bodhi Tree](#)."

**Open the Altar- Offer blessings or concerns.**

### Age Group Activities

#### The Thanksgiving Address: Native American Gratitude to the Earth

The Native American people known as the Haudenosaunee - also known as the Iroquois or Six Nations - begin gatherings with the Thanksgiving Address, an ancient message of gratitude to Mother Earth. This tradition inspired the holiday of Thanksgiving in the United States. It also matches perfectly with Buddhist ideas of Gratitude. Let's begin our small group session by reciting a version of this message. Take turns reading, or even better, read it together.

#### Read: "[Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message](#)"

*This book will be available in hardcopy and on the computer in class.*



"Giving Thanks" is a short version of the Thanksgiving Address with illustrations. For the full address, see <https://indigenousvalues.org/haudenosaunee-values/thanksgiving-address-ganonhanyoh/>. From that page:

"Haudenosaunee tradition teaches us that peace requires gratitude. We are to be thankful for the living world. Our relationship to the Earth is the basis of our sustenance and our peacefulness. Our Mother Earth connects us to a perpetual process of creation, and she continues to provide all we need to be happy and healthy.

To this very day, nearly every social, cultural and political event that takes place at the Onondaga Nation begins and ends with the "words that come before all others," that is known as the "Thanksgiving Address." Through these words, our minds are gathered together to share our thankfulness of what nature provides, and acknowledges the ongoing impact of these forces on human lives. The Thanksgiving Address acknowledges the people, earth, waters, plants, animals, birds, bushes, trees, winds, sun, moon, stars, as well as the unseen spiritual forces. There are

a multitude of connections between human beings and other living beings in the world. The Haudenosaunee are thankful for all the gifts that we receive.”

### Check-in: How are you?

In this check-in, whatever is up for us, can we bring it back to how the earth is supporting us? Remember that sometimes the earth supports us by giving us challenges.

### Video Part 1: “One Strange Rock” Episode 10: “Home”: Where is Home?

[Watch from 0:00-13:55, up to “hurry home.” 14 minutes.](#)

Astronauts leaving Earth gain a new perspective on our home. This segment introduces astronaut Peggy Whitson, who is a biochemistry researcher and the U.S. astronaut with the most time spent in space.

Peggy is from Beaconsfield, a very small town in Iowa. Peggy’s transformation into an astronaut is compared to the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. We are all transforming all the time, and we can change the direction of this transformation by what we do. This is an important message of Buddhism.

- What would you like to transform into?
- Do you need to leave Earth to gain a new perspective on the planet? What are some other ways you can expand your view? (e.g. reading, meditation)

### Shukke: The Buddhist Leaving Home Ceremony

“One Strange Rock” suggests that seeing Earth from space can broaden your mind and make you more grateful. Narrator Will Smith asks, “Where is home? Is it where you were born? Where you were raised? Or where you are now? Is it somewhere you live? Somewhere you left? Somewhere that shaped you? If you really want to know, you need to leave them all behind.”

But as we have seen, Native Americans didn’t need to leave Earth to develop gratitude - they just needed to pay attention. Zen Buddhist monks and lay practitioners have another way to broaden their minds: by doing zazen (seated meditation). The Japanese ceremony for ordination as a buddhist monk is called Shukke (pronounced “shoe-kay”), which means “leaving home.” Leaving home means taking a step into a larger world.

- Where (or what) is home for you?
- Do you need to leave home to appreciate it?
- Can you explore your experience on planet Earth the way an astronaut would?
- Can your view take in what other people think and feel?



### Video Part 2: “One Strange Rock” Episode 10: “Home”: Voyage of the Monarchs

[Watch from 23:15-28:25, to “the Earth has no borders.”](#)

This segment talks about the Monarch butterflies’ migration to Mexico. Their arrival coincides with the Day of the Dead Festival. The butterflies show that the earth has no real borders. Borders are only in our minds.

- Does travel broaden the mind?

### Video Part 3: “One Strange Rock” Episode 10: “Home”: Gratitude

[Watch from 40:12-46:37, to the end credits. 6 minutes.](#)

This segment is about returning home. Going away and coming back helps us appreciate what we have.

### A Modern Buddhist Gratitude Prayer?

It seems like a really good idea to open events with gratitude, as the Haudenosaunee people do. Can we imagine starting every day with a gratitude prayer? What ideas can we draw from both Buddhism and science? Here are some ideas:

- We give thanks to the Earth’s core, which drives the magnetic field that protects our planet from harmful rays from outer space.
- We give thanks to the diatoms, microscopic organisms in the ocean, that make oxygen for us to breath.
- We give thanks to the tropical rainforest, which provides many medicines.
- We give thanks to the Sun, the source of energy and life on this planet.
- We give thanks to the stars, which light the universe, and at the end of their lives, spread new elements.
- We give thanks to the Moon, which drives the tides and the cycle of time.
- We give thanks to our bodies and minds, which allow the universe to experience itself.
- We give thanks to the ultimate nature, to the unity of life, and to the interconnection of all things.

- The above are just some suggestions. What other things would you add? (Please collect ideas.)
- What would it be like to start each morning with a gratitude address? Is it something you’d like to do?



### (In Class) Hand out Magnets

**Credits** Youth Practice Leader: Kikan Howard. Grades 1-6 Teachers: Leslie Stoy, Towa Kurt Errickson, Jishi Megan Henrichs, Dylan MacWilliams.