



# STEWARDSHIP & RECIPROCITY

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## *Suggested Activities*

Think about the idea of reciprocity. For many Native American groups, reciprocal giving is a way of maintaining balance between the natural and spirit worlds for the good of the community and the environment. How is this concept demonstrated in each group's subsistence practices? Artistic efforts? Stories? Rituals and ceremonies?

One of the goals of the 1991 Festival of American Folklife was to demonstrate how Native American knowledge of the land is a powerful force in sustaining the environments in which the people live and in maintaining self-sufficiency and cultural identity. The farmers, potters, weavers, carvers, musicians, dancers, and storytellers who participated in the Festival are never distant in their thoughts or actions from the land. Most see stewardship of the earth as a responsibility inherited from the ancestors and as an investment for future generations. Can you think of ways this attitude can be applied in your life? In your community? Have any of your attitudes about your responsibilities changed as you have learned about Native American ways of viewing the world? Has your understanding of how other people live and work changed?

With your classmates, create a list of the beliefs, values, and actions you have learned about during your study of Native American cultures. Then choose one of the following activities (or design one of

your own!) to demonstrate your understanding of Native American perspectives on the natural world.

- ◆ Use your artistic skills to design a poster that illustrates the relationship between humans and the earth.
- ◆ Write and illustrate a children's story to teach about the importance of using the earth's resources with care and respect.
- ◆ Plan a ceremony in connection with the season of planting or harvesting in the region where you live.
- ◆ Write and perform a skit to call attention to a local environmental issue.
- ◆ Write a letter to a state or local official to suggest ways to treat natural resources.
- ◆ Choreograph and perform a dance to illustrate an environmental theme.
- ◆ Plant an indoor or outdoor garden. Keep a journal of what you do to care for the garden and how the plants change with the seasons.
- ◆ Write a poem in honor of the First People of the Americas.
- ◆ Research the subsistence practices of an indigenous culture in another region of the world. How do these practices compare to those of Native Americans?
- ◆ Keep a detailed log of the food you eat for one week. How much of that food comes from crops native to the Americas?
- ◆ Find out about political and environmental issues that are of concern to Native Americans living in your area. Learn as much as you can about how the traditions and beliefs of these groups influence their point of view. Write an article for your school or local newspaper to explain the issue and Native American perspectives.