

## Addressing Challenging Topics

As participants make observations, they might notice a lack of biodiversity, an overwhelming presence of pollution, or the threats to wildlife caused by climate change. Here are some tips and resources to help with these conversations:

- Make space to talk about them. You don't need to have answers, just be a good listener and acknowledge feelings and worries.
- Be open to letting participants talk about their feelings, and be comfortable validating them.
- Avoid the urge to say everything is going to be ok.
- Encourage connection and discussion with other peers and groups.
- Discuss ways to engage in solution-oriented activities, like:
  - Planting pollinator gardens
  - Volunteering at a park
  - Pick up litter
  - Conserving energy
  - Writing letters to politicians and other decision makers

[A kid's guide to climate change](#) is a good printable resource for kids from NPR.

We also asked Dr. Joseph Bruchac, an Abenaki Elder who helped us with the stories featured in the Storytime section of this guide, to help us think about how to address these challenges and advocate for hope. Dr. Bruchac points us to the importance of gratitude and the practice of giving thanks.

He says that he always tries to follow the practice of saying "Thank you," either internally or openly. For example, every time he drinks water, he gives thanks. That practice, he says, can "remind you of the fact that water is part of your body, that you are part of that water, and that we are all connected together."

He also talks about one of the very powerful traditions among his Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) friends: the Thanksgiving address. The address kicks off every significant gathering, "You begin by thanking the mother earth, what the earth has given us, then you thank the waters, what the water has given us, you thank the trees, you thank the medicine plants, you thank the 'three sisters'—the corn, the bean, and the squash—you thank the animal people and the birds. And for each of these you thank, you talk about the positive things they do for us, their attributes, and what they've given us. Birds have taught us their songs; they give us inspiration with their flight, for example. You talk about the four winds, that we all share the same breath; by sharing that breath of life, we're all connected together."

The Thanksgiving address helps us recognize how many gifts we were given, and how often we forget about them. You and your group can think about things that you are grateful about.