



Recommended Grades: PreK-3  
Estimated Teacher Prep Time: 20 Mins  
Estimated Project Time: 30 Mins

## Overview

Inspired by award-winning Native American children's book, [We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga](#), which shares the contemporary traditions of a Cherokee family, this project repurposes wine corks as stamps to create a Fall tree.

## Discussion Questions

1. In what season do the Cherokee people celebrate the New Year? Answer: Fall
2. What are some of their traditional ways to celebrate the New Year? Answer: Having a feast, dancing around the fire, wear new clothes, clean their houses and weave baskets.
3. Why do the Cherokee people say "Otsaliheliga"? Answer: To express gratitude—celebrate blessings and reflect on struggles throughout the year.
4. What do you feel grateful for? Children can write answers on their Fall tree or share with a friend.

## Prep

**From M.E.C.C.A Teacher Resource Center** (quantity per student)

- Wine corks, 4
- Light-colored cardstock, 1 sheet: 8.5x11", 12x12",
- Small trays from recycled materials, 2 (foam or plastic)
- Tempera paints: brown, red & yellow
- Marker, black

## Tools & Workspace Requirements

- Kitchen sponge
- Small kitchen knife & cutting board
- Hot glue gun or glue dots
- Small glass of water

## Project Directions

**To make the stamps:** Use the small kitchen knife and cutting board to cut corks into stamps. To make the tree trunk stamp, cut one cork in half lengthwise. To make the other stamps, you will draw shapes on the short circle end of the cork, then use a knife to cut away pieces of cork to leave only the stamp shape remaining. For example, to make the leaf stamp, use the marker to draw an almond shape. Make many small cuts along the outside of the marking, about 1/8 inch deep. Then place the cork on its long side and cut about 1/8 inch from the edge all around. Gently pull away the cut-out so that the stamp remains.

**To make the stamp pads:** Cut the sponge in half and attach one to each tray with the gluegun or glue dots. Add a splash of water to the sponge to get it wet. Squeeze brown tempera paint onto one sponge, and red & yellow onto the other. Use a spatula to scrape the paint across the sponge until the paint is soaked into the sponge.



## Project Directions

1. Start by reading the book [We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga](#), written by Traci Sorell and illustrated by Frané Lessac. The e-book is available to read for free using your public library card account.

2. Place paper, cork stamps, and stamp pads in front of each student at their workspace.

3. Make the tree trunk and branches. Using the “trunk stamp”, the cork that was cut in half lengthwise, press gently onto the brown paint stamp pad, then press the stamp firmly onto the paper. Repeat multiple times to create a thick trunk that flares out at the bottom and 4-5 thick branches that come out of the trunk. Use the rounded side of the trunk stamp to make several smaller branches coming off of each larger branch until the top of your paper is full of tree branches. (Younger children may need help making the tree shape, while older students can be more independent.) Let dry (should only take a few minutes).

4. Using the half-circle or fan-shaped stamp and the red side of the stamp pad, start to fill in the tree with red “leaves”. Place some leaf stamps to look like they are falling from the tree, and also all along the bottom of the page to look like they are covering the ground. After the red paint has dried, repeat with the almond-shaped leaf stamp and the orange paint (where the red and yellow paint has mixed in the middle of the stamp pad) and let dry. Finally, use the almond-shaped leaf stamp and the yellow paint to fill in all around the red and orange leaves, layering on top of the other colors to create some depth to the tree.

5. (Teacher note: younger students will likely need assistance from grown-ups for this part.) Using the black marker, outline the trunk of the tree and several of the large branches, and write the phrases “Otsaliheliga” and “We Are Grateful” in a rounded shape along the leaf-covered ground toward the bottom of the page.

