

PHOTO TAKEN AT LAND TRANSFER CEREMONY, WYANDOTTE NATION
PHOTO BY ANTHONY TRUEHART, GLOBAL MINISTRIES

ALL IN GOD'S IMAGE

A STUDY IN THE HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

UNIT 2 **A Different Perspective of Thanksgiving** *A Family Guide for the East Ohio Conference of The UMC*



EAST OHIO CONFERENCE
MULTICULTURAL VITALITY

Developed by
Corinne R. Dunn, M.Ed., M.A.
Certified Diversity Professional
Diversity Learning Consultant/Trainer

“Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre. He covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the animals their food, and to the young ravens when they cry.” - Psalm 147:7-9 (NRSV)

Note to Families

Note to families: this is the second in a series of guides to help non-Native adults and children learn more about specific days that are widely observed in this country so that we can grow together in our knowledge and respect for the Native American Tribal Nations in the United States. All in God's Image A Study in the History of Indigenous Peoples Unit 2: A Different Perspective of Thanksgiving provides information about the Native American perspective of Thanksgiving, which is observed on the fourth Thursday of November and has been celebrated in this country for more than 100 years. This study guide offers enlightening facts, activities, and resources appropriate for children and adults.

All in God's Image A Study in the History of Indigenous Peoples Unit 2: A Different Perspective of Thanksgiving is available for download on the Multicultural Vitality page of the East Ohio Conference of The United Methodist church website, www.eocumc.com/multi-cultural. On that page you can also download the first study guide of this series, Unit 1: What is Indigenous Peoples' Day?



Dear Reader,

Thank you for your willingness to engage in learning through the study guide series *All in God's Image A Study in the History of Indigenous Peoples*. These study guides are intended to be a resource for non-Native individuals to begin a journey of self-learning and of seeking Native and Indigenous voices from which to learn. The material in this guide features Native and Indigenous authors and our hope is that you will continue to center Native and Indigenous voices in your life.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge that this guide was compiled by a non-Native person, Corinne Dunn, an accomplished diversity consultant and trainer. While ideally resources like this would be written and compiled by Native and Indigenous persons, there is important work to be done by non-Native people to educate themselves. Authors like Ta-Nehisi Coates and others in the anti-racism movement acknowledge the difficult work of centering voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and of members of dominant groups learning for themselves without relying or putting the work on BIPOC individuals. This guide is in that space. This is work in which non-Native and the predominantly white organization of The United Methodist Church need to participate.

We also recognize that this work is not just about learning facts or history. We have a responsibility to be in relationship with Native and Indigenous peoples and to hear their stories and perspective. The United Methodist Church also has a place in the story (both good and bad) and this guide is a starting place to help you consider your place in the story. There is much repair, repentance, and restorative work to be done that simply cannot be accomplished in a study guide.

Cited resources featured in this guide are from a Native and Indigenous author and permission was given from the publisher or author to be used by non-Native people to educate non-Native people. We highly encourage you to continue to seek the voices and relationships with Native and Indigenous peoples. Our prayer is that this guide will be meaningful for you and for your family or small group. If you have any questions or concerns about this guide, please e-mail me at willj@eocumc.com so that we may continue to be in dialogue with one another.

In Christ,

Will Fenton-Jones

Director, Multicultural Vitality

What do we know about the history of the holiday we call Thanksgiving Day?

Thanksgiving is a national holiday celebrated in both the United States and Canada. It was observed by a few American presidents, including both George Washington, in 1789, and Abraham Lincoln, in 1863, as a day to show thankfulness. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law that the holiday would be officially acknowledged on the fourth Thursday of the month. In America, it is considered a day to commemorate the Pilgrim's landing at Plymouth Rock in 1620 and the meals the group ate a year later with the Wampanoag Nation who had helped the English survivors learn how to obtain food from the land. Many Americans see it as a day to spend with family, both near and far, and it is often observed by a traditional meal including turkey. It is not considered to be a specific religious holiday in much of the United States.

How is Thanksgiving Day observed in The United Methodist Church?

The United Methodist Church observes Thanksgiving as part of the Christian Year. It is a day to show gratitude to God. Typically, religious services take place around that date, including prayers of thanks, special Bible verses, and established hymns from *The United Methodist Hymnal* including "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" (#694) and "We Gather Together" (#131). Co-founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, wrote about the importance of giving thanks when he stated, "Thanksgiving is inseparable from true prayer; it is almost essentially connected with it." Read more about Wesley's commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, from which this quote was sourced, at www.umc.org/en/content/easy-ways-to-share-gratitude-this-thanksgiving-2.

In recent years, many United Methodists have celebrated Thanksgiving with interfaith services in their communities or and/or by hosting service projects for others. Some UMC leaders have also become increasingly vocal about the mythology surrounding the "first Thanksgiving" as it has been presented to us in American history. (Read "A Message for Adults: A Different Perspective of Thanksgiving" on page 9 of this study guide.)

How do Native American/Indigenous Peoples choose to celebrate the holiday?

Indigenous Peoples in the United States are diverse and numerous with more than 570 sovereign nations recognized. Each tribal nation may have its own, unique traditions which may or may not include a special meal or family gathering. Traci Sorell, a Cherokee citizen and an award-winning author, recognized that the giving of thanks should last throughout the seasons as opposed to just one designated day. Her book with Frané Lessac, *We Are Grateful/Otsaliheliga*, is featured on page 6 of this study guide.

Other Native Americans observe Thanksgiving as a day of mourning as they remember their ancestors who died because of warfare, disease, and forced removal as instigated by first, the European and then the American settlers. For them, the holiday is a way to recognize the injustices which they have experienced for hundreds of years in the Americas.

What are some common myths surrounding the first “Thanksgiving Day” in 1621?

· **Myth #1: The people who started Plymouth Colony were called Pilgrims.** Not true. The first group members were called the Separatists. They landed in America in the winter of 1620. Separatists were seeking freedom from the Church of England and were joined by others who came for additional reasons. Separatists have also been referred to as Calvinists because they followed the religious beliefs of John Calvin. The name Pilgrim was adopted at a later time since the group had, in fact, made a religious pilgrimage to what was then called “The New World.” [Sources: East Ohio News article. Fenton-Jones, William and Hawk, Daniel (11/20/20); and *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People*. Dunbar-Ortiz. Roxanne. (Adapted by Mendoza, Jean and Reese, Debbie. (2019). Boston, MA: Beacon Press, p. 50.]

· **Myth #2: This group who arrived established the first colony in the Americas.** This is also false. Because of the Doctrine of Discovery, which allowed European explorers to claim the land which they “discovered” in their explorations, other countries had already invaded areas earlier. The first English colony was Jamestown which was located in Virginia. It was settled in 1607 in what was then land belonging to the Powhatan Confederacy. [Source: *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People*. Dunbar-Ortiz, p. 68-69.]

· **Myth #3: The Native people who were present when the Pilgrims arrived were uncivilized.** Another myth! The Pilgrims encountered the original inhabitants of that area, the Wampanoag Nation, who had already been there for thousands of years. The Tribe had established a government consisting of “councils of elders, clan leaders and chiefs called ‘sachems’ [who] led the People and worked hard to keep families, villages, and the Wampanoag Nation strong” (p. 12). The Wampanoags had lived successfully off the land for centuries without considering it their own property. Sadly, when explorers came from other European countries at earlier times, this tribal nation, too, contracted smallpox which killed many members of the Wampanoag Tribe prior to the Mayflower’s arrival in 1620. The Wampanoags are very much present today. They are identified as the Wampanoag Tribal Council of Gay Head and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, both of which have been federally recognized. [Source: *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving*. Grace, Catherine O’Neill and Bruchac, Margaret M. with Plimoth Plantation (2004). Washington D.C., National Geographic.]

· **Myth #4: Squanto, a member of the Patuxet (Wampanoag) Tribe, was known to be a friend of the Pilgrims.** Yes and No. It is true that “Squanto,” his legendary name, was instrumental in teaching them agricultural skills in a land very different from their homeland. His Patuxet name, however, was actually Tisquantum, and he also proved to be an able translator for the Pilgrims. How had he acquired English as a second language? As was true of so many other Indigenous peoples at that time, he was captured into slavery years earlier by explorers and spent part of his life in Europe. It is not known how he escaped but he returned to America finding that members of his original tribe had been killed. [Source: *Squanto: Native American Translator and Guide*. Isbell, Hannah. (2018). New York, NY: Enslow Publishing.]

· **Myth #5: The name “Thanksgiving” was given by the Pilgrims when they first celebrated in 1621. It lasted just one day.** False. The Pilgrims had been celebrating harvest festivals in their homeland for years, and this was probably not the first in the New World. Native Americans, to this very day, also have these types of events throughout the year but the festivals are considered to also be a time to give thanks and show reverence. The “first Thanksgiving,” as it is now called, lasted three days sometime between September and November 1621. [Sources: *Do All Indians Live in Tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian*--Smithsonian Institution, First Edition. (2007). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books (p.73); and *We Are Grateful!* Otsaliheliga. Sorell, Traci and Lessac, Frané. (2018). Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.]

· **Myth #6: The Pilgrims invited the Wampanoags to attend the harvest celebration to thank them for their help in surviving the first year in America.** Again, a myth. In actuality, we are not certain that the Wampanoags were formally invited. It is reported that 90 members of the Tribe arrived and evidently decided to stay. The two groups shared food with one another. [Source: *Do All Indians Live in Tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian*--Smithsonian Institution, First Edition. (2007). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books (p. 73.)]

Note: To discover other myths about the first Thanksgiving, check out the books and websites listed in this family guide.

Family Activities for All Ages: Celebrating Thankfulness Throughout the Year

Note: permission was given to use the following blog in the development of some of the six activities below. Renée Gokey is a citizen of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. She is the Teacher Services coordinator at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian located in Washington, D.C. We are grateful to Ms. Gokey for contributing her Native American voice as an inspiration for these activities.

· “Five Ideas to Change Teaching About Thanksgiving in Classrooms and at Home.” Gokey, Renée. Smithsonian Voices. 14 November 2020. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2020/11/14/five-ideas-teach-thanksgiving/>

- Activity One:** investigate what foods originated with Native American cultures. Sixty percent of the world’s food is credited to the Indigenous peoples of North and South America (Reneé Gokey)! Pick a new recipe to try with your family which includes at least one of those foods.
- Activity Two:** Native American nations have developed unique and beautiful crafts. Check the blog at the top of the page for information about making a corn necklace. Wear that necklace at your own harvest celebration!
- Activity Three:** read “A Message for Adults: A Different Perspective of Thanksgiving” on page 9 of this study guide and discuss with your older child a historically accurate look at Thanksgiving. Debate whether history textbooks accurately reflect the real story. Why or why not?
- Activity Four:** learn more about the Wampanoag Tribe. Locate the places on a map where the two groups of the Tribe’s descendants are living today in New England.
- Activity Five:** our northern Indigenous neighbors in Alaska and Canada have a rich history. Choose a book to read from one of the two general book listings on page 7 of this guide.
- Activity Six:** discuss why it isn’t appropriate for non-Native children to wear Indian regalia as a costume on Halloween or Thanksgiving. (Spotlight the cover picture of a child taken on September 21, 2019, at The United Methodist Church special ceremony transferring land in Upper Sandusky, Ohio to the Wyandotte Nation.)

Activity Spotlight: *We Are Grateful/Otsaliheliga*, A Book by Traci Sorell Illustrated by Frané Lessac

Note: we greatly appreciate the help and support of award-winning author and Cherokee citizen, Traci Sorell, and Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc. in allowing us to spotlight her book. Traci Sorell contributes her Native American perspective and language as she describes giving thanks throughout the year. Her picture book describes activities in the fall, winter, spring, and summer. Readers are encouraged to visit their local library and check out the book of beautiful illustrations and Cherokee syllabary. The excerpt below focuses on the season of fall--uligohvdsi.

***We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*. Text copyright © 2018 by Traci Sorell Used with permission by Charlesbridge Publishing Inc., 9 Galen Street, Suite 220 Watertown, MA 02472, (617)-926-0329, www.charlesbridge.com. Permission was also granted to use the website's teacher's guide and video included below.**

“When cool breezes blow and leaves fall, we say otsaliheliga [we are grateful] . . . as shell shakers dance all around the fire, and burnt cedar’s scent drifts upward during the Great New Moon Ceremony . . . as we clean our houses, wear new clothes, enjoy a feast and forget old quarrels to welcome the Cherokee New Year.”

Follow-up activities to the book, *We Are Grateful/Otsaliheliga*:

- Practice: you have learned two Cherokee words in this passage of the book. Repeat them and learn the definitions: otsaliheliga (oh-jah-LEE-hay-lee-gah) "we are grateful" and uligohvdsi (oo-lee-GO-huhs-dee) "fall/autumn."
- Discuss: "The stomp dance involves everyone in the community. Women shake shells, men sing, and even children dance as everyone together celebrates through the night, praying for everyone and everything on Mother Earth" (Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc. teacher's guide). How does dancing and celebrating in this way bring Cherokee people closer together as a community?
- Draw and Create: individuals can fold a square or rectangular paper into quadrants. Younger children can draw pictures of things for which they are grateful each season of the year, i.e., playing baseball in the spring or making snowmen in the winter. Older children and adults can use prose or poetry to discuss their favorite aspects of each season and label each season with its Cherokee name.
- Watch and Listen: families might enjoy watching this 2020 video of Traci Sorell as she talks about the creation of her book, *We Are Grateful/Otsaliheliga*. She discusses how she began writing children's books as well as her recent book, *We Are Still Here! Native American Truths Everyone Should Know* which also focuses on her Indigenous background.

Books and Websites to Explore Together

Printed material and electronic websites are great ways to learn more about Indigenous peoples in the United States and other parts of the world. There are some important guidelines to take into consideration when choosing materials:

- *Who has written the book or contributed to the website?* It is always best that the author is a member of the tribal nation being described for accuracy.
- Look for materials which describe Native Americans not only in the past but also in the present. Characters should reflect varied personalities and geographic settings.
- Avoid books which depict non-Native children and even animals wearing headdresses and other types of regalia. These pictures do not reflect a respect for the significance of traditional apparel in the Indigenous culture.
- Watch out for materials that display stereotypes, both in language and in illustrations. This translates into visual media as well, i.e. streaming, animation, and cinema.
- Both fiction and nonfiction books are valuable, and don't forget Native American poetry as well!

General Book Listings:

- <https://coloursofus.com/32-native-american-childrens-books/> (Resources for young people, babies through high school age)
- <https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/american-indians/> (Dr. Debbie Reese, noted children's literature authority)

Websites for All Ages:

- <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360> (Native Knowledge portal for students and teachers)
- <https://www.facebook.com/LENACohio/> (Lake Erie Native American Council)
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education> (National Geographic)
- <https://www.eocumc.com/multi-cultural/native-american.html> (East Ohio Conference Native American Ministries)
- <https://www.umc.org/en/what-we-believe/umc-topics/our-people/native-people> (United Methodist Church)

Books and Websites to Explore Together, cont.

Fiction and Nonfiction Books

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People. Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. (Adapted by Mendoza, Jean and Reese, Debbie. (2019). Boston, MA: Beacon Press

Before Columbus: The Americas of 1491. Mann, Charles C. (2009). New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Do All Indians Live in Tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian--Smithsonian Institution, Second Edition. (2018). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books.

Encyclopedia of American Indian History & Culture: Stories, Time Lines, Maps, and more. O'Brien, Cynthia. (2019). Washington D.C.: National Geographic.

Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story. Maillard, Kevin Noble and Martinez-Neal, Juana. (2019). New York: Roaring Brook Press. (Picture Book)

Giving Thanks: Native American Good Morning Message. Swamp, Chief Jake and Printup, Jr., Erwin. (1995). New York: Lee & Low Books Inc. (Picture Book)

Native Heritage: Personal Accounts by American Indians 1790 to the Present. Hirschfelder, Arlene. (1995). New York: Macmillan.

The Native American Story Book: Stories of the American Indians for Children. Mullins, G.W. and C.L. Hause. (2016). Light of the Moon Publishing.

1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving. Grace, Catherine O'Neill and Bruchac, Margaret M. with Plimoth Plantation. Washington D.C., National Geographic.

Squanto: Native American Translator and Guide. Isbell, Hannah. (2018). New York, NY: Enslow Publishing. (Picture Book)

Taste the World: Corn. (2020). Chicago: World Book, Inc. (Picture Book)

The Mayflower: The Perilous Voyage That Changed the World. Romero, Libby and Baumert, Olga. (2020). New York: DK Books/Penguin Random House.

The People Shall Continue: 40th Anniversary Special Edition. Ortiz, Simon and Graves, Sharol. (2017). New York: Lee & Low Books Inc. (Picture Book)

Voices in the Stones: Life Lessons from the Native Way. Nerburn, Kent. (2016). Novato: New World Library, 2016. (Spirituality)

We Are Grateful/Otsaliheliga. Sorell, Traci and Lessac, Frané. (2018). Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc. (Picture Book)

We Are Still Here! Native American Truths Everyone Should Know. Sorell, Traci and Lessac, Frané. (2021). Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc. (Picture Book)

What the Eagle Sees: Indigenous Stories of Rebellion and Renewal. (2019) Yellowhorn, Eldon and Lowinger, Kathy. Berkeley: Annick Press. (Picture Book)

When We Are Kind. Smith, Monique Gray and Neidhardt, Nicole. (2020.) U.S./Canada: Orca Book Publishers. (Picture Book)

A Message for Adults: A Different Perspective of Thanksgiving

As you and/or the young people in your family examine this guide and its many resources and learn more about the holiday now referred to as Thanksgiving, you may discover some surprising inconsistencies in the stories you first learned as a child.

On November 24, 2020, the East Ohio Communications team published on the Conference website News page an article entitled “Acknowledging Our Past This Thanksgiving.” In the article Will Fenton-Jones and the Rev. Dr. Daniel Hawk shared reflections which included the following:

“The first Thanksgiving held a bright promise for the Pilgrim celebrants, but it was the harbinger of incomprehensible catastrophe for the Indigenous peoples of our land ... Today, the need for national healing seems more acute than ever. As a step toward healing, and as an act of repentance, the East Ohio Conference joins many other North American church, civic, and educational institutions in a Land Acknowledgement, to honor those peoples on whose land we now live, to challenge us to listen to their stories both past and present, and to pursue healing for ourselves and our Indigenous neighbors.”

It appears that the time is long overdue for us all to acknowledge the real story of those events in Plymouth so long ago. Hopefully, this family guide will stimulate conversation around the Thanksgiving table and in the weeks to come. Most importantly, it could be one of the first steps for us to join our children in establishing meaningful relationships with the Native Americans in our community and our country.

Additional Resources for Adults

- *All the Real Indians Died Off and 20 Other Myths About Native Americans*. Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne and Gilio-Whitaker, Dina. (2016). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- *This Land is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving*. Silverman, David J. (2019). New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-teachers-are-debunking-some-of-the-myths-of-thanksgiving>