

## Native Knowledge | Thanksgiving Story

As the holiday season approaches, many schools and students will be learning about the story of the “First Thanksgiving”. Educators across the United States will teach lessons of how Thanksgiving came to be. However, many of the materials and lessons that have been taught are inaccurate and incomplete from the Native American perspective. Thanksgiving Day, Meals, and lessons are centered around the misconception of the peaceful “Pilgrims” inviting the wild “Indians” to dinner. This story has been the focal point for decades.

### 1621 | Wampanoag

This story is between the English and the Wampanoag (Wam-pah-noah). The English people did not call themselves “Pilgrims” and the “Indians” that are attached to this story are the Wampanoag people.

The timeline for this story is dated in 1621. One year after the Mayflower landed in Provincetown also known as Patuxet.

The English people had a rough first year on the Wampanoag land. Over half of their people did not survive. The Wampanoag played an important role in the survival of the remaining English.

Wampanoag means “People of the Light” or “People of the East” or “People of the First Light”. Their land is from Southeastern, Mass and Eastern Rhode Island.





Tisquantum was a Wampanoag man that lived with and taught the English how to crop. The 1621 Harvest was successful for the English people because of Tisquantum guidance and help.

It is important to note that this myth has been told and retold for centuries based on Colonist Edward Winslow's letter describing the 1621 harvest. Native Knowledge is a tool to bring awareness to the Native perspective in this story. Native Knowledge has provided you with some information on how to address a Thanksgiving lesson without being offensive to Native American people while also sharing a more accurate account of the history of Thanksgiving.

## Things to avoid when teaching a Thanksgiving lesson



- Grocery Bag vests and paper Indian headbands with feathers
- Brown dyed t-shirts with "Indian Writing"
- 10 little Indian song
- "Sitting like an Indian" Phrase
- Giving out Native American names
- Making Indian drums
- Statements that claim Europeans discovered North America

## Suggestions

- Native American cultural presenters
- Working with a tribe near your school
- Mapping Tribes
- Culturally appropriate lessons
- Utilize the lessons in the OKCPS Thanksgiving Booklet
- Utilize: 1621 A New Look at Thanksgiving | National Geographic
- Visiting the National Museum of the American Indian website.



Native Knowledge is a series of informational handouts that teachers and educators can use to increase their cultural awareness and knowledge about Native American people. The series is written by staff members of the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) Native American Student Services department. Our hope is that all students and teachers learn about Native American people and culture and that they become knowledge carriers and teach others our truth.

OKCPS is happy to share our Native Knowledge series at no cost, but we do ask that your site and credit OKCPS for the use of our educational materials.

Quotes to use or fill space: Native peoples were and continue to be an integral part of the American Story.

The National Museum of the American Indian: American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving.

There were no Indians with woven blankets over their shoulders and large feathered headdresses cascading down their backs. There were no Pilgrims in somber black clothes and tall hats with silver buckles, either.

Grace, C.O., Bruchac, M.M., (2001) 1621 A New Look at Thanksgiving. Plimoth Plantation: National Geographic

### References:

Grace, C.O., Bruchac, M.M., (2001) 1621 A New Look at Thanksgiving. Plimoth Plantation: National Geographic

National Museum of the American Indian: American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving. [https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/thanksgiving\\_poster.pdf](https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/thanksgiving_poster.pdf)

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