



Thanksgiving: an indigenous perspective

by Dan Wahpepah Thursday, November 28, 2019

As an Indigenous person, I am aware of historical inaccuracies concerning my peoples. One such alternate view surrounds the Thanksgiving holiday. I could go into great detail about how there was eel rather than turkey, or how inaccurately natives were depicted in paintings capturing this day. We could discuss historical trauma and Perpetrator Induced Traumatic Stress which flavored these deeds and impact both the colonists and colonized in deep and profound ways. I could bring up many buzzwords designed to trigger but will refrain in favor of the reader seeking out the true history with an open mind and heart.

Instead, I'd like to share a portion of an address from the Haudenosaunee that you may consider sharing around your Thanksgiving table. It holds valuable truths about how to live in good relations with all of creation.

"Let us greet the world in Thanksgiving as if we were sharing one mind, one heart, and one body. Today we have gathered and come from many different places. We have arrived safely at this place to share with each other our gifts from the Creator.

"So we bring our minds together as one in Thanksgiving and Greetings to one another. We now turn our thoughts to Earth Mother. She continues to care for us and has not forgotten her instructions from the beginning of time. Now we bring our minds together in Thanksgiving for the Earth.

"Now as one mind we turn our thoughts to the waters of the Earth for they too have not forgotten their instructions from the creator of life. The waters continue to flow beneath the ground, in little streams and in rivers, in lakes and in wetlands, and in the great seas. They quench our thirst and help keep us clean so we can fulfill our duty to creation. We now bring our minds together in Thanksgiving to all

the Waters of the Earth. We now address all the beings both seen and unseen that dwell in the water for they too have not forgotten their original instructions from the creator of life to provide for us in many ways. With one mind we send our Thanksgiving and greetings to all the nations who dwell in the waters.

“Now we direct our thoughts to the many kinds of plants that live upon the Earth- for they too have not forgotten their original instructions. Many members of this nation sustain those who walk upon this Earth, and many others who continue to fulfill their duties to take away the sickness of the human family and elevate human consciousness. With one mind we send our thoughts and Thanksgiving to the plant nations. With one mind we now think of our relations in the many insect nations. Like the other members of the natural world, they too have not forgotten their original instructions to fulfill their obligation to continued creation.”

Because all things are in prayer, the address continues to mention the Trees, Birds, Four Winds, Thunder Beings, the Sun, the Moon, the Star nation, the Four Spirit Beings, future generations, elders, children, enlightened beings and the Creator. If interested, put in the effort to read the prayer. It is full of beautiful descriptions of their roles, our connections to them and it may deepen our gratitude and awareness.

I am asking you to do the important work that is required of us all. To achieve growth as a people is to do the work. Peace requires a constant attenuation to local/world pressures and we must constantly be learning new strategies to achieve that peace on a community and global level. We are in a time of cultural upheaval. We live in an unsustainable economy which will collapse. What better way to utilize Thanksgiving than to acknowledge the continuing genocide so we can move forward with gratitude and in good relations? Our work is to recognize the harvest, our connections, and the ways we contribute to life while not forgetting the massacres that happened so that we can have turkey day. While change is uncomfortable, a shared history is important for healing. All My Relations. Miigwech.

Dan Wahpepah - Aanishinabe