

NEWSLETTER

New Hampshire Intertribal Native American Council

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This is a popular image of the first Thanksgiving, a painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. But this is definitely NOT what happened.

What Really Happened at the First Thanksgiving? The Wampanoag Side of the Tale

By Gale Courey Townsing 11/23/12

When you hear about the Pilgrims and “the Indians” harmoniously sharing the “first Thanksgiving” meal in 1621, the Indians referred to so generically are the ancestors of the contemporary members of the Wampanoag Nation. As the story commonly goes, the Pilgrims who sailed from England on the Mayflower and landed at what became Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620 had a good harvest the next year. So Plymouth Gov. William Bradford organized a feast to celebrate the harvest and invited a group of “Native American allies, including the Wampanoag chief Massasoit” to the party. The feast lasted three days and, according to chronicler Edward Winslow, Bradford sent four men on a “fowling mission” to prepare for the feast and the Wampanoag guests brought five deer to the party. And ever since then, the story goes, Americans have celebrated Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of November. Not exactly, Ramona Peters, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe’s Tribal Historic Preservation Officer told Indian Country Today Media Network in a conversation on the day before Thanksgiving 2012—391 years since that mythological “first Thanksgiving.”

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215 Raymond Road
Candia, NH 03034**

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<http://nhinac.weebly.com>

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We know what we're taught in mainstream media and in schools is made up. What's the Wampanoag version of what happened?

Yeah, it was made up. It was Abraham Lincoln who used the theme of Pilgrims and Indians eating happily together. He was trying to calm things down during the Civil War when people were divided. It was like a nice unity story.

So it was a political thing?

Yes, it was public relations. It's kind of genius, in a way, to get people to sit down and eat dinner together. Families were divided during the Civil War.

So what really happened?

We made a treaty. The leader of our nation at the time—Yellow Feather Oasmeequin [Massasoit] made a treaty with (John) Carver [the first governor of the colony]. They elected an official while they were still on the boat. They had their charter. They were still under the jurisdiction of the king [of England]—at least that's what they told us. So they couldn't make a treaty for a boatload of people so they made a treaty between two nations—England and the Wampanoag Nation.

What did the treaty say?

It basically said we'd let them be there and we would protect them against any enemies and they would protect us from any of ours. [The 2011 Native American copy coin commemorates the 1621 treaty between the Wampanoag tribe and the Pilgrims of Plymouth colony.] It was basically an 'I'll watch your back, you watch mine' agreement. Later on we collaborated on jurisdictions and creating a system so that we could live together.

What's the Mashpee version of the 1621 meal?

You've probably heard the story of how Squanto assisted in their planting of corn? So this was their first successful harvest and they were celebrating that harvest and planning a day of their own thanksgiving. And it's kind of like what some of the Arab nations do when they celebrate by shooting guns in the air. So this is what was going on over there at Plymouth. They were shooting guns and canons as a celebration, which alerted us because we didn't know who they were shooting at. So Massasoit gathered up some 90 warriors and showed up at Plymouth prepared to engage, if that was what was happening, if they were taking any of our people. They didn't know. It was a fact-finding mission.

When they arrived it was explained through a translator that they were celebrating the harvest, so we decided to stay and make sure that was true, because we'd seen in the other landings—[Captain John] Smith, even the Vikings had been here—so we wanted to make sure so we decided to camp nearby for a few days. During those few days, the men went out to hunt and gather food—deer, ducks, geese, and fish. There are 90 men here and at the time I think there are only 23 survivors of that boat, the Mayflower, so you can imagine the fear. You have armed Natives who are camping nearby. They [the colonists] were always vulnerable to the new land, new creatures, even the trees—there were no such trees in England at that time. People forget they had just landed here and this coastline looked very different from what it looks like now. And their culture—new foods, they were afraid to eat a lot of things. So they were very vulnerable and we did protect them, not just support them, we protected them. You can see throughout their journals that they were ———

always nervous and, unfortunately, when they were nervous they were very aggressive.

So the Pilgrims didn't invite the Wampanoags to sit down and eat turkey and drink some beer?

[laughs] Ah, no. Well, let's put it this way. People did eat together [but not in what is portrayed as "the first Thanksgiving"]. It was our homeland and our territory and we walked all through their villages all the time. The differences in how they behaved, how they ate, how they prepared things was a lot for both cultures to work with each other. But in those days, it was sort of like today when you go out on a boat in the open sea and you see another boat and everyone is waving and very friendly—it's because they're vulnerable and need to rely on each other if something happens. In those days, the English really needed to rely on us and, yes, they were polite as best they could be, but they regarded us as savages nonetheless.

So you did eat together sometimes, but not at the legendary Thanksgiving meal.

No. We were there for days. And this is another thing: We give thanks more than once a year in formal ceremony for different season, for the green corn thanksgiving, for the arrival of certain fish species, whales, the first snow, our new year in May—there are so many ceremonies and I think most cultures have similar traditions. It's not a foreign concept and I think human beings who recognize greater spirit than they would have to say thank you in some formal way.

What are Mashpee Wampanoags taught about Thanksgiving now?

Most of us are taught about the friendly Indians and the friendly Pilgrims and people sitting down and eating together. They really don't go into any depth about that time period and what was going on in 1620. It was a whole different mindset. There was always focus on food because people had to work hard to go out and forage for food, not the way it is now. I can remember being in Oklahoma amongst a lot of different tribal people when I was in junior college and Thanksgiving was coming around and I couldn't come home—it was too far and too expensive—and people were talking about, Thanksgiving, and, yeah, the Indians! And I said, yeah, we're the Wampanoags. They didn't know! We're not even taught what kind of Indians, Hopefully, in the future, at least for Americans, we do need to get a lot brighter about other people.

So, basically, today the Wampanoag celebrate Thanksgiving the way Americans celebrate it, or celebrate it as Americans?

Yes, but there's another element to this that needs to be noted as well. The Puritans believed in Jehovah and they were listening for Jehovah's directions on a daily basis and trying to figure out what would please their God. So for Americans, for the most part there's a Christian element to Thanksgiving so formal prayer and some families will go around the table and ask what are you thankful for this year. In Mashpee families we make offerings of tobacco. For traditionalists, we give thanks to our first mother, our human mother, and to Mother Earth. Then, because there's no real time to it you embrace your thanks in passing them into the tobacco without necessarily speaking out loud, but to actually give your mind and spirit together thankful for so many things... Unfortunately, because we're trapped in this cash economy and this 9-to-5 [schedule], we can't spend the normal amount of time on ceremonies, which would last four days for a proper Thanksgiving.

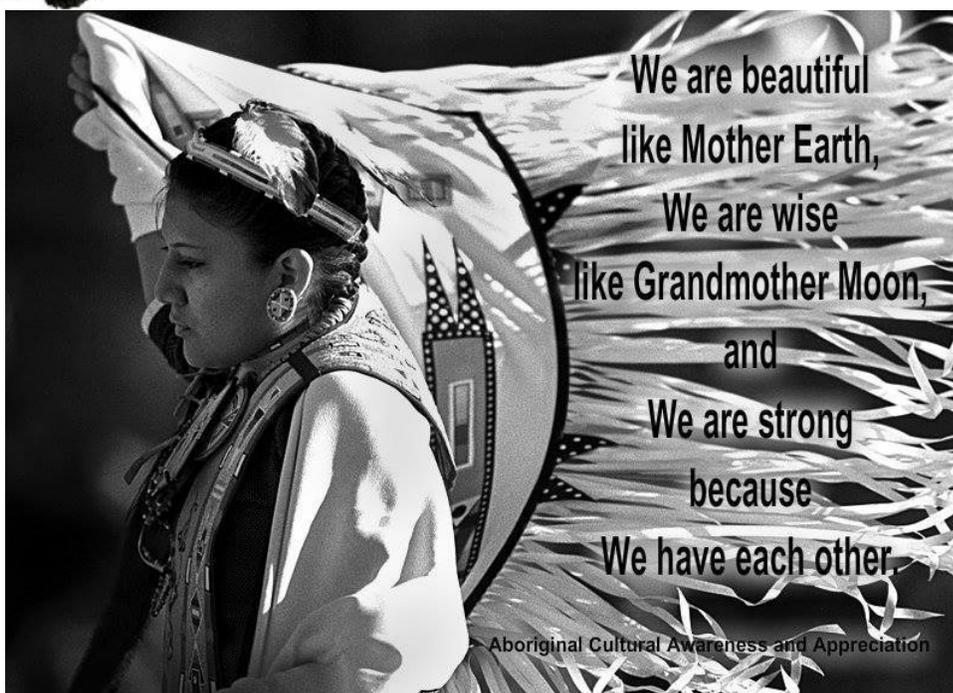
Do you regard Thanksgiving as a positive thing?

As a concept, a heartfelt Thanksgiving is very important to me as a person. It's important that we give thanks. For me, it's a state of being. You want to live in a state of thanksgiving, meaning that you use the creativity that the Creator gave you. You use your talents. You find out what those are and you cultivate them and that gives thanks in action.

And will your family do something for Thanksgiving?

Yes, we'll do the rounds, make sure we contact family members, eat with friends and then we'll all celebrate on Saturday at the social and dance together with the drum.

This has been an interesting and busy summer, for one and all. We had several new Pow-wows this year. However all the pow-wows we attended were uplifting and many people, spectators and dancers alike came and enjoyed these pow-wows and festivities. For the most part Creator had blessed us with a great summer, and nearly perfect weather which created an atmosphere of good spirit. As many of you know it is a lot of work putting on a Pow-wow. And we would sincerely like to say Thank You to every one that helped us throughout the 2013 season. Many of our mutual Friends, vendors, singers, flutists, story tellers and dancers from New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Connecticut were there at many of these events to make this summer successful. A big thank you to all of the Drums whose beat and voice were the heart beat of all of this... Many Blessings to every one we know and care about for a safe and healthy winter. Again we thank you.



I am Starting the call early for next years Pow-wows and events. We will Need Volunteers for all of the Pow-Wow's, for The Gate, The Feasts, Security for three shifts, set up, and clean up. We would like to have some of you help out with making desserts, donating coffee supplies, and paper goods. We need volunteers for doing crafts with the kids. We will need volunteers to run the coffee station. And runners for the elders, fire keepers, and drums. We are sadly lacking people to help. There is a great need here and a niche that needs to be filled.

NH Indian Bones Still in Europe?

Written by J. Dennis Robinson

NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY:

Passaconaway has been called the greatest leader of New England natives. Were his remains discovered in 1820 and shipped to France? What happened when NH asked for them back in 1984? Are they still there?

History News Update Exclusive to SeacoastNH.com & the NH Gazette

The remains of 17th century Indian Sagamore Passaconaway may be buried, not in his native New Hampshire soil, but among the archaeological collections of a European museum. According to a 1984 New York Times article, then NH Governor John Sununu petitioned French authorities on behalf of a local Native American representative to recover the bones of Passaconaway stored in a Paris museum since 1821.

But the attempt "fizzled" according to current NH State Archaeologist Richard Boisvert contacted this week on the 20th anniversary of the attempt. Passaconaway was chief of the confederation of New Hampshire area tribes during the first fifty years of European contact and promoted peace with whites during his long reign. Boisvert says the life and death of the 17th century Indian leader are still "clouded in mystery".

"We have no specific evidence to indicate that we know where the (Passaconaway's) remains are," he says.

According to the NY Times article, artifact hunter Peter Woodbury of Bedford unearthed the bones in 1820 while exploring an island in the Merrimack River near Manchester, thought to belong to the Penacook leader. The remains were apparently sent to the Museum of Natural History in Paris for study the following year. Later research by Woodbury's descendants indicated that the bones were still in France as late as 1928, but attempts to get them back have always been unsuccessful.

Historian David Stewart Smith of Webster, NH says the gubernatorial request failed 20 years ago partially because it was poorly worded. Smith has long been involved in the repatriation of Native American remains from museums. He notes, however, that there is no way to know whether the bones – called "gigantic" by Woodbury -- really belonged to Passaconaway, or even to a Native American. The evidence also suggests, he says, that Woodbury's excavation may not have taken place on Cartagena Island, legendary home of Passaconaway, but elsewhere.

Smith, an ethno-historian, teaches at Vermont College and is of Indian descent. He is currently writing a book about the confederation of Penacook tribes that Passaconaway initiated around the time the first settlers arrived in New England. He describes Passaconaway as "the King Arthur of New England" who united his people and kept the peace, despite mistreatment from white colonists.

Continued from previous page;

"In terms of his death," Smith says, "there isn't anything absolute. There is nothing reported. The nearest I can get is that he disappears from history around 1666, the same time as the Mohawk raid on the Penacooks."

It is not surprising, Smith says, that French museum officials were unable or unwilling to locate the bones from the Peter Woodbury collection from 1820.

Museums nowadays are reluctant to admit that they have Indian remains, he says, since modern Indians are seeking to rebury them. He says it is unclear why these particular bones, if they exist, would require nearly 200 years for "scientific study" to be completed. Smith points out that the Smithsonian Institute reportedly has remains from 150,000 to 200,000 human individuals numbered and stored in its collections, many Native Americans.

In a final twist, according to a local reporter who researched the story in 1984, the remains may not be in the original French museum at all. The reporter, who prefers not to be identified, told SeacoastNH.com that a Paris museum curator wrote back to the governor's office in 1984. He explained that the alleged bones of Passaconaway were in Paris until the Germans were about to occupy the city during World War II. At that point the bones from New Hampshire were reportedly tossed into boxes containing the bones of other skeletal remains from archaeological digs by early French archaeologists in America. These boxes were sent to another museum.

According to the reporter, the curator of the other museum located the box full of mingled bones in 1984, but was unable to separate out those from the Woodbury collection from 1821. They apparently reside today in the basement of the second museum. Where is the other museum? Our source would not say.

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Blood Quantum - Why It Matters, and Why It Shouldn't
by Christina Berry

"You're an Indian? What part?"



That's the universal question many mixed-blood American Indians are asked every day. How many times have you mentioned in passing that you are Cherokee to find your conversation interrupted by intrusive questions about percentage? How many times have you answered those questions? Well stop! That's right -- stop answering rude questions.

Have you ever been talking to someone who mentioned that they were part Hispanic, part African-American, part Jewish, part Italian, part Korean, etc.? Have you ever asked them what percentage? Hopefully your answer is no, because if your answer is yes, then you're rude. It would be rude to ask someone what part Hispanic they are, but we accept that people can ask us what part Cherokee we are.

This is a double standard brought about by our collective history as American Indians, and is one we should no longer tolerate.

The history of blood quantum begins with the Indian rolls and is a concept introduced to American Indians by white culture. Throughout early Native history, blood never really played a factor in determining who was or was not included in a tribe. Many American Indian tribes practiced adoption, a process whereby non-tribal members would be adopted into the tribe and over time become fully functioning members of the group. Adoption was occasionally preceded by capture. Many tribes would capture members of neighboring tribes, white settlers, or members of enemy tribes. These captives would replace members of the tribe who had died. They would often be bestowed with some of the same prestige and duties of the person they were replacing. While the transformation from captive to tribal member was often a long and difficult one, the captive would eventually become an accepted member of the tribe. The fact that the adoptee was sometimes of a different ethnic origin was of little importance to the tribe.

It wasn't until the federal government became involved in Indian government that quantum became an issue. One of the attributes collected on a person signing one of the many Indian rolls was their quantum. However, this was highly subjective as it was simply a question that the roll takers would allow the people to answer for themselves. I know for a fact that this was known to be incorrect because my own ancestors' quantum is recorded incorrectly. My great grandmother and her sister are listed with generationally different quanta even though they were sisters with the same mother and father and have the exact same quantum.

In this day and age, however, quantum is heavily relied upon for determining eligibility for tribal recognition. In order to become a registered citizen of any federally recognized Cherokee tribe you must first get a CDIB (Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood). This CDIB is issued by the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) and simply states that the United States government certifies that you have a specified degree of Indian blood and are eligible to be a member of a given federally recognized tribe. Once you have a CDIB you can become a recognized citizen of that tribe.

In addition, many Indian tribes include their own quantum restrictions for citizenship. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians requires that you be 1/16 or higher to join, and the United Keetowah Band requires a blood quantum of 1/4 or higher. The Cherokee Nation, on the other hand, has no quantum restrictions. The majority of the Cherokee Nation has 1/4 or less Indian blood.



When considering these numbers it is important to remember that the Cherokee were in direct contact with white settlers very early in American history. Many prominent Cherokee families include inter-married whites as far back as the colonial period -- prior to the American Revolution. As you can imagine, with over two hundred years of intermarriage, many Cherokee today have some very confusing fractions to spit out every time someone asks, "What part Indian are you?"

But why do we, as tribes or individuals, think that a number is sufficient in proving our Cherokeeeness? Blood quantum is just that -- a number -- a sterile, inhuman way of calculating authenticity. When a person asks, "What part Cherokee are you?"

The Blood Quantum - Why It they are trying to quantify your authenticity. If the answer given is a small percentage or an incomprehensible fraction, the answerer's Cherokeeeness is called into question. Why? Does the fact that my ancestor Granny Hopper married a Scottish trader take away from the fact that Granny Hopper will forever be my great, great, great...great grandma? No, it just means that one of my other great, great, great...great grandmas had a really neat Scottish accent.

We are not Gregor Mendel's cross-pollinated pea plants; we are people. Our ethnicity and cultural identity is tied to our collective and ancestral history, our upbringing, our involvement with our tribe and community, our experiences, memories and self-identity. To measure our "Indianness" by a number is to completely eliminate the human element. And to allow others to judge us based on that number is to continue a harmful trend.

Next time someone asks you what part Cherokee you are, tell them it's irrelevant. If you're braver than me, challenge them by explaining that they are asking a rude question. Because in the end, the answer doesn't matter. You're a whole person, not the sum of your "parts." If any "part" of you is Cherokee, then you are Cherokee. Period.

Art Credit

The image above is a work by Cherokee National Treasure artist Martha Berry, a close up section of the bandolier bag called, "Quantum Envy." You can see more of her work in the All Things Cherokee Art Gallery. All Things Cherokee: Martha Berry



I have to apologize for being late with this publication. My husband, Frank had another stroke in October which put this publication back a few weeks then, Thanksgiving came and went, and complications to my life have pushed the publication back again thus far. It is nearly Christmas, as I write this and you will probably not get this newsletter until the January meeting and another newsletter will be due by the end of the month. I have done my best to adhere to the 4 times a year publication. January, April, July, and October, but this has been a difficult year for many of us. And we all have had several deaths this fall, and into the winter months to deal with. I will continue to do my best with this publication, and keep it coming out on time. I had a lot of help, when Grandfather Don Newell read and edited, this with me. We are both sticklers on spelling, but he was a bigger stickler on punctuation than I am some days. We worked well together. He is a big part of many lives that is missed often. If you have anything to share, to add to the Newsletter, ideas or even comics please send them to me or to The new address listed on page 2. It is - New Hampshire Intertribal Native American Council - 215 Raymond Road Candia, NH 03034

Aho Wilowoni

The following tale was found among the E. Tappan Adney Manuscripts in the Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. All of the tales where this came from, were collected by Adney from Governor William Neptune of Pleasant Point Reservation, Maine, in the early 1940's.

An Indian Boy That Almost Turned Into A Bear

A Passamaquoddy boy was lost in the woods. He was hungry and scared. He goes into a hole; a bear was in there. He is scared and he comes out. The big bear was a female; she had little cubs with her, and when boy come out big bear come close to him, [and] now and then touch him but not want to hurt him, like make [i.e. like she was making] some motion [for] him [to] do something, but young fellow wouldn't move so bear went around him and started on ahead walking. Then at last young fellow think, "I will go with it," and starts out with bear.

Bear take him where she have cubs. Night time come, [and to] keep little fellow from freezing she put him together with cubs, and they don't eat nothing but berries that summer. When little fellow saw got to [i.e. that he'd have to] eat all winter he put stuff he gathered into den so [he] could eat, and so big bear know he want to eat and help him and got enough [for him] to eat all winter. So they went into den and stay all winter. Bear don't eat nothing. Spring time they come out and the bear would leave young fellow; course, young fellow go out, but too cold for him; he go back. Big bear would not leave her friend; he played with cub.

In two years time the Indians discovered this big bear and the young feller, the young man, . . . and he told them not to kill his mother. When they found him his breast had begun grow hair like a bear. Well, on account of this young man, bear got away; this young man tell her he seen them coming. Young man was wild, didn't want come home, tried to get away. When came to settlement they looked after him but he wanted [to] go back into the woods. [It] was about a year before he got civilized, and when he got civilized every bit of hair come out. And old people thinks, 'If he stay one year more with bear he turn into a bear.'

At last young man got married and his wife wanted some bear meat. They had deer, raccoon; he will kill any kind of meat. He kin tell [from a] den without digging it whether a female or a male bear inside how much smoke (steam) [rises from it; it is] more strong from female. He told them, "If you see that, keep away from it; that will (may) be my mother," and he wouldn't kill any female bear. And this young man he kill so many bear, this woman ask husband, "Why you not kill female? Might taste different."

He didn't pay attention. Wife don't know his story; he keep that secret himself. And she coaxed him to kill female bear. At last wife got troubled he not kill female. "If you don't bring she bear, I won't live with you any longer."

So he went out and killed the female bear and brought her home and said, "Here it is. That will be last bear you eat. No more bear meat ever."

And it was the last one, too. That young man didn't live much longer. He died. It worried him till he died. He couldn't think of nothing else, but how he had killed his mother the one that had saved him in the woods.

A Few Upcoming Events:

January 8th, 2014—The NH Intertribal Native American Council Monthly Meeting - Meeting Starts at 7PM - FMI Call 603-65 1-8769 Laconia Police Station, New Salem Street, Laconia, NH

January 11th, 2014— Dighton Indian Council: Pot Luck Social, 5pm Dighton Council Hall, 111 Somerset Avenue Rte 138 Dighton, MA 508-880-9507

January 25th, 2014— NH Intertribal—3 Annual Honor the Veteran’s Pow-wow Plymouth State University Foley Gymnasium PE Center Holderness/Plymouth, NH

February 5th, 2014- The NH Intertribal Native American Council Monthly Meeting - Meeting Starts at 7PM - FMI Call 603-65 1-8769 Laconia Police Station, New Salem Street, Laconia, NH

February 9th, 2014- UNACC 16th annual Winter Social, and Pot Luck, (Fort) Devens Massachusetts 10 Antietam St off Route 2—Exit 37B , Jackson Entrance or Rte 495, Exit 29B Rte 2A through Main Entrance 978-772-1306

March 5th 2014 - The NH Intertribal Native American Council Monthly Meeting - Meeting Starts at 7PM - FMI Call 603-65 1-8769 Laconia Police Station, New Salem Street, Laconia, NH

March 9th, 2014 - UNACC 9*th Annual Bear fest (Wake Up), (Fort) Devens Massachusetts 10 Antietam St off Route 2—Exit 37B , Jackson Entrance or Rte 495, Exit 29B Rte 2A through Main Entrance 978-772-1306

April 2nd, 2014- The NH Intertribal Native American Council Monthly Meeting - Meeting Starts at 7PM - FMI Call 603-65 1-8769 Laconia Police Station, New Salem Street, Laconia, NH

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