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## OUR VIEW

# Thanksgiving myths

By VINCENT SCHILLING  
*Indian Country Today*

Considering *Indian Country Today* has published its fair share of the true history of Thanksgiving, in which 90 Wampanoag shared provisions with the Pilgrims in 1621, we thought we would take a bit of time to delve into some of the most common misconceptions about the November holiday.

### The Thanksgiving Day celebrates a peaceful gathering

In 1621, though Pilgrims celebrated a feast, it was not repeated in the years to follow. In 1636 a murdered white man was found in his boat and the Pequot were blamed. In retaliation settlers burned Pequot villages.

Additionally, English Major John Mason rallied his troops to further burn Pequot wigwams and then attacked and killed hundreds more men, women and children. According to Mason's reports of the massacre, "We must burn them! Such a dreadful terror let the Almighty fall upon their spirits that they would flee from us and run into the very flames. Thus did the Lord judge the heathen, filling the place with dead bodies."

The Governor of Plymouth William Bradford wrote: "Those that escaped the fire were slain with the sword; some hewed to pieces, others run through with their rapiers, so that they were quickly dispatched and very few escaped. It was

conceived they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire ...horrible was the stink and scent thereof, but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the prayers thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them."

The day after the massacre, William Bradford, who was also the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, wrote that from that day forth shall be a day of celebration and thanks giving for subduing the Pequots and "For the next 100 years, every Thanksgiving Day ordained by a Governor was in honor of the bloody victory, thanking God that the battle had been won."

### Native Americans and the Pilgrims were "besties"

The above statement is straight from the mouth of a fifth-grader at Long Elementary School in Ohio, who stated the Indians (Wampanoag) and Pilgrims were not "besties" or best friends. True to this statement, the pilgrims in Massachusetts were far from friendly. Soon after arriving in Plymouth, Massachusetts, Pilgrims went into Indians' dwellings and cornfields and took whatever they wanted, leaving beads behind. But that isn't the picture that is painted by many accounts of the first Thanksgiving.

According to one colonist's account in "Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong" by James Loewen: "The next morning we found a place like a grave. We decided to dig it up. We found first a mat, and under that a fine bow... We also found bowls, trays, dishes, and things like that. We took several of the prettiest things to carry away with us, and covered the body up again."

The Pilgrims settled in an area that was once Patuxet, a Wampanoag village, but it had been abandoned four years prior because of a deadly outbreak of a plague brought by European traders. Before 1616, the Wampanoag numbered 50,000 to 100,000, occupying 69 villages scattered throughout southeastern Massachusetts and eastern Rhode Island. The plague, however, killed as many as two-thirds of them. Many also had been captured and sold as slaves.

### Native Americans and Pilgrims came together to give thanks and celebrate

In 1621, when the Pilgrims were celebrating a successful harvest, they were shooting guns and cannons into the air. The Wampanoag chief and 90 warriors made their way to the settlement in full warrior mode — in response to the gunfire. As the Huffington Post's Richard Schiffman puts it: "It remains an open question, however, whether the Wampanoag were actually invited, or if they crashed the party."

The Pilgrims were most likely nervous — the Wampanoag outnumbered the Pilgrims two to one, but it certainly wasn't the happy picture put forth in many history books. According to Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Ramona Peters: "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."

### They ate turkey, sweet potatoes and cranberry sauce at the first Thanksgiving

According to many historical accounts, there is no proof of turkey gobbling at the 1621 meal, but there was wild fowl (most likely geese or duck). Sweet potatoes were not yet grown in North America and cranberries are not a likely dessert food because sugar was an unaffordable luxury. Other items on the table included such things as venison, pumpkin, succotash and Indian corn.

### Europeans appreciated Squanto's help

Many have heard the story of the friendly Indian Squanto who learned English from fishermen and later taught the Pilgrims how to plant corn and other vegetables. But what many history books don't share is that Squanto was kidnapped as a boy and sold into slavery in Spain. After several years, Squanto struggled to get back to Cape Cod.

When he returned to his village, he discovered he was the only member of his tribe that remained — the rest were either killed in battle or died of disease during his absence.

Another myth here would be to note that Squanto did not learn English solely to help the colonists — it was a necessity to facilitate his escape so he could return home.

### Pilgrims taught Indians about Thanksgiving

The Pilgrims did not introduce the sentiment of Thanksgiving to the Indians. According to Loewen, "Thanksgiving is full of embarrassing facts. The Pilgrims did not introduce the Native Americans to the tradition; Eastern Indians had observed autumnal harvest celebrations for centuries. Our modern celebrations date back only to 1863; not until the 1890s did the Pilgrims get included in the tradition; no one even called them 'Pilgrims' until the 1870s."

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## OTHER VIEWS

# How evil is big tech?

Not long ago, tech was the coolest industry. Everybody wanted to work at Google, Facebook and Apple. But over the past year the mood has shifted.

Some now believe tech is like the tobacco industry — corporations that make billions of dollars peddling a destructive addiction. Some believe it is like the NFL — something millions of people love, but which everybody knows leaves a trail of human wreckage in its wake.

Surely the people in tech — who generally want to make the world a better place — don't want to go down this road. It will be interesting to see if they can take the actions necessary to prevent their companies from becoming social pariahs.

There are three main critiques of big tech.

The first is that it is destroying the young. Social media promises an end to loneliness but actually produces an increase in solitude and an intense awareness of social exclusion. Texting and other technologies give you more control over your social interactions but also lead to thinner interactions and less real engagement with the world.

As Jean Twenge has demonstrated in book and essay, since the spread of the smartphone, teens are much less likely to hang out with friends, they are less likely to date, they are less likely to work.

Eighth-graders who spend 10 or more hours a week on social media are 56 percent more likely to say they are unhappy than those who spend less time. Eighth-graders who are heavy users of social media increase their risk of depression by 27 percent. Teens who spend three or more hours a day on electronic devices are 35 percent more likely to have a risk factor for suicide, like making a plan for how to do it. Girls, especially hard hit, have experienced a 50 percent rise in depressive symptoms.

The second critique of the tech industry is that it is causing this addiction on purpose, to make money. Tech companies understand what causes dopamine surges in the brain and they lace their products with "hijacking techniques" that lure us in and create "compulsion loops."

Snapchat has Snapstreak, which rewards friends who snap each other every day, thus encouraging addictive behavior. News feeds are structured as "bottomless bowls" so that one page view leads down to another and another and so on forever. Most social media sites create irregularly timed rewards; you have to check your device compulsively because you never know when a burst of social affirmation from a Facebook like may come.

The third critique is that Apple, Amazon, Google and Facebook are near monopolies that use their market power to invade the private lives of their users and impose unfair



DAVID BROOKS  
Comment

conditions on content creators and smaller competitors. The political assault on this front is gaining steam. The left is attacking tech companies because they are mammoth corporations; the right is attacking them because they are culturally progressive. Tech will have few defenders on the national scene.

Obviously, the smart play would be for the tech industry to get out in front and clean up its own pollution. There are activists like Tristan Harris of Time Well Spent, who is trying to move the tech world in the right directions. There are even some good engineering responses. I use an app called Moment to track and control my phone usage.

The big breakthrough will come when tech executives clearly acknowledge the central truth: Their technologies are extremely useful for the tasks and pleasures that require shallower forms of consciousness, but they often crowd out and destroy the deeper forms of consciousness people need to thrive.

Online is a place for human contact but not intimacy. Online is a place for information but not reflection. It gives you the first stereotypical thought about a person or a situation, but it's hard to carve out time and space for the third, 15th and 43rd thought.

Online is a place for exploration but discourages cohesion. It grabs control of your attention and scatters it across a vast range of diverting things. But we are happiest when we have brought our lives to a point, when we have focused attention and will on one thing, wholeheartedly with all our might.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that we take a break from the distractions of the world not as a rest to give us more strength to dive back in, but as the climax of living. "The seventh day is a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul, joy and reticence," he said. By cutting off work and technology we enter a different state of consciousness, a different dimension of time and a different atmosphere, a "mine where the spirit's precious metal can be found."

Imagine if instead of claiming to offer us the best things in life, tech merely saw itself as providing efficiency devices. Its innovations can save us time on lower-level tasks so we can get offline and there experience the best things in life.

Imagine if tech pitched itself that way. That would be an amazing show of realism and, especially, humility, which these days is the ultimate and most disruptive technology.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in September 2003. He has been a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*, a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, and is currently a commentator on PBS.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Walden's votes in Congress will cost him votes in election

This letter is directed to my neighbors in Oregon's Second Congressional District who, like me, have been supporters of our Representative Greg Walden.

We all need to pay attention to Rep. Walden's vote last week in support of the U.S. House tax restructuring bill. The truth is that this bill will harm many of us in order to pay for permanent, hefty tax cuts for the small handful of our Second District neighbors with very high income and/or net worth.

It will do so in ways that we will notice, and that we will not like, such as:

- Raising taxes outright for about a

quarter of us;

- Eliminating deductions for state and local taxes, medical expenses, child credits, adoptions, higher education tuition and interest on student loans;
- Triggering automatic, deep cuts to Medicare; and

- Relying on tens of thousands canceling their health insurance, which will raise premiums for the rest of us.

Greg Walden voted for a radical, awful, unpopular bill which he helped ram through the House in two weeks without a hearing. He needs to hear from his constituents who will be hurt by it.

Jim Appleton  
Mosier

## LETTERS POLICY

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