



## A message from **THE PRESIDENT**

### **HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

As we rest from our labors with family and friends, eating, laughing, rejoicing in the love and companionship we have so generously been given, we realize how very much we have to be thankful for.

The origin of the Thanksgiving holiday is a subject of much speculation, with different claims made by different states – Maine and Massachusetts among them – and the date of its celebration has altered over the years; the fourth Thursday in November, the history books tell us, was designated as Thanksgiving as late as 1942.

Wherever it began and whenever it's celebrated, it's easy to see how the abundance of this beautiful land prompted such a feast. It is wise, however, to remember that the storybook version of that "First Thanksgiving," with its friendly pilgrims and Native Americans, is just that – a story, a fantasy. As the National Museum of the American Indian website informs us:

The "First Thanksgiving" as a national story is incomplete and inaccurate. The whole history is more complex and includes the Wampanoag voice and perspective that have been largely absent from this narrative. The Wampanoag and neighboring Native nations were interacting with European explorers, traders, and enslavers for nearly one hundred years before English settlers arrived at the Wampanoag village of Patuxet in 1620...Harvest ceremonies and festivals have been an integral part of Wampanoag lifeways for thousands of years. The Wampanoag practiced daily and seasonal traditions of giving thanks long before the encounter with English settlers and the formation of Thanksgiving as a national holiday.

Linguist and McArthur Award recipient Jessie Little Doe Baird elaborates on this tradition of giving thanks:

Wampanoag philosophy is based upon an understanding that balance is the basic ingredient required for sustainable life. Both our Land and our People have thrived sustainably as part of the greater circle of life. We understand that Creation has given to us many privileges as well as responsibilities. The earth, the sun, the moon, the wind, our waters, and all living beings, our language and understanding of the world are all privileges. We also recognize our responsibility to be stewards of these gifts and to take care of our sisters and brothers.

Baird's words remind us that we mustn't forget those who do not possess the things so many of us take for granted: food, clothing, shelter. Physical and emotional safety. I hope you'll consider sharing some of your bounty with the less fortunate, in whatever way you chose.

I'd like to close this message with a poem by Alberto Ríos titled "When Giving is All We Have."

*One river gives  
Its journey to the next.*

We give because someone gave to us.  
We give because nobody gave to us.

We give because giving has changed us.  
We give because giving could have changed us.

We have been better for it,  
We have been wounded by it—

Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,  
Big, though small, diamond in wood-nails.

Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,  
But we read this book, anyway, over and again:

Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,  
Mine to yours, yours to mine.

You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.  
Together we are simple green. You gave me

What you did not have, and I gave you  
What I had to give—together, we made

Something greater from the difference.

I wish you all a bountiful Thanksgiving.

With gratitude,

Daisy Cocco De Filippis, Ph.D.  
President

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