



# Thanksgiving: Taking and the Aftermath - November 2022 Lesson Plan

## Things to prepare BEFORE the meeting:

- Send an email reminder a week before AND the day before the meeting with the location & time
- Have copies of the questions and resources that are being provided so all can be informed and participate
- Have pieces of paper for students that are needed for the activities

**Objective:** Teach students about the real history behind Thanksgiving, and encourage them to think critically about both historical and ongoing injustices Indigenous communities in the US have faced. Go beyond the usual acknowledgment, and learn how to take meaningful action to support, uplift, and stand in solidarity with the Indigenous communities in the US fighting for sovereignty, recognition, and autonomy every day of the year.

## Key things to mention:

- November is Native American Heritage Month (NAHM)
- It is imperative to stand in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples in the US, not just with words but with action, not just for one month but always
- Indigenous peoples and their cultures are not just historical but are still here today
- Native voices, knowledge, perspectives, communities, and people matter, and it is important to actively listen to what they say

## NAHM Quick Facts:

- NAHM was created in 1990 due to efforts by Indigenous and Pacific Islander leaders
- There are 574 “federally recognized” Nations and hundreds more unrecognized ones that the United States government refuses to acknowledge
- There are about 6.6 million people in the US who identify as Native, many of whom live in urban areas
- Indigenous people have a life expectancy that is 5.5 years shorter than all other races due to a systemic lack of access to medical care
- In 2018, 25.4% of Indigenous people were living in poverty, a much higher proportion than the overall US population. That disparity has only been exacerbated by COVID-19

## LESSON PLAN

### 1. Beginning of meeting

- A. It's helpful to have music playing and welcome people as they come into the room.
- B. Have a sign-in sheet ([example](#)), and make sure to send any new names to STAND national ([info@standnow.org](mailto:info@standnow.org)).



- C Welcome people as they come in, and use this time to get ready by rearranging the chairs in the room and/or logging into the computer, etc.

## II. Introductions

Introduce yourself and any other chapter leaders (name, position and favorite movie/song/book or anything).

## III. Activity 1: Icebreaker/Introduction to Main Concepts

- A Goal: This activity is designed to get students thinking about how the holiday of Thanksgiving relates to Indigenous oppression. Members may be shy at the beginning of a meeting, so this is to break the ice and encourage everyone to speak/share their views and get participants involved!
- B Ask students to stand in a circle in the classroom. In this exercise, one student will state a series of phrases, and those who agree will step into the circle. Those who disagree will stay on the borders of the circle. You can modify the list of statements based on what you think fits best for you. Remember to take pictures of activities or other special moments and send them to [info@standnow.org](mailto:info@standnow.org) to be featured in our Chapter Newsletter and social media.
- C **Read this statement to begin the activity:** "Now we will begin our first activity in order to situate ourselves more firmly within the context of the history of Indigenous Genocide. I will read a series of statements. If you agree with these statements please take a step into the circle. We will then pause and you can step back out of the circle. As we go through this exercise, think about why you agree or disagree, who might feel differently, and how your education and experiences have shaped your opinions. "
- D Recite these phrases, whoever agrees will step into the circle:
  - 1 Thanksgiving was founded when the Pilgrims and Native Americans became friends and had a meal together.
  - 2 The United States was founded on genocide.
  - 3 While the US hurt Indigenous people, it's okay because that's just what they had to do to make this country.
  - 4 Native people don't really face oppression today.
  - 5 Thanksgiving is a day of fun with friends and family.
  - 6 Thanksgiving is a day of mourning.
  - 7 The current way we teach Thanksgiving is fine.
  - 8 I can do something to help Indigenous activists today.
  - 9 **Fun one:** I like turkey.
  - 10 **Fun one:** Pumpkin pie is better than apple pie.
- E After this activity, have everyone sit down, and you can all answer these questions as a group discussion:
  - 1 What did you learn in this activity?
  - 2 Were you surprised by any of the statements?
  - 3 What are your general views on historical and contemporary violence towards Indigenous people?



4. What role does the US government play in the lives of Indigenous peoples today? What do you think it should do instead?
5. There were many statements we all agreed or disagreed with. How do the opinions of others outside this room differ? And how might that affect national policies?

#### IV. Background on Thanksgiving

Share some information about the true history of Thanksgiving with the group. You can share the information below for people to read or break it up or talk about it however works best for your group.

**The First Thanksgiving:** The well known Thanksgiving feast at Plymouth Rock was not the first Thanksgiving feast on American soil. There are observations that there were feasts in Texas, Florida, and Maine, but this is the most widely celebrated one. It was said to be held on December 11, 1621 as a celebration of their first good harvest with the help of the native Wampanoag. To the colonizers though, a day of Thanksgiving was a day of fasting and prayer. These colonizers were actually Separatists who split off from the Puritans hoping to practice their own faith and worship how they wanted. When they came to New England, they had no idea how to fish or effectively grow crops, and as a result many died. The Wampanoag people who already lived there, including Samoset and Tisquantum (Squanto) signed a peace treaty with them, even though Squanto was kidnapped and enslaved years before and returned to a community devastated by a deadly epidemic. Over 20 million Indigenous people were killed during the period of colonization due to diseases colonizers brought over from Europe. After the plentiful harvest and well-known three-day feast with the Wampanoag, things seemed fine. However the peace would not last, as Squanto was accused in a plot to overthrow the government and would later be executed. As the years went on the natives and settlers' peace grew ever more unsettled and eventually led to war. In short, the well known first Thanksgiving was a short-lived peace between both the colonizers and the native Wampanoag people. American colonizers over the years would continue to strip Indigenous nations of their lands, forcing them onto reservations or outright killing them. The US government enacted policies to force assimilation and cultural destruction. Colonizers saw themselves as entitled to the land and resources of the Americas, and took the opportunity to steal from and disenfranchise the people already here.

**Thanksgiving Today:** Since then, Thanksgiving has moved away from a time of feasting and prayer to become a day of eating food, watching American football, and watching parades. While these current traditions are done by many, very few take it upon themselves to remember the impact this day has had on Native Americans currently and historically. There are many ways to conceptualize and understand the complexities and meanings behind what Thanksgiving is and what it represents, so here are just a few ways to acknowledge and support the contributions that Native Americans have given us.

#### V. Activity 2: Whose Land Am I On?

- A. Click this [link](#) and input your address to find what land you and your school/community are on.
- B. Take some time to click the additional links to read about the tribes who once lived (or maybe still live) where you are.



- C Discuss the responses to these questions (or any others you want to add) as a group. As a recommendation, it's better to get a chapter leader to start the discussion, so it's not awkward silence. In order to engage in a deeper conversation, you can include examples and connect reflections from this activity to the first one.
1. What is their history?
  2. Are they still here today?
  3. If so, what issues do they face today?
  4. If not, what happened? Where are they now?
  5. What did you learn and what surprised you from learning about the history of the Indigenous people of your community?

## VI. Action Items

After learning about the history of Thanksgiving and the American genocide against Indigenous people, you can take a variety of actions to showcase your support to contemporary activists!

- A. If there are any Indigenous-led organizations in your area, reach out to them and ask how you can be of support!
- B. Sign some petitions [here](#).
- C. Talk to your families at Thanksgiving, and honor those killed and displaced by American colonizers.
- D. Continue educating yourself about structural violence that persists today. Consider looking into land acknowledgements and food sovereignty in particular.
- E. Stand against environmental destruction that often harms Indigenous and marginalized communities the worst.
- F. Read books by Indigenous authors, watch shows or movies made by Indigenous people, or support Indigenous creators in other ways.
- G. Draft an op-ed (this takes a long time and might be a project you can continue in the future). Here is a [guide](#) to writing. [Here](#) is an example of an op-ed.

## VII. Conclusion

- A. Conclude the meeting with a thank you, and ask about future meeting dates. Ask students about feedback about the meeting and some things they liked or didn't like to make adjustments in the future and make everybody feel engaged.
- B. Make sure to mention the resources that were given and other topics that were discussed.
- C. Follow up after the meeting to let people know about things you will be doing in the future and invite people to get more involved. Consider including a form for people to provide any other feedback or information about how they would like to participate.

Additional Resources:

<https://nationalhistorycenter.org/decolonization-resource-collection-americas/>

<https://resourcegeneration.org/land-reparations-indigenous-solidarity-action-guide/>

<https://www.vsacca/decolonization-resources/>



<https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2021/native-american-history-and-sovereignty/histories-of-indigenous-sovereignty-in-action-what-is-it-and-why-does-it-matter/>

<https://networkadvocates.org/recommittoracialjustice/legacy/>

<https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/disparities/>

<https://ncrc.org/racial-wealth-snapshot-native-americans/#:~:text=The%20national%20poverty%20rate%20for%20national%20poverty%20rate%20was%2017.6%25.>

<https://standnow.org/2021/10/11/ipd/>