

Equity and Inclusion Notes



Meridian educates global citizens in an equitable, inclusive, and increasingly diverse community.

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Rethinking Thanksgiving

At The Meridian School, we encourage our school community to avoid a single story that reinforces stereotypes. Instead, we promote learning from different perspectives and bringing up unheard voices and untold stories. As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, we want to encourage our community to rethink the traditional teaching of Thanksgiving that leaves out the Native American perspective. The day after Thanksgiving has been proclaimed as Native American Heritage Day and November as Native American Heritage Month. Let's celebrate by learning about cultures, breaking stereotypes, and teaching how Native Americans' lives have been impacted through history.



Lee & Low Books: <https://i0.wp.com/blog.leeandlow.com/wp->

In the classroom, Meridian faculty are encouraged to deconstruct cultural myths, stepping away from stereotypes of Pilgrims and Indians to examine this period through more historically accurate methods. For younger kids, we promote books that emphasize Native American ways to thank nature and Earth or books that explore other aspects of native cultures. Parents can further this exploration by researching the cultural, spiritual, and environmental contributions of Native Americans. With the cataclysmic threat of climate change upon us, we can show our kids the insights, wisdom, and solutions offered by our native peoples to better steward and preserve the land. Sharing a fuller story with our children about Native Americans can add depth and meaning to Thanksgiving. But sharing a greater understanding about the importance of respecting and partnering with indigenous people can make a lasting impact on our future and our planet.

Finally, it is also important not to ignore current social justice issues that affect Native Americans. The struggles of indigenous people are still real today: the breaking of treaties, illegal use of tribal lands, grave desecration, cultural marginalization, and environmental destruction. A greater understanding of these issues is essential if we ever hope to change them.

Here are some resources and ideas to keep in mind. Consider how Native Americans are represented (or not) in your book collections at home and school. Talk about stereotypes. Review how Thanksgiving is presented in books and whether it includes the Native American perspective. Here are some resources:

- ⇒ Review the Native American perspective on the first Thanksgiving at [Oyate](#).
- ⇒ A good informative children's book for older kids is [1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving](#) by Catherine O'Neill Grace and Margaret M. Bruchac (Abenaki).
- ⇒ Younger kids are reading [Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message](#) by Jake Swamp.
- ⇒ Lee and Low Books article: "[A Culturally Responsive Approach to Discussing Thanksgiving in the Classroom](#)" by Lindsay Barrett.
- ⇒ Teaching Tolerance article: "[Teaching Thanksgiving in a Socially Responsible Way](#)" by Amanda Morris.
- ⇒ See more relevant books in the Anti-Defamation League's list of [People, Identity, and Culture Books](#).

