

CULTURAL COMPETENCY CORNER

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF
RISE SERVICES, INC.

Dear Rise Employee:

In this edition of the Cultural Competency Corner, we will discuss the Thanksgiving tradition, some myths and their corresponding truths, and Native American contributions to our society and culture. We want this insight to add to the collaborative spirit that exists at RISE. We hope you enjoy this edition.



**Steven Hunter,
Diversity Officer**

Steven Hunter, Diversity Officer
Rise Services, Inc.
Email: steveh@riseservicesinc.org
Phone: 480.799.6765

This newsletter is designed with you in mind. If you have content ideas, cultural events, or cultural celebrations to share, please forward them to Steven Hunter for consideration.

RISE CORPORATE VALUES



CHIEF OUSAMEQUIN OR MASSASOIT (1580–1661) WAS THE LEADER OF THE WAMPANOAG TRIBE.

MASSASOIT PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THE SUCCESS OF THE PILGRIMS.



RESOURCE
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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN: WWW.NMAI.SI.EDU/
EDUCATION INTERTRIBAL BISON COOPERATIVE: WWW.ITBCBISON.COM
TOHONO O'ODHAM COMMUNITY ACTION: WWW.TOCAONLINE.ORG NATIONAL
PUBLIC RADIO WWW. NPR

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

The first Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1621. Members of the Wampanoag Tribe met with Pilgrims in Plymouth, MA. The American Thanksgiving holiday began as a feast of thanks in the early days of English colonizers. It is interesting to note Native Americans had a long tradition of honoring the fall harvest with feasting and games centuries before the colonialist's arrival.

The Wampanoag People shared their land, food, and knowledge of the environment with the English. Without help from the Wampanoag, the English would not have had the successful harvest that led to the First Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving Myths

The story is often told the first meal consisted of turkey, assorted vegetables, and fruit pies.

According to historical accounts from Squanto (Smithsonian, 2019), venison was served instead of turkey. The meal is said to have also included delectables such as seafood, cranberries, cornmeal, cabbage, onion, carrots, and peas. There were no pies.

The account has long been recalled that the Native American and English settlers enjoyed a long, amicable relationship. And it is often recounted that the Thanksgiving meal was but one occasion where the two peoples dined in harmony. According to the National Museum of the American Indian (2019), the feast between the Wampanoag and the English settlers in 1621 focused on political alliances and the desire to sustain peace.

The Wampanoag

The Wampanoag people had a sophisticated society and lived in the region for thousands of years. The Wampanoag Tribe enjoyed their own government, religions, philosophical beliefs, knowledge system, and culture. They were also people who routinely gave thanks as a part of their daily life.

Native American Contributions

Native Americans are intelligent, resilient, resourceful, and creative. They have shaped much of what we know about agriculture. Additionally, Native Americans influence our art, music, food, and our understanding of medicine, nature, and history.

The contributions of our first Americans are many. Some of their contributions are listed below:

1. The log cabin is an adoption of the Indian log or longhouse.
2. Canoeing, lacrosse, and tug-of-war are sports created by Native Americans.
3. Corn, 14 different beans, maple syrup, wild rice, pumpkin, and avocado all started with Native American farmers.
4. Native Americans were the first to invent chewing gum.
5. Native Americans adopted snowshoes originally worn in the Great Lakes region of the early Americas.
6. Barbecues, hammocks, kayaks, and moccasins are all Native American words adopted into our modern culture.
7. Native Americans developed and communicated with sign language. Hand signals were used to facilitate trades and other communications with other tribes.
8. Tobacco, cigars, and pipe smoking are rich Native American traditions.
9. Cotton was originally a Native American resource.
10. Native Americans were the first known culture to use rubber. They used it to make containers, as well as a ball they played games with.

Varying Perspectives

Thanksgiving is celebrated across America by people of every ethnicity, religion, and background. Most associate the holiday with family gatherings, good food, and a time to acknowledge the things you are grateful for. It is important to remember that not everyone marks the holiday with the same reverence and joy. Understanding that Thanksgiving is not always remembered fondly, by many of our first Americans (and those sympathetic to their history), provides an opportunity to increase our understanding of the Native American experience. It also allows us to expand our level of empathy and cultural and historical awareness.