

Why First Nations People Regard America's Thanksgiving Day as a National Day of Mourning

By [Dr. Gary G. Kohls](#)

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"Grieved by the loss of their lands, dissatisfied with reservation (aka, concentration camp)life, and ultimately brought to a condition of near starvation, the Dakota people appealed to US Indian agencies (involving ex-Minnesota governors Sibley and Ramsey) without success. The murder of five whites by four young Dakota Indians ignited a bloody uprising in which more than 300 whites and an unknown number of Indians were killed. In the aftermath, 38 Dakota captives were hanged in Mankato (the day after Christmas Day 1862) for 'voluntary participation in murders and massacres,' and the Dakota remaining in Minnesota were removed to reservations in Nebraska. Meanwhile, the Ojibwa were relegated to reservations on remnants of their former lands.

"What happened to the Dakota in 1862 and afterward was a grievous crime against humanity. If it had occurred in this present day and age the United Nations and the international community would condemn it and declare it to be ethnocide and genocide. A United Nations world court indictment would be issued and the perpetrators of this ethnocide and genocide would be rounded up, tried, convicted and punished for crimes against humanity." — Thomas Dahlheimer from his long essay, entitled, [A History Of The Dakota People In The Mille Lacs Area](#)

"Since 1970, Native Americans have gathered at noon on Cole's Hill in Plymouth to commemorate a National Day of Mourning on the US Thanksgiving holiday. Many Native Americans do not celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims and other European settlers. To them, Thanksgiving Day is a reminder of the genocide of millions of their people, the theft of their lands, and the relentless assault on their culture. Participants in a National Day of Mourning honor Native ancestors and the struggles of Native peoples to survive today. It is a day of remembrance and spiritual connection as well as a protest of the racism and oppression which Native Americans continue to experience." — Text of a plaque on Cole's Hill, overlooking Plymouth Rock

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There is no historical evidence that the First Thanksgiving actually occurred in the year 1621, as most of us Americans have been carefully taught, but there is also no historical documentation that any Native Americans were invited to attend any of the fall harvest celebrations that any Pilgrims ever hosted. Some accounts suggest that about 90 Wampanoag heard the settlers firing guns and came to see the cause of the stir or even ready to enter battle.

The story about how the aboriginals traded with the invading Pilgrims and taught them how to hunt and cultivate crops is usually exaggerated.

The Pilgrims found good land to establish as their new home in Plymouth was due to the fact that a smallpox epidemic had wiped out a Wampanoag village there before they arrived. Squanto, the aboriginal who aided the Pilgrims, was later [sold into slavery in Spain](#). He actually learned [English in order to escape](#) his enslavement, but when he returned home, his entire tribe was dead.

The alleged “celebration” in 1621 did not mark a turning point in native vs. foreigner relationships and, whatever actually happened, did not become an annual event. In fact, relations between the native peoples and the Pilgrims deteriorated, and actually led to many wars. In fact, in 1637, following the death of a single Pilgrim (that they believed had been caused by an Indian), the Pilgrims burned their village and massacred [at least 400 men, women and children](#).

Following that massacre, the Governor of Plymouth, [wrote](#) that 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.” Typical puritanical Christianity!

Over the decades I have been re-learning many of the myths that my teachers taught me over my lifetime - including the lies about the First Thanksgiving. The patriotic stories about how Minnesota conquered the aboriginals that once occupied the territory are at least as distorted.

The quotes and text that follows represent my attempt to correct the record. Some quotes are important to note.

“The Sioux Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state.” - **Alexander Ramsey**, Minnesota’s second Governor

Gov. Ramsey’s Thanksgiving Proclamation - November 3, 1862

“WHEREAS,

“I, Alexander Ramsey, Governor of the State of Minnesota, do hereby set apart the twenty-seventh day of the present month of November, as a Day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God for his wonderful mercy towards us—for all the good gifts of His providence—for health and restored domestic peace—and the measure of general prosperity which we enjoy.

“Especially let us recognize His mercy in that He has delivered our borders from the savage enemies who rose up against us, and cast them into the pit they had privily dug

for us; that our friends have been rescued from the horrors of captivity, and that our homes and household treasures are now safe from the violence of Indian robbers and assassins.

“And let us praise Him for the continued preservation of the Government of our Fathers, from the assaults of traitors and rebels; for the sublime spirit of patriotism, and courage, and constancy with which He has filled the hearts of its defenders; for the victories won by the valor of our troops; for the glorious share of Minnesota in the struggles and triumphs of the Union cause; for the safety of her sons who have passed through the fire of battle unscathed, and the honorable fame of the gallant dead; for the alacrity and devotion with which our citizens have rushed from their unharvested fields to the standard of the nation; and, above all, and proclaim FREEDOM as the condition and the law of a restored and regenerated Union.

“Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the State, at the City of St. Paul, this third day of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two”.

We sports-addicted, shop-until-you-drop, historically-illiterate, couch potato Americans have been the unwitting beneficiaries of 500 years of genocide against Native Americans who owned and occupied the continent that we falsely call our own. The lies our teachers taught us in our history classes have been happily perpetrated by historical figures such as Minnesota’s first two governors (Henry Hastings Sibley and Alexander Ramsey) and many others like them.

The original occupants of South, Central and North America (especially Canada and what now constitutes the United States) were over-powered by wealth, numbers and advanced technology that made mass murder of fingered enemies more efficient. The uncountable numbers of crimes against humanity have been waged against the aboriginal tribes that had occupied the two continents for thousands of years before Columbus accidentally bumped into the east coast. (Most of the actual killing was done not by the ruling elites, but by the ruthless soldiers who were mindlessly obedient to their political and economic superiors.)

The genocide began in 1492 when the gold-hungry white supremacist Christopher Columbus and his well-armed, sex-starved sailors disembarked from their stinking ships thinking that they had landed in India. Calling the inhabitants “Indians”, they set about pillaging the land, raping the female inhabitants while their priests converted the “heathens” to their brand of punitive, pro-homicide Christianity.

Columbus and his men eventually demanded, under the threat of cutting the native’s hands off, that the non-white “sub-humans” produce allotments of gold from precious metal-less mines. All of this satanic cruelty was accomplished with the blessings of the priests.

Native Americans, whose hunting weapons were inferior to those war-making weapons of the foreign invaders, preferred self-exile or even death to the dishonor of submitting to slavery and so they refused to become slaves – nor would their tribal cohorts collaborate with their enslavement. And when they were forced from their ancestral lands by so-called Christian presidents like the acknowledged murderer Andrew Jackson, they tried to re-establish their tribal cultures further west.

Those of us modern-day Minnesotans who have Caucasian ancestors have benefitted from both the American and Minnesotan massacres of Native American tribes, the occupations

and the theft of their land, the exploitation of their natural resources and the destruction of their way of life.

We pink-skinned progeny of our predatory ancestors were then carefully taught to believe the Big Lies about the First Thanksgiving that were carefully embedded in our history books and Sunday School lessons. And so we gullible non-native Minnesotans have been led to believe the sweet-sounding invented stories about the “nice” Pilgrims that landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620 who then proceeded to gratefully share a post-harvest feast with their new neighbors.

Our illegal, undocumented immigrant ancestors from Europe were obviously not averse to homicidal violence. Sadly, they were soon followed by a large variety of other decidedly un-Christ-like religious fanatics that perpetuated the genocide that resulted in a 90% depopulation of the Native Americans over just the few centuries following the invasion of Christopher Columbus.

The 2015 Ken Burns Documentary

The disinformation process that fooled so many Americans about the first Thanksgiving was explored in the 2015 Ken Burns documentary that was broadcast on PBS-TV during the Thanksgiving season three years ago.

That documentary refuted many of the myths about the First Thanksgiving that most of us had learned in school.

The myths about the “New Testament” values of welcoming the stranger and being merciful to the oppressed has been frequently disproven by many of those who have sought refuge from brutality, oppression and/or dictatorial rule in their homelands and expected that they would be welcomed here. The truth of the matter has often come hard.

The myth of the “merciful Puritans” of the First Thanksgiving was designed to absolve our ancestors from the guilt of the cruel bloodbaths that they either perpetrated or approved of when invading American soldiers repeatedly massacred the militarily weaker native populations all over the world and even in their own land.

The following quotes from a few of our so-called military or governing “heroes” need to be recited in the context of the true history of the American military genocide of the First Nations people.

Those military “heroes” include Henry H. Sibley and Alexander Ramsey, Minnesota’s first and second governors, both later to become army officers in the war against the oppressed and starving Sioux Indians. (Sibley- a Democrat - was governor from 1858 - 1860. He was succeeded by Alexander Ramsey - a Republican - from 1860 to 1863.)

Following are a series of quotes from historical figures of the era. The spark that set off the 6 week-long Sioux Uprising in the fall of 1862 (right in the middle of the American Civil War) was the impending starvation of the Native Americans who had been made dependent on food commodities, gold coins and credit after they had deceitfully ceded most of their hunting grounds and water resources to the deceptive US government:

“We have waited a long time. The money is ours but we cannot get it. We have no food but here these stores are filled with food. We ask that you, the agent, make some

arrangement so we can get food from the stores, or else we may take it to keep ourselves from starving. When men are hungry, they help themselves.” —**Chief Little Crow** (Taoyateduta), Mdewakanton Dakota, to Indian Agent Thomas Galbraith in 1862

“For what reason we have commenced this war I will tell you. It is on account of Major Galbraith.”- Chief Little Crow in a letter to Henry Sibley, 1862 (For much more on the Galbraith issue, [click here](#).)

“So far as I am concerned, if they are hungry let them eat grass or their own dung.” — Indian trader Andrew J. Myrick to Indian Agent Thomas Galbraith. A few weeks later (on August 18, 1862), on the first day of the Sioux Uprising, Myrick was killed and his mouth was stuffed with grass.

“I shall probably approve them (the executions of the 303 Dakota warriors)and hang the villains” - Ex-governor and then **US Army Colonel Henry H. Sibley**, who had led the troops that defeated Chief Little Crow in the Battle of Wood Lake on August 23, 1862. Sibley had appointed the five-member military tribunal that tried, convicted and sentenced to death by hanging (in a “kangaroo court” proceeding, with no legal defense provided), the 303 Dakota warriors that had been captured in the battle that ended the 6 week-long US-Dakota War of 1862. Sibley was commenting on the fate of the convicted warriors, all but 38 of whom had their death sentences commuted by President Lincoln. Many warriors were imprisoned at Camp McClellan, near Davenport, Iowa and more than 1,600 non-combatant Native Americans were imprisoned at a concentration camp at Fort Snelling over the winter of 1862 - 63. Those that survived the cold, the starvation diets and the diseases were then deported to concentration camps in Nebraska and South Dakota (including Pine Ridge; [see this](#))

“The Sioux (aka Dakota)Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state.” - Minnesota’s second governor **Alexander Ramsey** in a statement made on Sept. 9, 1862. Ramsey had made a fortune in real estate because of his dealings selling “stolen” Native American land to white settlers and businessmen after he himself had negotiated the treaties that cheated the tribes out of the land.Ramsey, incidentally, served as Secretary of War under Rutherford B. Hayes 25 years later.

“Destroy everything belonging to them and force them out to the plains, unless, as I suggest, you can capture them. They are to be treated as maniacs or wild beasts, and by no means as people with whom treaties or compromises can be made.” - Civil war **Major General John Pope**, in a letter to Colonel Sibley - dated September 28, 1862.

“As Europeans settled the East coast, they displaced eastern tribes who then migrated to get away from the White civilization, and they, in their turn, displaced weaker local tribes they encountered, and pushed many of those tribes farther from their homelands, as they took over their homelands.

“Westward moving Europeans would give the displaced eastern tribes ... guns and gun powder and they would then instigate fights between the newly arrived tribes and the long established tribes in order to force the long established tribes from their homelands; and in doing so, extinguish the long established tribes’ ancestral ties that they had with the land, their ancestors and the spirit world. Evidence of this practice has shown itself time and time again throughout the Americas.

“Around 1750, a displaced East coast band of Ojibwe were pushed into the Dakota’s homeland and they then used French guns and gun powder to force the Dakota from their **Mille Lacs Lake homeland**.

“This was the strategy the European colonists used to greatly diminish the number of Dakota in their Mille Lacs homeland, which encouraged and made it possible for a French weapons armed, alcohol manipulated band of Ojibwe to violently force the Dakota from their Mille Lacs homeland.” — **Thomas Dahlheimer** from his long essay, entitled, [A History Of The Dakota People In The Mille Lacs Area](#)

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***Dr Gary G. Kohls** is a retired family physician from Duluth, MN, USA. Since his retirement from his holistic mental health practice he has been writing his weekly Duty to Warn column for the Duluth Reader, northeast Minnesota’s alternative newsweekly magazine. His columns, which are re-published around the world, deal with the dangers of American fascism, corporatism, militarism, racism, malnutrition, Big Pharma’s over-drugging and Big Vaccine’s over-vaccination agendas, as well as other movements that threaten human health, the environment, democracy, civility and the sustainability of all life on earth. Many of his columns have been archived at a number of websites, including*

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Featured image: The statue of Little Crow overlooking Minnehaha Falls (MinnPost photo by Iric Nathanson)

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