

ART FOR OURSELVES GATHERINGS

Thankful for what?

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Thanksgiving is a holiday that continuously erases its violent origins with cornucopias of feigned abundance and this erasure exemplifies the ongoing violence of white [settler colonialism](#). Before and since the fabled '[first thanksgiving](#),' indigenous people in what is now the United States of America have experienced unprecedented injustice. The way Thanksgiving is [marketed and celebrated](#) makes light of these truths and characterizes indigenous people as existing in the past. This is obviously untrue! Indigenous people and cultures are alive! Modern! Vibrant! Here!

While we may be aware that Thanksgiving as a holiday is oppressive and violent, many of us, both indigenous and non-indigenous folks, also have only a few times a year where we can spend time with family or friends, or take time off from work. So we find ourselves, again, at the Thanksgiving table.

We've changed the structure for this month's gathering in anticipation of some folks already having plans to gather. We've provided research prompts, resources and some suggestions for discussion that help address the oppressive and violent history of this holiday and offer alternative ways to experience the rare joy (and pain) that is time with loved ones.

Opening

- If you are indigenous, take care of yourself this time of year (and all year!). Engage in some ritual that honors your body, self, community, and ancestors. One possibility is writing about yourself, your story, your family, your ancestors or recording family stories and history.
- If you are not indigenous take [responsibility](#) for supporting your indigenous friends and local indigenous communities! Ask friends what they need and want. Tell the truths to your non-indigenous friends and family so that your friends don't have to! Take the

burden of explanation and correction off the shoulders of indigenous folks. Center the indigenous perspective of Thanksgiving, not the settler perspective.

- Before you gather with your loved ones, conduct research about the people whose [land](#) you occupy. Learn about their history and their current struggles. Learn how you and your family and friends can be [co-conspirators for indigenous liberation](#).

Discussion at the table with friends and/or family

- Whose land are we currently occupying? What is the history of those communities? What are the current issues facing those communities?
- What does Thanksgiving [symbolize](#) to your (indigenous or non-indigenous) community(ies) and to other (indigenous or non-indigenous) communities?
- Thanksgiving is celebrated widely in schools. How can we support our children in understanding indigenous history?
- What do we really want to celebrate? The season change? The harvest? Indigenous survival and resiliency? Familial love and care? Is there an alternative celebration that we can begin next year?
- How can we experience and share gratitude with critical awareness?
- What specific action steps can each of us take to become or remain co-conspirators for our collective liberation when we leave this table?

Personal Reflection

- How'd the gathering go?
- How can you continue to be in active solidarity with North American indigenous people?
 - If you are not indigenous and feel that you should be an active support but haven't been and still maybe (be honest) don't see yourself taking action, ask yourself why? Why do you feel this is not your struggle? Not your burden? Why does it seem like a challenge to participate? Now pick one thing you can really do and do it!