

# Letter: Facts About Standing Rock and Indigenous People as We Celebrate Thanksgiving

By: KEN SAZAMA | November 23, 2016

## Who Lived Here First?

The Massachusetts people lived in the general Boston area. They were called “people of the great hills”, a reference to the Blue Hills.

Going from East to West, the Wampanoag, Mohegan and Mohican tribes also lived and thrived in what we now know as Massachusetts.

## Facts About The First Thanksgiving

The first Thanksgiving was a peaceful event that brought 90 Wampanoag Indians and 50 Pilgrims together in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1621. While we continue to celebrate this gathering, we all know that following this event relations became much more difficult and ultimately led to the genocide of the Indigenous Tribes at the hand of the white settlers.

Thanksgiving Day, November 24th is the 47th day of National Mourning. If you want get a great perspective about what Indigenous people currently think about Thanksgiving, it is a great event to go to.

## Indigenous People’s Day

It is also well known that despite what some schools have taught, the North American continent was well populated by dozens of indigenous tribes when Columbus arrived. Some states and many cities have officially changed Columbus day to Indigenous

People's Day, including Cambridge. There is a strong movement in Boston to do the same! In October, I participated in a Indigenous Peoples' Day rally at City Hall.

Earlier this month I visited the Standing Rock Reservation, and the encampment that the "water protectors" are bravely trying to protect. There are countless times where pipelines have leaked and damaged local water sources. After everything that has been taken from the Lakota people, they are valiantly fighting to protect their water.

The injustice towards Native People still hasn't stopped. Right now over 200 Indigenous Tribes and several thousand allies have gathered to protect the sacred land of the Sioux tribe at Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota.

The pipeline was originally planned to go through Bismark, but was already rerouted because of concerns for the health and safety of Bismark citizens. In an act of racism, Energy Transfer Partners (the company building the pipeline) moved the route directly next to Native land. This land, of course, was originally Native land and is also going directly through sacred lands and burial grounds.

As you spend time with family and friends this week, what can you do to help?

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