

Johnnie Diacon cvhocefkv tos. Este Mvskoket omis. Raprakko vmetvlwv tos. Ecovlke toyis. Tvlsv, Oklvhomv like tos. My name is Johnnie Diacon. I am Muscogee. My tribal town is Thlopthlocco. I am Deer Clan. I live in Tulsa, Oklahoma. With fall comes the trifecta of European-based American holidays come to Indian Country. The first was Columbus Day, now recognized as Indigenous Peopleâ€™s Day or Native American Day in many U.S. cities. The second was Halloween in which many non-native people appropriate Native American regalia as a costume. The third is Thanksgiving with its mythological story of Indians and Pilgrims sitting down to a bountiful love feast. Being Mvskoke, I am used to the many inaccuracies, stereotypes and other falsehoods and misinformation when it comes to us as a people and our history. The very terms used to describe us, that we use ourselves, are not often our traditional names. We are not Indians. We are not Americans, per se. We are not Creek, Cherokee, Sioux or any of the designations used by dominant society to refer to all tribes. In school, I was taught Christopher Columbus â€œdiscoveredâ€• America while attempting to prove the world wasnâ€™t flat. For Halloween, native-based attire is based on dime novels and Hollywood movie portrayals of native people as frightful, blood-thirsty savages. For Thanksgiving, we were taught how the Indians found the Pilgrims in a wretched state, took them in, taught them to grow crops and live off the land. Then together they celebrated their first harvest with what was to be the first Thanksgiving feast. Because of these falsehoods, I have always faced the fall holidays with this awareness in my approach and participation. I was aware these myths were created to foster an agenda rather than to record what truly happened. All stories have two sides, and I am the other side of those stories. I am not the one and only voice for indigenous people. I am a single voice, and my views are based solely on my own experiences and understandings as a native person living in America today. As a native person I have always been taught to be thankful, every day and for everything. Every

morning I arise early before the sun to give thanks and to commune with my creator in preparation for another day. Growing up, I always knew there was much more to Thanksgiving and being thankful than just on the fourth Thursday of every November. So, the whole Pilgrim/Indian story never really figured into my view of the notion of thankfulness. I think of Thanksgiving Day as a day of mourning for those lost through years of colonization and genocide that was visited upon our native nations by the European settlers. And on that day, I am thankful we are still here today to sit down with family, share a meal and enjoy the fellowship, both native and non-native. I am thankful for the food first cultivated by the native farmers of the Western Hemisphere now enjoyed around the world. I am thankful for our culture and language that has survived despite efforts to eradicate it since that fateful day in October 1492. I am thankful for my children and grandchildren, for my ancestors and their sacrifices and survival from the wars, the Trail of Tears, boarding school and the relocation programs of the 1960s and 1970s. I am thankful for my relations yet born. I am thankful for my wonderful wife, Nikki, and the life we have together. I am thankful for my successes and failures and the strength and knowledge that I gained from both. I am thankful I am Raprakko Mvskoke. To me Thanksgiving Day is more than just turkey, football or the fourth Thursday of November. It has a deep spiritual connection to creation and the people and creatures of this creation. Be thankful, all day, every day. Johnnie Diacon is an award-winning artist and a graduate of Bacone College and the Institute of American Indian Arts. His work resides in the permanent collections of many institutions including the Philbrook Museum and Institute of American Indian Arts Museum of Contemporary Indian Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Earlier this year, his painting, "Omvlkvt Opvnvks (Everybody Dance) Green Corn Suite," was chosen as the jacket cover art for the latest book by U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, also a Mvskoke citizen.

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