

Ten Minute T(ea) with Ms. Tricia Smith

*Interview conducted by Jon Mabie
November 22, 2016*

Q) What does Thanksgiving mean to you?

A) Thanksgiving for me is a time to reflect on what I'm grateful for, to spend time with my family and friends. Because I'm a teacher at a boarding school, it's the first real vacation after the school year has started, so it's a very nice time, I enjoy it.

Q) Do you ever think about the history behind Thanksgiving, the events afterwards, the displacement of Native Americans for instance?

A) Every year. I think that the history of Thanksgiving is a beautiful story of the Native Americans rescuing the poor Pilgrims who would have starved had they not had the help of the Native Americans. Although the history that happens directly after that is incredibly disgusting and shameful, that brief moment in time [of peace between Pilgrims and Natives], for me, is worth celebrating.

Q) And does that affect how you celebrate Thanksgiving?

A) It does. I think about my celebration of it every year, and I think as a person who is conscious of their country and doing the right thing for certain disenfranchised groups, I struggle sometimes with celebrating it. However, I always make a point of turning it in on myself and making it about my relationship with the holiday rather than the historic genocide of a people that came after the holiday.

Q) Do you think events like Thanksgiving, that have certain meanings for each family and person, even though the events might have a troubled history, are worth celebrating?

A) I think we can heal the past in many ways, and pay tribute to it by how we celebrate, for instance recognizing the damage our culture has done to indigenous people and to different aspects of society. I firmly believe that we live in this present moment and that sometimes we, as a society, spend too much time dwelling on past mistakes and need to find a way to move forward in a positive way.

Q) So would you say that how you view the past changes how you experience the present?

A) Yes, I think that if I wasn't conscious of the origins of Thanksgiving that I wouldn't be an informed citizen of my country.