

7.15 How To Center Indigenous Peoples During Thanksgiving

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw, Jalyne Geddes

Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00

You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast Season Seven, Episode 15: "How to Center Indigenous Peoples During Thanksgiving"

Jasmine Bradshaw 00:15

Teaching our children to be inclusive and anti-racist starts with us within the sacred walls of our home. First Name Basis is designed to empower you with the confidence you need to be a leader in your family and a change maker in your community. Together, we will wrestle with hard questions and use the answers to create the world we want: a world that reflects our values of inclusion, compassion, and courage. I'm your host, Jasmine Bradshaw, and I am so excited to be on this journey with you.

Jasmine Bradshaw 00:56

Today we are talking about Thanksgiving. And we are talking specifically about centering Indigenous Peoples on Thanksgiving and around Thanksgiving, because if you remember I made an episode—oh, was it a couple seasons ago? It was "The Untold Story of Thanksgiving," I think it might have actually been the very first untold story episode I ever made. Oh my gosh, that is wild to think about. I will link that episode in the show notes, "The Untold Story of Thanksgiving," And I made that episode because I felt like I didn't have a clear understanding of what really happened in the history when it came to, quote unquote, "the First Thanksgiving." And as I have reflected on making that episode, I'm glad it's out there, but it really centers the colonizers. It really centers the white European settlers who came and stole the land from the Indigenous Peoples. And I thought, what would it look like for us to truly understand how we can make the Indigenous People the center of our focus during this time. Because if you remember, one really important tenet of anti-racism is taking the people who are always at the center and moving them to the side to make space for the people who are on the margins. So we all know that white people are the dominant culture, which means that they're often at the center of our conversations, and our focus and our TV shows and our media and everything that we do. So anti-racism includes taking white people, moving them to the side and taking the people who are on the margins and bringing them more into focus, meaning Black and Indigenous People of color. So when

we're thinking about Thanksgiving, what does it truly look like to take the white settlers and move them to the side so that the Indigenous Peoples in our communities can be at the center of our focus? That being said, it would not make any sense at all for me to do this episode on my own because I am not Indigenous. As far as I know, I still have some family history work that I need to do. And I know that my ancestors were very close to the Arawak, the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean, but it is not something that is a central part of my identity. So it wouldn't make sense for me to explain how to center Indigenous Peoples on Thanksgiving. So hopefully you can see kind of what it looks like to de-center ourselves and center others. And so I have invited one of my dearest friends, Jalyne Geddes, to teach us all about how to center Indigenous Peoples on Thanksgiving, and we'll talk a little bit about teaching our children about Thanksgiving as well. So Jalyne and I actually met because we are both part of a group of women of color who are trying to make change in our community. And Jalyne is an activist, both through her words and through her artwork, her beadwork, and you'll hear more about that in the episode. It is truly amazing that she shares such a sacred part of her ancestry with so many of us. Jalyne is Nehiyaw or Cree, so she grew up on a reservation and she has so much wisdom and insight to share with us when it comes to honoring and centering our Indigenous brothers and sisters. And I will be sure to link everything in the show notes, everything that she mentions and her Instagram account, so that you can go and follow her there. But I hope you will learn from and reflect on this conversation with Jalyne Geddes.

Jasmine Bradshaw 04:34

Hello, my sweet friend. Thank you so much for coming on the show.

Jalyne Geddes 04:38

Thank you for having me.

Jasmine Bradshaw 04:41

Oh, I'm so excited. Okay, first, tell us about your family and yourself. I want to know everything.

Jalyne Geddes 04:47

Okay. And also this—out of anytime I do a podcast or any kind of anything, this question is like the most nerve wracking.

Jasmine Bradshaw 04:57

No way.

Jalyne Geddes 04:59

Because, I'm like, one time I forgot to mention I had a daughter. Like, who am I gonna forget to say? Well, my name is Jalyne Geddes, I'm from Beardy's and Okemasis Cree Nation, and that is a reservation up in Canada. I have a beautiful family. My husband's name is Dustin, and I have—we have—a six-year-old son named Desmond and a two-year-old daughter named Winifred, who we call Freddy. And I stay at home with them. And my background is, in my background is in several things, but majority accounting. And right now I'm focused on my beadwork.

Jasmine Bradshaw 05:41

Yes. And tell everybody where they can find your beadwork. Let's get that right up front.

Jalynne Geddes 05:46

Okay, so I'm on Instagram. It's the easiest place to find me. And it's @nehiyanahk_creations.

Jasmine Bradshaw 05:52

Neh-hee-uh-nuhk. Am I saying that right?

Jalynne Geddes 05:54

Yeah, yeah. And Nehiyanahk means Cree country. So it's like, basically, Cree Country Creations. Nehiyaw is what we call ourselves as a people. And Nehiyanahk is the land. That's the country, the land we live on.

Jasmine Bradshaw 06:09

Thank you for explaining that, because I've always wondered. Okay, so we're talking about Thanksgiving today. And my biggest number one question about Thanksgiving and everything that goes along with it is, what does it look like to celebrate Thanksgiving in a way that honors Indigenous Peoples? I think my real question is, is that even possible?

Jalynne Geddes 06:30

Right? I think when it comes to Thanksgiving, the best thing that people can do is to kind of accept that there will be Native people who won't ever be happy with Thanksgiving, and that's just a truth that for non-Indigenous people, they'll just have to live with and make space for. Among our community, there is a wide spectrum. And I want to preface this by saying that whatever I say here, I'm not a spokesperson for my community, these are just my thoughts, and I wouldn't want anybody to use my words as a weapon against my community, if they're in agreement with me, because somebody might disagree with me. And that is okay. And that is valid. And I want to make space for that, that, that we have a wide spectrum of people who practice this day in a different way. And so I just want to make space for that. And to let everybody know that yeah, I'm not a spokesperson, I'm just one person with one tiny opinion. And it's not even the most important opinion, but it is just one.

Jalynne Geddes 07:36

And so I would say like the most important thing is to understand that—that it's a complicated day, for a lot of people. Some people celebrate, it might celebrate it the same way, the average person celebrates it. They might give thanks on this day. They might have the turkey dinner and everything, and that's okay. I know several people who use it legitimately as a day of mourning. And that's, that's something that was started, I believe in 1970, is when they instituted the National Day of Mourning among Indigenous People. And so that is something that's valid. And so if you know, if you come across that if you might know somebody who's Indigenous, and they celebrate it in that way, or they, I shouldn't say celebrate, but they commemorate it in that way, that's equally valid. And I think—I don't know what your demographic is of people who listen to this, but in our faith community, when we get baptized, the covenant is to "mourn with those that mourn." And so I think that when we talk about this as a National Day of Mourning, it is our covenant responsibility to respect that and honor that. And so to take that seriously, and it's something that I take seriously too. And I think that I want people to be

cognizant of this this year, especially with COVID and how it hit the Navajo Nation. The name, the National Day of Mourning takes on a deeper meaning. But also, in conjunction with that, the residential school findings. I know you've talked about in your podcast before, but that is something that hit our, like our community, like, from north to the south, like that is something that hit us hard. And so I think honoring this also as a National Day of Mourning is important. And I think it's also important because people want to give thanks on this day, and I understand that, but I I hope people would understand that mourning is also a form of gratitude, because it is an expression of a deep love of something that you lost. It can be kind of overwhelming to have all of these different truths present at once. But I think it's important to be able to sit with all of those truths. And the best way I think, to honor, in my opinion, to honor our community is to try hardest to let ourselves immerse ourselves in each and every single part of that truth.

Jasmine Bradshaw 10:06

Jalynne, I should have known that I was gonna get emotional. All we do is cry together!

Jalynne Geddes 10:13

I didn't want to look you in the eye because I'm like, "Jasmine is making me cry. I'm just trying to make it through this."

Jasmine Bradshaw 10:19

Oh, my goodness. Well, thank you for, oh, wow, thank you for sharing like the, just the idea of mourning being in conjunction with gratitude and holding space for both of these really important things. As you know, we as a nation, and as a people, have gone through such hard things, but the Indigenous community especially being like, when you, it was when you brought up them being hit by COVID and, of course, the residential schools. And the hard part about all of that is that we all knew that that existed. But it's just the findings, bringing it to the forefront. It's really frustrating too. And, you know, I don't want to speak for you. But I found myself being really frustrated by the sudden outrage when we all knew this was there. And so anyway, all that to say, thank you so much for sharing how we can hold space for both of those things, because I think that is something that I've really struggled with. And it's so funny because Violet was just watching Daniel Tiger today, and they were singing a song about how you can feel two things at the same time. Like, that's exactly what you are saying. So I need to listen to Daniel Tiger. I need to listen to Jalynne Geddes, like yes. Holding space for both.

Jalynne Geddes 11:30

I think something to that is important, when we're talking about holding space is to center Indigenous People on this day, in your, when you're having conversations in your home, and like, yeah, it's wonderful to give thanks. Give thanks all year round. Like it's wonderful to give thanks and to, to have a heart of gratitude. But this day has been, like the history behind it, hasn't been taught in an honest way. And as you center Indigenous Peoples, it's also specifically important to center the Wampanoag because they are the tribe that, that this involves. And there we know a lot about the European part of this day, like that's what, that's what people have been taught is the European perspective, and the European perspective has been centered, but the Wampanoag perspective. You know, like I mentioned before, I'm Canadian, and we celebrate Thanksgiving at a different time. Like it's, it's a month earlier. And so all of this is relatively new to me. I've been in the States for 10 years. So it's a learning process

for me, too. I want to be transparent about that. Like the, the way that the US celebrates this day is new to me, too. And it was a learning curve for me, too. But when I was learning about it—and I'm still learning about it from the Wampanoag perspective—as far as I, my understanding is that the Europeans were trying to plant food, and they were trying to, like sustain their own lives, and they were, in the process of trying to plant food they're digging up Wampanoag graves. And they, they also had guns, they had all these things that created a lot of tension for them, and a lot of fear. And so and then, you know, history goes on to show like they're taken advantage of and, and that's why it has always been important to let Indigenous People have that space to mourn. And, yeah, like we had mentioned this year that the reason for that mourning was really brought to the forefront. And I hope people honor that by not diminishing it in our homes, by having it as a crucial part of our conversations, and like a loving part of our conversations.

Jasmine Bradshaw 13:35

And one of the things that I was thinking of as you were talking is the way that gratitude is such a central part of Indigenous culture, every single, like, group, or tribe that I've learned about, gratitude is a huge piece of what they believe and what they ascribe to. And so I think that the mistake that some people can make when they're talking about this Day of Mourning is acting like Indigenous Peoples don't align with gratitude, which is so not the truth at all.

Jalynne Geddes 14:05

Mm hmm. And that's something that we believe. Like you had mentioned, like, in my tribe, in particular, we our people were hunters. And when we hunted, we used every part of the buffalo for something, like the teeth, the sinew, like every piece of the buffalo was used and every piece of the buffalo was given thanks for. And part of the reason for that is nothing belongs to us. Like, everything was given to us from the Creator. And the land is our Mother. It's Mother Earth, and she doesn't belong to us. We are in debt to her. I think, as we like, face life, or approach life with that perspective, then the automatic consequence of that is loving each other a little more. We talk to our son a lot about good and bad consequences, and that's a good consequence. We live with gratitude and we love each other more, and it's easier to love each other. Well I shouldn't say easier. But it sets us off on the right foot to love each other a little better.

Jasmine Bradshaw 15:06

Oh, I love that. Thank you. So when we're thinking about parents and them teaching their kids, I'm wondering if you could help us understand what parents should prioritize. Like, if there was one thing that you wish mamas could talk to their kiddos about when it comes to Indigenous peoples in their area, what would you have them talk about?

Jalynne Geddes 15:28

Just that we're, we're here. Don't speak about us in the past tense. We are present, and we are still here. And I think that's where people kind of get tripped up is because the history books teach, talk about us like we were gone, or we were a people of the past. But a lot of us, we still practice as much as we can our traditional ways. And it's still alive with us. I would also like hope that parents refer to, like Indigenous, Indigenous is like a fine term it's something, one of my preferable terms. But I think the most correct thing you can do is if you find a tribe of the person, refer to them by their tribe. Like I prefer

to be referred to as Nehiyaw or Cree. If you meet somebody who's of another tribe then you can, you know, refer to them as theirs, their tribe. And that is like one of the, I think, one of the important things. And it helps keep us present and not forgotten and not erased, because then it becomes this, this amalgamation of everybody. We're not all one people, and we all have diverse practices. And so I think that's something that's important too, is like learn, learn the nation of the land you're on and learn the nation of the people, if they happen to know indigenous people, learn their nation and honor that.

Jasmine Bradshaw 16:52

Thank you. Okay, so what I hear you saying is like, be as specific as possible about the Indigenous Peoples in your area.

Jalynne Geddes 17:00

Also, like something that I would love people, for parents to do all year round, not just Thanksgiving, but like, make your child's classroom a safe place. Meaning like, go to your teacher, ask them, "What is your curriculum around Thanksgiving?" So that's something I did with my son. Before his first day of school, I talked to the teacher and asked them about their curriculum around Thanksgiving, just to make sure that there were no stereotypes being like perpetuated. And also, they weren't being called Indians, but they were, if they were referred to, as Indigenous or as Wampanoag, or, you know. Use specificity and don't use outdated terminologies is the big one. Don't wait for the Native mamas to do it. Like, it's a big burden for us to always have to fight to create those safe spaces. And so if we have, like everybody pitching in, it's so much easier to create a safe space than people think it is.

Jasmine Bradshaw 17:57

Oh my goodness, yeah. I feel like I can relate to that, as a Black woman. Like, we need those allies! If we're the only one speaking up and asking for it, so many people are going to write us off.

Jalynne Geddes 18:11

Absolutely, and that are like, they'll roll their eyes and think, "typical." But if we have everybody engaged in it, then only good things can happen. The true test of a friend is how they speak about you when you're not there. And so if you want to consider yourself a friend to Indigenous People, create that safe space even if we're not there. If there's not an Indigenous child in your son or your daughter's classroom, and you're creating a safe space for them anyway, then that is true love. That is true friendship.

Jalynne Geddes 18:43

Oh, I love that. And I would add, and I we've talked about this, the fact that not everybody looks, quote unquote, "Indigenous." Like you might not know if there's an Indigenous child in your child's class, just because someone doesn't have the, you know, the features that you might think of as Indigenous does not mean they aren't so.

Jalynne Geddes 19:04

Absolutely. And that's something, like so my son has long hair, but if he didn't, you know, my husband is white, and he has my husband's features. He might be like, somebody might refer to it—like there's so many terms for it, but like "incognito," that they can blend in? Yeah, it's also, it's good to do away

with your stereotypes of what a Native person looks like, because there are, you know, we are a people who are very diverse, and we run the gamut of our features, whether some of us wear our hair long, some of us don't. And there, we're all valid Indigenous identities, and that's something that people should be aware of.

Jasmine Bradshaw 19:49

Yeah, another thing that I was wondering if you could help us understand, I've talked a lot on my Instagram and on the podcast about how October and November are especially tough for the Indigenous community. And I think that a lot of people turn their attention to Native issues during this time. But I'm wondering how can we kind of stay involved? Like how can we stay involved in the Indigenous issues going on not just in our country, but in our area, beyond just October and November?

Jasmine Bradshaw 20:19

Well, I think I mentioned get involved in your schools, your children's school curriculums, but also just get involved. The best thing you can do is find out whose land you're on and go to their website. They will have so many different gatherings and everybody's welcome at them. You're welcome to attend powwows, which we have mainly in the summertime. It also is, you stay up to date with the tribe whose land you're on, you find out about other important things like murdered and missing Indigenous women. That's always something that is at the forefront of our community's hearts, as well as they know their residential school finding. And sometimes you have to like dig, because the media doesn't like to talk about these things. Like a lot of the times we have to, specifically for murdered and missing Indigenous women, we have to like take the reins on that and do all the investigating. Like the tribes started it all on their own because nobody cared. So as you search for ways to be involved, you will find plenty of ways to get involved.

Jasmine Bradshaw 21:22

Okay, speaking of powwows, I have to ask you to tell the story of how your parents met.

Jalynne Geddes 21:28

Oh, my gosh.

Jasmine Bradshaw 21:30

Please tell it, it's so cute!

Jalynne Geddes 21:32

They are the sweetest. So they, my dad, so we're from Beardy's and Okemasis Cree Nation. That's where I grew up and that's my dad's reservation. But my mom's reservation is called the James Smith Cree Nation and they're both tribe, but different reservations. But they met at a powwow in Batoche, and my dad saw my mom dancing, and she was all dressed in white. And he said, these are his direct words, "It is fair to say that as soon as I saw her, I was smitten."

Jasmine Bradshaw 22:02

I love them. I love that story. I have tears, man. That's so cute.

Jalynne Geddes 22:07

I know. They're sweet couple, and they've just gotten better.

Jasmine Bradshaw 22:12

Yes, that's really true. Okay, what does it look like for people to incorporate the Indigenous community into their anti-racist work? I've shared this with you before, but one of the biggest mistakes that I made when I started learning about anti-racism was that I looked at it in a very Black-white binary, and the erasure of Indigenous People is not by accident. And so including Indigenous communities in our anti-racism work is critical. So can you tell us some tips about what that might look like?

Jalynne Geddes 22:44

Well, first of all, I want to say that anybody who's embarking on an anti-racist journey, you're gonna make mistakes, and that's okay. Like, I'm on my own journey, and I mess up all the time. And I make mistakes, and I'm so grateful for people who, who put me right, who set me right. I think that's such an act of love. And so I think it's okay to go into it knowing I'm going to make mistakes, and that's okay. But also, I think, as you like, just try to engage in the, in the true history, those opportunities to to honor Indigenous People and to truly understand us, they will reveal themselves as you dive deep into the true history of America. And there's so many, there's so many ways you can do that. And I mean, for example, this is kind of like, not silly, but...so I don't know if your viewers—do you have viewers? Listeners? Listeners. If they—cuz I know you've spoken about Rutherford Falls on your Instagram—but there's this joke about like, Mark Ruffalo, because everybody in the Indigenous community loves Mark Ruffalo because he is always like this huge activist for us. Yeah, and he's he's always like posting about us, he's just like this, like, super ally. We love him. But even at the Oscars, everyone was at the Oscars, it was during COVID, it was the Oscars, and he did a—nobody else did—he did a land acknowledgement.

Jasmine Bradshaw 24:13

Wow.

Jalynne Geddes 24:13

Like you can, there's just so many ways you can just slip it in there.

Jasmine Bradshaw 24:19

Oh, absolutely. Oh, I love that. And it made me think when you were sharing about learning the true history, I know that when I learned something like that, like I have to tell somebody. I feel like the word "struck gold" is not really the appropriate term, but like it's like this thing that you can't even keep inside once you do learn it. I feel the same way about learning Black history. I'm like, 'how did I not know this?' And, 'Everybody in the world needs to know this.' So I think you're right with starting with the history, starting with ourselves, and then moving into teaching our children, because we can't teach our kiddos anything that we don't understand ourselves

Jalynne Geddes 24:55

Yeah. And but you know, you know what, something that's really nice about learning is you can learn alongside your children, and you don't have to be so far advanced. And if they ask you questions that you don't know, it is always okay to tell your kids, "I don't know. Let me find that out." It's, because some of the best ways you can learn is like picking up a children's book with your kids. And, and it like doesn't have to be a complicated one. But like, you know, me and my son, we have several children's books about the residential schools, which is a very, like, tender topic. And the books that we have available about them, they can be gentle, or they can just, they can have, be, more in depth. And you can read them before you show them to your child, and, which is important to do anyway. But you can learn alongside your kids. And it's okay to model that spirit of humble learning for them, so that they have that same humble learning in their heart as they go through their life. And so I don't think that forcing yourself to be an expert right away is necessary, you can dive in with your kids. While you're still, while you're starting out.

Jasmine Bradshaw 26:04

I love that. That is so wise. Thank you for sharing that, because I needed that reminder too. One of the last things I wanted to ask you is, how can our kids support your kids?

Jalynne Geddes 26:15

I think it all starts with like, what you model for your kids. If you're a non-Indigenous Person, like for example, like my son, like I mentioned, my son has long hair, and he's the only child, or only boy, in his class with long hair. And you can, like, something as simple as teaching your kids about body autonomy will help my child, because they're not, because we teach my, our, son that his hair is sacred, in that his hair is, honors, his ancestors, and that it's special. And so if you teach your children about body autonomy, they're not just going to go up to my son and grab his hair, because they know that that's his body. And then from there, you can, you know, they can, it's okay to, and also it's okay to ask questions in a respectful way, and you can model that for them too, but if you teach them, like, something basic like that, that will open the door for other conversations about, you know, his hair, or whatnot. And so, like just modeling really simple basic things for your kids so that they know how to approach somebody who might have a different life experience, like, little things go a long way.

Jasmine Bradshaw 27:29

I love how you said a little bit earlier that only good things can come from it, because when you were talking about the body autonomy in the hair, I mean, when we just talked to Sheryl last week on the podcast, she was talking about how hard and frustrating it is when people come up to her son, her Black son, at the park and put their hands in his hair. So it's like this, when you are modeling this and talking about this, it's not just supporting one community, it's supporting all

Jalynne Geddes 27:56

Mmm hmm. And modeling the way you talk about anybody. Like, and it becomes way more important when it becomes a member, if your child has questions about members of a marginalized community, modeling that, "Oh, they do this thing this way. Isn't that amazing that we all do things different ways? And isn't that wonderful?" And really putting the emphasis on how wonderful differences are and not saying "Yeah, they do things weird." Like, we, that's why we don't say "weird" in our home, we are, we try not to. I mean, you know, sometimes I look at myself, and I'm like, "Oh, this is a weird outfit I'm

wearing," so it's easy to, you know? But we try our hardest to stay away from any kind of language like that, because then they can start to put that language onto other people. People overcomplicate things, when really it's all about, like, using compassionate language, and patient language, and letting them be excited about things.

Jasmine Bradshaw 29:00

Thank you, thank you. Thank you, my sweet friend, I love you and I adore you. And I know people are going to want to come and find you. So remind us again, how can they follow you? How can they support you? Where are you at?

Jalynne Geddes 29:12

I am on Instagram and my account is called @nehiyanahk_creations. And that's where you can find all of my beadwork all of my, you know, all of my thoughts about everything. I kind of like spill everything onto that page. So you know, enter at your own risk.

Jasmine Bradshaw 29:31

But you do it so beautifully. Every time I read one of your posts. I'm like "How long did that take her?!" because it is, like, poetic.

Jalynne Geddes 29:39

That's so kind of you to say

Jasmine Bradshaw 29:41

Oh, well thank you for sharing your wisdom. I very very much love you.

Jalynne Geddes 29:45

I love you.

Jasmine Bradshaw 29:48

Isn't she so stinking wise? Oh my goodness. I cannot believe I get to be friends with this brilliant woman. Thank you for taking the time to listen to this conversation. I hope that you have some important things that are at the front of your mind while you're thinking about going into this Thanksgiving season, and I will link all of her information in the show notes, and of course, I will tag her on Instagram all over the place. So if you are in our Instagram community, it will be super easy for you to find her and follow her. If you're not in our Instagram community, find us @firstname.basis, and you can come and join the conversation. We are also going to be sending out resources about talking to your kiddos about Thanksgiving, about teaching about Thanksgiving. So if you are not yet, join our Fam Favorites email list. It's firstnamebasis.org/famfavorites. And you will get resources in your inbox every week that help you to go further and gain deeper knowledge about the episode that you heard here on First Name Basis.

Jasmine Bradshaw 30:51

All right, I love you so much. I am so proud of the work that we're doing together, and I hope hope hope that you are really taking to heart what it means to center Indigenous Peoples this Thanksgiving.

Jasmine Bradshaw 31:05

My friends, thank you for being here. I hope you can feel how much I believe in you, and how deeply I know that when we work together, we can make real change in our communities. Any of the books, podcasts, or articles that I reference will be linked in the show notes. If you are looking for more detailed notes, be sure to head over to our Patreon community. On our Patreon site. I provide all of the outlines that I use to make the episodes and everything is linked there. So you don't have to take furious notes while you are listening. And don't forget to join us over on Instagram at [firstname.basis](#). If you're interested in partnering with First Name Basis or doing some kind of collaboration, please email us at hello@firstnamebasis.org. All right, have a great week my friends, and I will talk to you again soon.