

## Thanksgiving — Quyawik, Quyawim ernera

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### QUYAWIM ERNERA PINGAKTAARAA. – HE LIKES THANKSGIVING.

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Photo: Ouzinkie children dressed for a Thanksgiving play and celebration, 1960s. Smith Collection, courtesy of Tim and Norman Smith.

The origins of the Thanksgiving holiday are as complex as the history of America. Although many people consider the harvest feast held in the Plymouth colony in 1621 as the first Thanksgiving, the tradition of giving thanks over a harvest meal is not confined to European settlers, nor did it begin in Plymouth. For millennia, Native American communities have recognized nature's bounty and given thanks at fall gatherings. Alutiiq people, for example, have long shared stores of foods harvested in the summer during fall and early winter gatherings. Today, the festivals of the past have changed to modern potlucks and potlatches, but they reflect a tradition of honoring ancestors and the spirit world for the gifts of food that sustain human life.

Thanksgiving became a United States holiday during the Civil War. In 1863, President Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November a national day of thanks. Many Alutiiq families have adopted this holiday, celebrating as other Americans do with a day of feasting and relaxation. Although Kodiak's Thanksgiving tables may feature turkey and pumpkin pie, they are also likely to include local foods from the past year's harvest. The seal and deer meat, salmon, crab, and wild duck served in Alutiiq homes mirror the feast shared by the Plymouth colonists and their Wampanoag Indian neighbors, who celebrated the bounty of their world with local venison, cod,

lobsters, seals, and a variety of game birds.