



HONORING OUR HERITAGE

A TOOLKIT AND GUIDE FOR CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY



PARTNERS FOR RURAL
TRANSFORMATION

HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY



What is Indigenous Peoples' Day?

Indigenous Peoples' Day is a holiday recognized every second Monday of October in the United States. This day is an honorable alternative to acknowledging Columbus Day. This holiday re-centers the focus from Columbus Day, moving from a celebration of colonialism into an opportunity to reveal historical truths about the genocide and oppression of Indigenous peoples in the Americas, to organize against current injustices, and to celebrate Indigenous resistance.

Indigenous Peoples Day was born in 1990, at a U.N. conference in Geneva, Switzerland, which was focused on discrimination against Indigenous populations in the Americas. In 1992, activists in Berkeley, CA, convinced the Berkeley City Council to declare October 12th a "Day of Solidarity with Indigenous People." Since then, there has been a growing movement to reclaim "Columbus Day" as "Indigenous People's Day"; states such as South Dakota, Hawai'i, and Alaska have changed the holiday's name and many more cities have taken similar action.

Why is Indigenous Peoples' Day Important

Most American students are taught the phrase: "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue", in reference to his alleged discovery of the United States. However, Christopher Columbus was not the first foreign explorer to land in the Americas. Neither he nor those that came before him discovered America—because Indigenous Peoples have populated the Western Hemisphere for tens of thousands of years. European contact resulted in devastating loss of life, disruption of tradition, and enormous loss of lands for Indigenous Peoples in the Americas. ([Source: National Museum of the American Indian | Smithsonian Institute](#)). Celebrating and honoring Columbus and other colonizers like him invalidates the cultures and nations that existed before his haphazard "discovery", while also minimizing the damage colonization did to Indigenous populations.

Indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere experienced resource theft, disease, and enslavement at the hands of European colonizers. Warfare and forced relocation further splintered these populations, altering their lives to this day. Indigenous Peoples' Day can't fully address the erasure of Native American history from public education on its own. But it offers a focus to this history in schools, where many history textbooks leave out Native Americans or sanitize white colonizer's treatment of them.



ADVOCACY + OPPPOSITION

STATEMENTS



IN SUPPORT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY

For Indigenous peoples who want to amplify IPD in their community:

- Asking for guidance and support from members of the local Indigenous community
- Be mindful to be inclusive of all Indigenous people, including yourself
- Engage your local community + ensure that their concerns and focuses are addressed in your celebration

For non-Indigenous allies:

- Reach out to the local Indigenous community(ies) and follow their lead
- Centering Indigenous voices and work in this movement, highlighting what issues they acknowledge as key in their lives
- Land acknowledgement
- Decolonize your social media
- Advocate for federal adoption of IPD

IN THE FACE OF OPPPOSITION

"Columbus was an explorer! Not a colonizer!"

- Present firsthand accounts from Columbus' journal. With this, non-Natives will become aware that celebrating Columbus Day contributes to the erasure of the Indigenous peoples' trauma and history.

"All that stuff happened so long ago - get over it!"

- Make the issue current, like how Columbus' legacy still makes. For example, the Doctrine of Discovery declared that Christian explorers have the authority to claim any land that is "discovered." This document is embedded in US law via a Supreme Court case and is still used today to justify taking land from Indigenous people.





COVID-19 SAFE CELEBRATION IDEAS

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Host a virtual/safe Native movie screening

For a lot of people, seeing is sometimes better than just reading. Make a connection through film! [VisionMaker.org](#) has a rich collection of Native-made and centered films for public broadcasting.

Share/follow/highlight Indigenous news sources

News sites like: Indian Country Today, National Native News, APTN News, Censored News and Indianz.com are great places to start and become more knowledgeable about Indigenous issues

Search for IPD events in your area

This is perhaps the simplest of them all! Just perform an easy Google search with "Indigenous Peoples' Day" + "your city/area" and check out everything there is to offer near you. Take friends, be safe, and be respectful.

Build/strengthen connections to Native communities

Make plans to attend an event hosted by a Native group, organization, or cultural center. Find out how you + your community/family can be of assistance regarding the issues nearby groups are working on or struggling with.

Amplify/create Indigenous fundraiser

Use your voice as an ally to amplify an existing Indigenous-led fundraiser or create a community-based fundraiser as an Indigenous person. Spread the word and garner support for your cause online. For example: Native Women Lead, Lakota Law, Native CDFI Network,

Shop Native

Part of turning progressive words to tangible actions is making conscious life changes. Making more purchases from creators from Indigenous tribes is a perfect example of this. Beyond Buckskin's [list of Native creators](#) is a great place to start.

HOW TO REACH OUT TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS



STEP ONE: Study up on issues/legislation relevant to your nearby Indigenous community

Research issues and legislation that has affected Indigenous communities in your region, focusing on Indigenous voices and how they have responded. Most importantly, amplify the actual community members and how they continue to be affected by these concerns.

STEP TWO: Identify your elected representative

Letters are highly effective to get in contact with your elected officials. Many legislators believe that a letter represents not only the position of the writer but also many other constituents who did not reach out.

Use the [Common Causes database](#) for identifying your official, bills they've introduced/voted on, and how to reach them.

STEP THREE: Write a letter to your elected representative communicating your ideas

In your letter, be brief -- but clear. Remain focused on the issue and solutions the community has identified, and why this matters to the representative. Remember: elected officials serve the people. Be courteous, but be firm. Use the [ACLU's sample letter](#) for guidance.

STEP FOUR (optional): Host a virtual meeting with local Indigenous community members and leaders for awareness and connection

If safe, choose a place that can be easily reached by your elected official and community members. In this time, a Zoom or Google Meet meeting may be best.

For the meeting, make sure to do the following:

- Determine your meeting agenda.
 - Remember to research the representative's background.
 - Highlight the issues that local Indigenous communities members make priority/issues you wrote about.
- Create your talking points.
 - Make sure you and your team should assign agenda points to each other.
 - There should be an organizer, a facilitator, note taker, etc.
 - Others should be ready with specific data or stories about Indigenous Peoples Day and be prepared to explicitly ask for the elected representative's support.





PRT ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATED TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

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Oweesta Corporation's mission is to provide opportunities for Native people to develop financial assets and create wealth by assisting in the establishment of strong, permanent institutions and programs contributing to economic independence and strengthening sovereignty for all Native communities.

Follow them on social media and online at [oweesta.org/!](http://oweesta.org/)



RCAC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides training, technical and financial resources and advocacy so rural communities can achieve their goals and visions. For more than 40 years, our dedicated staff and active board, coupled with our key values: leadership, collaboration, commitment, quality and integrity, have helped effect positive change in rural communities across the West. RCAC works with Tribes and Native communities to maintain and develop drinking water, wastewater, solid waste and housing services.

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