

Indigenous Peoples Day and Columbus Day

Two distinctions, one federal holiday! It's rather hard to figure sometimes what to celebrate on a day with two distinctions. Let's break this down...Columbus Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day are celebrated on the same day every year on the second Monday in October, but they are not the same holiday. They're two distinct traditions with distinct beginnings. Columbus Day is a federal national holiday for the United States as well as in Latin America and other countries. It commemorates Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Indigenous Peoples' Day, on the other hand, is a national holiday which is to celebrate Native American customs and heritage. Indigenous Peoples' Day and Columbus Day have a shared history that includes their rich and enduring cultures and acts of institutional oppression and genocide.



It wasn't until 1937 that Columbus Day was declared a national holiday by presidential decree. In 1968, it was designated as a holiday in the United States. Columbus Day is a commemoration of Italian immigrants' history, culture and accomplishments in the United States and those of Italian origin. Christopher Columbus embodies the human spirit for exploration in a time of great exploration in the world. He ranks up there with the top explorers of all time. Columbus's legacy for exploration is synonymous with names such as Marco Polo, Vasco da Gama, Ferdinand Magellan and Amerigo Vespucci. It is by this spirit of pushing the boundaries of what is known to what is unknown as to why his adventures are revered.

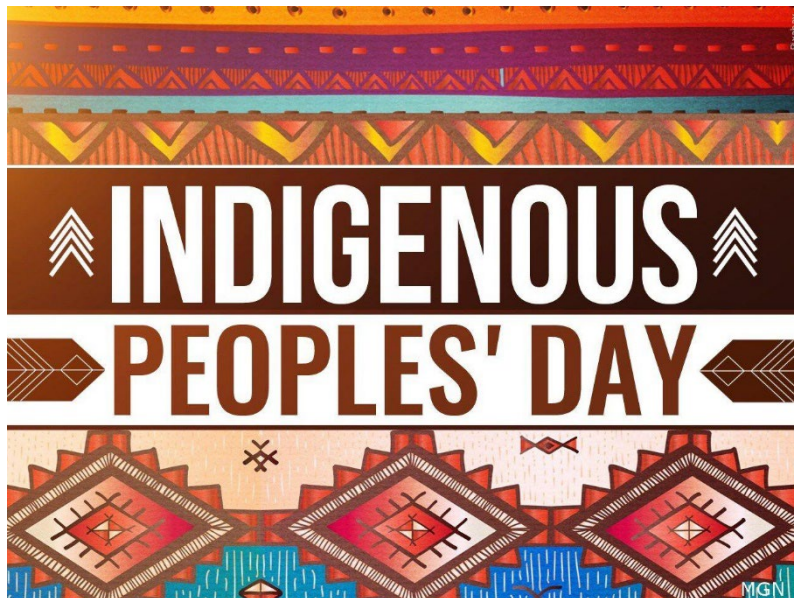


One of the main criticisms of Columbus is that he embodied colonialism. During the colonialism era, human values were at an all-time low and class stratification led to a hierarchal form of oppression that

is bewildering to us today. History has revealed many atrocities in our past and history has an opportunity to prevent them in the future as long as their stories are not lost. While Columbus Day is celebrated in honor of Christopher Columbus, Indigenous Peoples Day is celebrated in opposition to Christopher Columbus' colonial ideals and works.

This conversation goes back as far as 1977. Where the International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas, sponsored by the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland first proposed the idea of replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. This didn't gain much ground until the city of Berkley, CA made it official in 1992. Then, South Dakota became the first state to officially recognize the holiday beginning in 1989. Since then, the holiday has been catching on with several states adopting the holiday over the next couple decades. Until, [President Biden made it official in 2021](#). The Biden administration is the first to officially recognize Indigenous Peoples Day on October 11, 2021. The holiday, which coincides with Columbus Day, is a holiday that celebrates Native American peoples and commemorates their histories and cultures. The holiday is also an opportunity to reveal historical truths about colonialism and the genocide and oppression that Native Americans faced. The holiday is one that can be a time for reflection on history, celebration of tribal cultures and education of Native American peoples.

While the debate seems to be ongoing as to which holiday should take precedence. Take this opportunity to view some history, celebrate culture and be appreciative for this great human experience we all have!



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