

5 Ways To Celebrate Indigenous People's Day 2017

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One by one, cities across the United States are beginning to publicly replace Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day, a celebratory day of recognition for the culture and history of Native people. Just this past year, Los Angeles County, Salt Lake City, and Austin all passed resolutions declaring Indigenous People's Day is to be annually celebrated the second Monday of October. The push to create Indigenous People's Day has intensified this year, especially with the call to remove statues of Christopher Columbus, but activists have been fighting to rename Columbus Day since the 1970s. This push should remind us to respect the rights and culture indigenous people every day, but the holiday serves as a special reminder to celebrate Native Americans.

There are myriad reasons to replace Columbus Day, but the most impactful is Columbus' long history of colonization and violence towards indigenous people on the continents he claimed to have "discovered." Between Columbus' arrival in 1492 and the Pilgrims' arrival in 1620, 90 percent of

Native American population died from European-born diseases. Columbus is not a romanticized myth, but a colonizer who uprooted and killed indigenous people — and most Native Americans still face discrimination and trauma to this day that is reminiscent of their ancestor's. Renaming Columbus Day "Indigenous People's Day" is just a small step in the long process of amends the United States owes Indigenous people. Here are five ways you can celebrate Indigenous people on Indigenous People's Day.

Participate in cultural appreciation

No, cultural *appreciation* is not the same thing as cultural *appropriation*. Cultural appreciation is all about respecting different cultures, understanding the role you play in oppressing or erasing said culture, and not trivializing sacred cultural traditions by simply adopting them. Celebrate Indigenous People's Day by attending community celebrations — participate in the music, food, and fun, while actually respecting the culture and history you are enjoying. And before you get any ideas, this does not mean you can wear a ceremonial headdress. Also, appreciation is about learning the history and accomplishments of Native Americans. Attend a panel discussion, lecture (from Native Americans, not from your white professor), or do your own research.

Donate to Indigenous People's Rights Organizations.



If you do not have the time to participate in the in-person celebrations, you can donate to Native organizations that fight to protect both human and environmental rights of Indigenous people. Consider donating to the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition, a group made up of five nations (and supported by 30 Native American Tribes!) who are in a battle to preserve Bear Ears National Monument that has come under threat. Or, donate to Stand With Standing Rock, the group formed of Native activists, different tribes, and allies who halted the Dakota Access Pipeline — and are still fighting against it.

Attend vigils, rallies, or other events that Native activists organize

On Indigenous People's Day, let's celebrate Native culture, but let's also recognize why the holiday is needed in the first place. Systemic racism has long erased the narratives of indigenous people from American history, and contributes to the large health and wellness disparities Native Americans face today, when compared to all other Americans. Native American women are especially marginalized, as they are twice as likely to be sexually assaulted than women of any other race. Additionally, so many Native American women end up missing or murdered that North Dakota senators are calling it an "epidemic." If Native Activists organize vigils or rallies on Indigenous People's Day, try to show up and acknowledge the harm the United States has inflicted on different nations.