

by Lacey Shepard Oct 10, 2022

Indigenous Peoples' Day & How You Can Support Native Excellence Every Day

Indigenous Peoples' Day or Columbus Day?

US history remembers Christopher Columbus as a master navigator who “sailed the ocean blue in 1492” and “discovered the New World.” The reality is that what Columbus found was a land that was inhabited by and thriving under the stewardship of local tribes who had lived in the Americas since time immemorial. The arrival of Columbus was the start of what would become centuries of war and the attempted elimination of Native people – yet people have been celebrating Columbus Day on the second Monday in October for decades.

In recent years there has been an increasing demand to stop using this day to celebrate a man who began the genocide against America's Indigenous peoples. Instead, individuals, organizations, and even politicians have advocated for a national day honoring America's Indigenous people to recognize the rich cultural history, atrocities suffered under colonization, and modern-day thriving of America's original people. The first state to reject Columbus Day and instead celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day was South Dakota in 1990; and while several other states followed suit, it wasn't until 2021 that a US President officially recognized Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day. While this doesn't make Indigenous Peoples' Day a federal holiday, it is a big step in acknowledging the negative impact of colonization and supporting a bright future for Native people.

Why is Indigenous Peoples' Day Important?

Representation and acknowledgment matter, and while there are 574 federally recognized Indian Nations across the US, there is hardly any representation of modern Native excellence in mainstream media. The representation we do see is often an antiquated generalization or hyper-focused on the atrocities done to Native people—often making people think of Natives in the past tense. Through the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Day, we can take steps to end Native erasure, accurately portray modern Native people, and celebrate the contributions they've made and are currently making to society.

Ways to support

Support Indigenous Peoples' Day by supporting Native people—even if you aren't Native

yourself. Over 100 US cities are celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day instead of Columbus Day; if your city isn't one of them, talk to your local elected officials to petition for the change. Educate yourself on the true history of Native people nationwide and in your area, and take advantage of the resources available to you.

- **IllumiNative** – A Native women-led organization that uplifts Native voices while providing resources to advocates and allies for re-education.
 - Download [An Advocate's Guide To Supporting Indigenous People's Day](#).
- **NDN Collective** – A national organization that leads decolonizing efforts through the revitalization of Indigenous culture.
- **Advance Native Political Leadership** – A Native women-led organization that breaks down barriers and expands representation for Native people in politics.

Share these resources with your friends and talk to your community about supporting Indigenous Peoples' Day. Reach out to your local Indigenous community to see how you can support their efforts and share their voices in colonized spaces.

Remember to support Natives beyond one day in October. Support artists in mainstream media, create space for Indigenous voices, and learn about whose land you're on.

Beyond Indigenous Peoples' Day

While learning the true history of Indigenous people is important, there are also Native people existing and contributing to society today. Find sustainable ways to recognize and appreciate contemporary Native culture in your daily life.

Support Native Artists in mainstream media.

Streaming services are beginning to produce projects that feature Native directors, writers, and actors. Hulu released *Reservation Dogs*, which is written and directed by an entirely Native team, that focuses on four native teenagers. Peacock released two seasons of *Rutherford Falls*, a comedy about a fictional tribe that features mostly Native actors and has a Native co-creator.

Native artists have been creating modern music with homage to their heritage for decades. These artists can be supported through your standard online music platforms. Two of our favorites are Supaman, an [Apsáalooke](#) rapper from Montana who blends spiritual concepts into his rap music, and Snotty Nose Rez Kids, a duo of Haisla rappers out of British Columbia.

Make yourself familiar with Native stores.

Buying and supporting Native-made doesn't have to be a unique experience on recognized holidays. It's easy to find businesses that sell items to support your daily life. Below are a few that we love supporting:

- **Prados**
 - Prados is a beauty brand created by makeup artist, Cece Meadows (Yoeme and Nəmənə). The packaging is expertly designed through artist collaborations and features bold color palettes that can be enjoyed by anyone so you can decolonize your makeup
- **Bison Star**
 - Bison Star is a small family business that has been creating and selling personal care items since 2018. Run by husband-and-wife duo, Angelo (Taos Pueblo) and Jacqueline, all products are carefully created from natural and locally sourced ingredients.
- **Birchbark Books**
 - BirchBark Books is a Native-owned independent bookstore founded by Louise Erdrick (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) for book lovers who appreciate good writing and a thoughtfully curated book selection. Birchbark Books can be found online or at their brick-and-mortar location in Minneapolis, MN.
- **Beyond Buckskin**
 - Beyond Buckskin is a collective of over 40 artists launched in 2009 by Jessica R. Metcalfe (Turtle Mountain Chippewa). The Beyond Buckskin Boutique provides an online space to easily connect with Native fashion designers and jewelry artists.

Support Native Excellence Every Day.

It's so easy to support Native excellence every day. Purchase some of your Christmas gifts from Native artists or Native brands. Add Native-made beauty products to your skincare routine. When looking for a new place to try for dinner, see if there are any Native restaurants or chefs in your area (like **Off The Rez** in Seattle). Read books by Native authors, support shows and movies with Native talent, and go to art openings and concerts by creative Native artists. When you go for a hike, take a few minutes to Google which tribe's ancestral homeland you're going to be on and see what tips they share to ensure you recreate respectfully. (**Snoqualmie Tribe Ancestral Lands Movement** does a great job at sharing tips on enjoying the great outdoors with Native values.) Listen to Native voices, make sure there's a seat at the table for Native thoughts and ideas, and encourage your friends and family to do the same. In doing so, you're supporting Inspired Natives everywhere, every day.