

[For 12/21/15 meeting]

COUNCILLOR MAZEN

[Add other Councillors as may wish to sponsor or present]

WHEREAS: Columbus Day has been celebrated unofficially since the early 18th century, and was officially made a Federal Holiday in 1937 to be celebrated on the second Monday of October, with M.G.L Part I, Title I, Ch. 4, section 7, clause 18 setting aside the second Monday of October as a State Legal Holiday, and M.G.L Part I, Title II, Ch. 6, Section 12V designating that the Governor declare that day to be Columbus Day; and

WHEREAS: The day commemorates the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas on October 12, 1492; and

WHEREAS: The First Voyage of Columbus to the Americas also initiated the transatlantic slave trade, journal entries from Columbus show his desire to enslave the Indigenous populations of the Caribbean, and he imprisoned and transported many hundreds of people to this end; and

WHEREAS: Columbus' Second Voyage of 1493 was one of conquest, wherein seventeen ships were led by him to the New World, and his governorship of the Caribbean instituted systematic policies of slavery and extermination of Indigenous populations, especially the Taino people whose population was reduced from approximately 8 million to 100,000 during Columbus' reign, being further reduced by the continuation of his policies until near-extinction in 1542; and

WHEREAS: The example of the Taino people is merely indicative of the policies of Columbus and his men, and all told some historians estimate that more than 15 million Indigenous persons were exterminated in the Caribbean Basin alone; and

WHEREAS: Though the introduction of European diseases may account for some of these deaths, starvation and overt extermination policies were mostly to blame, and thus this atrocity cannot be reasonably attributed to forces outside of the control of European colonialists; and

WHEREAS: Other localities have adopted Indigenous Peoples' Day as a counter-celebration to Columbus Day, to promote Indigenous cultures and commemorate the history of Indigenous Peoples; and

WHEREAS: Cambridge believes that the cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas are worthy of being promoted, that the history is rich, diverse, and worthy of celebration, and that the actions and policies of European colonizers of the Americas destroyed a part of those cultures, and inhibited the promulgation of it for generations to come; and

WHEREAS: Cambridge recognizes the fact that the City is built upon the homelands and villages of the Massachusetts Indigenous Peoples of this region; and,

WHEREAS: The City values the many contributions made to our community through Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, labor, technology, science, philosophy, arts and the overall cultural contribution that has substantially shaped the character of the City of Cambridge; and

WHEREAS: In 1990 representatives from 120 Indigenous Nations at the First Continental Conference on 500 Years of Indian Resistance unanimously passed a resolution to transform Columbus Day into an occasion to strengthen the process of continental unity and struggle towards liberation, and thereby use the occasion to reveal a more accurate historical record.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY

RESOLVED: That the Council go on the record to state that the second Monday of October henceforth be commemorated as Indigenous Peoples' Day in Cambridge, in recognition of the position of Indigenous Peoples as native to these lands, and the suffering they faced following European conquest of their land; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Council recommends that Indigenous Peoples' Day be observed by the people to reflect upon the ongoing struggles of Indigenous People on this land, and to celebrate the thriving culture and value that Indigenous Peoples add to our City; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Council recommends, following the approval of this resolution, consultation with Indigenous people regarding the forms of future commemoration in Cambridge for Indigenous Peoples' Day; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City of Cambridge will encourage Cambridge Public Schools to observe this day, with appropriate exercises and instruction in the schools around the time of Indigenous Peoples' Day, to the end that the culture, history and diversity of Indigenous Peoples be celebrated and perpetuated; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City of Cambridge encourages other businesses, organizations, and public institutions to recognize and observe Indigenous Peoples' Day; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to ensure that the Massachusetts Indian Commission, North American Indian Center of Boston, the Nipmuc Nation, the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian Tribal Council, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), The Praying Indian Tribes of Natick and Ponkapoag, the Massachusetts at Ponkapoag Tribe, and United American Indians of New England, all of which include descendants of those people indigenous to this area, receive a suitably engrossed copy of this order.