

[Brookline, MA Indigenous Peoples Day Resolution filed on 8-30-17 for the November 2017 Town Meeting]

Principal Petitioners:

Patricia Connors (Town Meeting Member, Precinct 03),

[REDACTED]

Cornelia van der Ziel (Town Meeting Member, Precinct 15),

[REDACTED]

Raquel Halsey, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Vishni Samaraweera, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

TO SEE IF THE TOWN WILL VOTE TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY IN BROOKLINE

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, chapter 4, section 7, clause 18 setting aside the second Monday of October as a Massachusetts state holiday, and M.G.L. Part I, Title II, chapter 6, section 12V providing that the Governor declare that day to be Columbus Day; and

WHEREAS, Columbus Day commemorates the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas specifically on the Caribbean islands of the Bahamas and Hispaniola (present-day countries of the Dominican Republic and Haiti) on October 12, 1492; and

WHEREAS, the first voyage of Columbus to the Americas initiated the transatlantic slave trade, journal entries from Columbus show his desire to enslave the Indigenous populations of the Caribbean, and he subsequently 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/Arawak 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/Arawak 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 these atrocities cannot be reasonably attributed to forces outside of the control of European colonialists; and

WHEREAS, the devastation of Indigenous populations would lead to the kidnapping, deaths, and enslavement of tens of millions of African people, and the profound effects of the transatlantic slave trade and African diaspora continue to be felt to the present day; and

WHEREAS, the cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas are worthy of being promoted, their history is rich, diverse, and worthy of celebration, and the actions and policies of European colonizers of the Americas actively destroyed and suppressed parts of those cultures; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous Peoples of the lands that would later become known as the Americas have occupied these lands since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Brookline, Massachusetts (the "Town") has a history of opposing racism towards Indigenous peoples in the United States, this racism serving to perpetuate high rates of Indigenous poverty and leading to inequities in health, education, and housing; and

WHEREAS, the Town wishes to honor our nation's Indigenous roots, history and contributions; and

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska and other localities including Seattle WA, Cambridge MA, Denver CO, Portland OR, Berkeley CA, and Albuquerque NM 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, Indigenous Peoples Day was first proposed in 1977 by a delegation of Native Nations to the United Nations-sponsored International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas; 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 RESOLVED THAT TOWN MEETING URGES:

1. The Board of Selectmen to establish that the second Monday of October henceforth be commemorated as Indigenous Peoples Day in Brookline, in recognition of the position of Indigenous Peoples as native to these lands, and the suffering they faced during and after the European conquest,
2. The people of Brookline to observe Indigenous Peoples Day by reflecting upon the dispossession of the homelands and villages of the Massachusetts people of this region, without which the building of the Town would not have been possible, and to celebrate the survival of Indigenous Peoples against all odds, and to celebrate the thriving cultures and values that Indigenous Peoples have brought and continue to bring to our Town and the wider community,
3. The Board of Selectmen to appoint an Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration Committee to develop and implement the Town's commemoration of Indigenous Peoples Day. This committee shall include representatives from the following: the Town's Commission for Diversity, Inclusion & Community Relations, the North American Indian Center of Boston, United American Indians of New England, Cultural Survival, IndigenousPeoplesDayMA, and other Indigenous representation as well as Brookline community representation from all segments of the community such as schools, non-profit organizations and businesses,
4. The Board of Selectmen or its designee to assist the Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration Committee with identifying and obtaining possible funding and resources necessary for the commemoration of Indigenous Peoples Day in the Town,
5. The Public Schools of Brookline 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,

6. The Board of Selectmen to encourage businesses, organizations, and public institutions to recognize and observe Indigenous Peoples Day, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk shall ensure that the Massachusetts Commission of Indian Affairs, North American Indian Center of Boston, IndigenousPeoplesDayMA.org, United American Indians of New England, Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness, the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian Tribal Council, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council (including the Hassanamisco and Natick), the Assonet Band of Wampanoags, the Chappaquiddick Wampanoags, the Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuc, the Pocasset Wampanoag, the Ponkapoag, and the Seaconke Wampanoag, all of which include descendants of those people indigenous to Massachusetts, as well as the Brookline School Committee and Brookline TAB, receive a suitably engrossed copy of this Resolution.

Or take any action relative thereto.

SOURCES for WHEREAS clauses

Columbus Day has been celebrated unofficially: <http://www.history.com/topics/exploration/columbus-day>

The first voyage of Columbus to the Americas also initiated the transatlantic slave trade: A People's History of the United States, Howard Zinn, 1980
([http://library.uniteddiversity.coop/More Books and Reports/Howard Zinn, A peoples history of the United States.pdf](http://library.uniteddiversity.coop/More_Books_and_Reports/Howard_Zinn,_A_peoples_history_of_the_United_States.pdf))

Columbus' second voyage of 1493 was one of conquest: Indians are Us?, Ward Churchill, 1994

The example of the Taino/Arawak people: A Little Matter of Genocide, Ward Churchill, 1997

though the introduction of European diseases: Indians are Us?, Ward Churchill, 1994

the devastation of Indigenous populations: The Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014

Other localities: [Wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline-for-support-for-Indigenous-Peoples%27-Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline-for-support-for-Indigenous-Peoples%27-Day), last edited November 10, 2016

Indigenous Peoples' Day was first proposed: Wikipedia, op cit

in 1990, representatives: Wikipedia, op cit

Explanation

As we write this, there is increasing awareness about the pain and damage caused by symbols such as confederate flags and statues, attention should also be paid to the longstanding request of many Native people to abolish the Columbus Day holiday, which to them is a celebration of the deaths of millions of their people, and instead declare Indigenous Peoples Day on the second Monday in October in order to bring more awareness to the history and continued presence of Native people here in the US.

The “Whereas clauses” provide an explanation of this warrant article. Here is some additional relevant information:

More details about Columbus

In this Resolution, we did not set forth some of the more gruesome actions of Columbus and his men, including:

-Widespread rape and enslavement of Indigenous women and girls. In addition to putting the Natives to work as slaves in his gold mines, Columbus also sold sex slaves as young as 9 to his men. Columbus and his men also raided villages for sex and sport.

-In the year 1500, Columbus wrote: “A hundred castellanoes are as easily obtained for a woman as for a farm, and it is very general and there are plenty of dealers who go about looking for girls; those from nine to ten are now in demand.”

-Several accounts of cruelty and murder include Spaniards testing the sharpness of blades on Native people by cutting them in half, beheading them in contests and throwing Natives into vats of boiling soap. There are also accounts of suckling infants being lifted from their mother’s breasts by Spaniards, only to be dashed headfirst into large rocks. -Bartolome De Las Casas, a former slave owner who became Bishop of Chiapas and repented his previous actions, described these exploits. “Such inhumanities and barbarisms were committed in my sight as no age can parallel,” he wrote. “My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature that now I tremble as I write.”

-Columbus forced the Native Arawak or Taino people to work in gold mines until exhaustion. Those who opposed were beheaded or had their ears cut off.

-In the province of Cibao all persons over 14 had to supply at least a thimble of gold dust every three months and were given copper necklaces as proof of their compliance. Those who did not fulfill their obligation had their hands cut off, which were tied around their necks while they bled to death—some 10,000 died handles.

-The Spanish used dogs against the Indigenous people. These dogs wore armor and had been fed human flesh. Live babies were also fed to these war dogs as sport, sometimes in front of horrified parents. There was also a practice known as the montería infernal, the infernal chase, or manhunt, in which Indians were hunted by war-dogs.

(The above points are direct quotations from: <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/8-myths-and-atrocities-aboutchristopher-columbus-and-columbus-day/>)

Some Brookline area history

-The first mention of “Muddy River” acknowledges an Indian presence with an estimated population of 50,000 in the area from the mouth of the Merrimac River to Cape Ann of in 1632. (History of Brookline, Massachusetts, Bradford Kingman, 1892)

-Brookline historical accounts by non-Native people refer to a Native defensive fortification near what is now known as Beacon and Powell Streets. (Brookline, a Favored Town, Charles Knowles Bolton, 1897) Other accounts refer to signs of an Indigenous village that was located in the area where the Ackers family subsequently established a farm, near the present-day Brookline Reservoir, by Boylston and Eliot Streets. (A History of Brookline, Massachusetts from the First Settlement at Muddy River Until the Present Time, John William Denehy, 1906 and History of the Town of Brookline, John Gould Curtis, 1933, prepared under the direction of the Brookline Historical Society)

-Brookline residents Joseph Smith and Lancelot Talbot are known to have purchased 7 Native Americans from the colonial government in 1675 to be sold as slaves in the Caribbean (www.hiddenbrookline.org)

Contemporary statistics

-Indigenous peoples of North America comprise approximately 2% of the U.S. population, with many more Indigenous people living here who are labeled as “Hispanic” or “Latinx” and whose ancestors are from Mexico, El Salvador, Ecuador and other countries. The Native American population of Massachusetts is 1% or less, but represents many different Native Nations and cultures. There are more than 500 federally recognized tribal nations in the U.S.

-Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Native youth aged 10-24. (www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/)

-Native Americans have the lowest high school graduation rates in the country. (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016007.pdf>)

-One in three Native American females have been sexually assaulted, and many Indigenous people believe this number is much higher. This compares with one in six of the total female population of the U.S. having been the victim of attempted or completed rape. (www.rain.org).

-Nearly 30 percent of Native Americans and Alaska Natives [lived in poverty in 2014](#) – approximately double the nation's [overall poverty rate](#). And about [7.5 percent](#) of Native American and Alaska Native homes did not have safe drinking water or basic sanitation as of 2013, according to the government's Indian Health Service. More than 10,000 people on the Navajo reservation alone – the largest in the US – lack safe drinking water. (<https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-06-16/some-native-americans-lack-access-to-safe-clean-water>-Native men, women and children occupy the most severely overcrowded and rundown homes in the United States). (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/06/americasforgotten-crisis-50-percent-native-american-tribe-homeless>)

-U.S. popular culture and school curricula do not accurately depict the history or ongoing existence of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous people speak routinely of being stereotyped and dealing with misunderstandings or lack of knowledge about their culture and history. Stereotypes do harm. ([“All the Real Indians Died Off” and 20 other Myths About Native Americans](#), Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker, 2016).