
*From the Desk of the HRSJ Advisor
Indigenous Peoples' Day 2021
Moving Beyond Land Acknowledgments*

Since 1968 the second Monday in October, in the USA, has been designated as a federal holiday which was formerly recognized as “Columbus Day.” However, there has been a movement to change the focus of this federally designated holiday. Over the last several years numerous states have acted to recognize the second Monday of October as “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” or have elected to have this day considered as a dual holiday. “For the first time, a U.S. President issued a proclamation, lending the most significant boost yet to efforts toward an appreciation of Native peoples” (Miller and Knickmeyer, 2021). The proclamation can be read at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/10/08/a-proclamation-indigenous-peoples-day-2021/>.

Jean Dennison, co-director for the Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies at the University of Washington, said that “at best, Columbus Day and colonialism put native peoples in the past. At worst, it makes them invisible. Indigenous Peoples’ Day at its core really aims to celebrate the past, present and most importantly, the futures of native peoples throughout the United States” (Wall Street Journal, 2021). At AMI/USA we are grateful for the Indigenous people of this land, particularly our Montessori colleagues, guides, administrators, board members, advocates, and activists, trainers and who are the carriers of tradition and culture. Additionally, we are grateful to the Indigenous Montessori Institute and Indigenous Montessori Network for the knowledge, resources, and direction that they have provided to us and the Montessori Movement as well as all of the other Indigenous educators working all throughout Turtle Island (for one example of an impressive Indigenous community building organization see: <https://kclcmontessori.org>).

Like many others, I have spent time learning about the Indigenous people in my state that live close to me. I have also, with guidance, been working to develop an intelligent and personal acknowledgement to articulate the respect and support that I feel for the Native people. At AMI/USA we realize that “speaking and hearing words of recognition is an important step in creating collaborative, accountable, continuous, and respectful relationships with Indigenous nations and communities” (NMOTAI). This is nothing to take lightly and as always, studying and understanding Indigenous history is vital. It is encouraging that many today are highly motivated to make acknowledgements, but it is also important to note that there is so much more we can



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do to uplift and demonstrate commitment to the tradition, values, and lives of the Indigenous people.

Land acknowledgment alone is not enough. A land acknowledgement is merely a starting point. Let this day be a tremendous call to action for all, especially for Montessorians, to do more to recognize the continued struggle and work of Indigenous communities across Turtle Island (or the so-called Americas). Support Indigenous people of Turtle Island and those around the world by donating your time and money to projects and social justice efforts, support indigenous-led grassroots change movements and campaigns (see also: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/>). You can consider contacting your legislators to ask them to act to make this day, to be one recognized as Indigenous Peoples' Day in your state and to support efforts to have land returned to Native people. Just as importantly, commit to teaching and guiding students to resources that reveal the true, and indisputable histories and legacies of Indigenous people in the so-called Americas and the true history of Christopher Columbus.

Miller, Z. and Knickmeyer, E. October 8, 2021. Biden is first president to mark Indigenous Peoples' Day. AP News. Downloaded October 11, 2021.

<https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-lifestyle-holidays-columbus-day-a1ad30d52ad7ff80aa8e7621e2f9a425>

Prang, A. October 11, 2021. Indigenous Peoples' Day and Columbus Day: What to Know. Wall Street Journal. Downloaded October 11, 2021

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/columbus-day-indigenous-peoples-day-what-to-know-11633787027>

Honoring Original Indigenous Inhabitants: Land Acknowledgement
National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian

<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/informational/land-acknowledgement>

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