

Indigenous Peoples Day

Katie Moody

BEFORE YOU READ: Discuss the meaning of “Indigenous.” Name some synonyms.

I learned about Christopher Columbus in school. My teachers said he was a hero. He “discovered” the “New World.” My teachers did not say much about the people who lived here before he came. Because of Columbus, many of these people died.

The U.S. government also says Columbus was a hero. In the U.S., we have a holiday to celebrate him. In 1934, Congress made a holiday called Columbus Day. It is on the second Monday of October.

When I was a child, I asked myself if Columbus was really a hero. I thought about the people who lived here before he came. I read books by Indigenous peoples. I learned about the pain and loss that they feel. If we want to heal from the past, we should listen to what they say.

Many people want to change the name of Columbus Day. They don’t want to celebrate settler colonialism. They say that we should have a holiday that celebrates Indigenous people. I agree we should change the name of the holiday. It is a start. It would help us change how we tell U.S. history.

The first city to make the change was Berkeley, California. They started celebrating Indigenous Peoples Day in 1992 – 500 years after Columbus invaded this land. Since then, more than 100 cities and states have changed the name of the holiday.

I wish we had Indigenous Peoples Day when I was a child. Maybe I would have learned more about the real history of this land. I hope children in the future will learn a more accurate history than I did!



Katie Moody is an interfaith minister and hospice chaplain living on the seacoast of New Hampshire. This is an adaptation of her original piece, which appeared in the Indigenous Peoples issue of The Change Agent.

AFTER YOU READ:

- 1.** Find out whether your state or city celebrates Columbus Day or Indigenous Peoples Day. Write a letter to your city or state government and say how you feel about the holiday.
- 2.** How did Katie Moody educate herself about Indigenous peoples? How could you?
- 3.** When “people” is the plural of person, it does not have an “s” at the end. However, when “people” describes a group, then you do need an “s” if you are talking about more than one group. Try saying and writing sentences that use “people” and “peoples.”

Letter Writing Template and Model

Use these to help you write your letter. Use the rubric on the next page to see all the parts you need to include and to measure your progress.

Template:

	Today's Date
Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Salutation,	
Indented paragraph #1 – should include a few sentences. In the first paragraph you should introduce yourself and say why you are writing.	
Indented paragraph #2 – should include a few sentences. The second paragraph should include more substance and details about why you are writing.	
Indented paragraph #3 – should include a few sentences. The third paragraph should conclude the letter and perhaps say something about next steps if appropriate.	
Sincerely,	
<i>[your signature here]</i>	
Your name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	

Sample:

	February 13, 2019
Marty Walsh City Hall Plaza Boston, MA	
Dear Mayor Walsh,	
I live in Boston. I am your constituent. I am writing because I believe we should change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day.	
Columbus was not a hero. He brought death and destruction to the Native people in the Americas. Many Indigenous People are asking that we stop celebrating Columbus Day. They say we should celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day instead. I agree. If Boston made this change, we would not be the only ones. Lots of other cities (like nearby Cambridge!) and some states have already changed the holiday to Indigenous Peoples Day. Local Massachusetts tribes, like the Mashpee Wampanoag, have changed the name of the holiday on their school calendars.	
Please consider my request to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day. Columbus caused a lot of hurt. What is there to celebrate about that? Instead, we should celebrate the Native people who survived against all odds!	
Sincerely,	
<i>Cynthia</i>	
Cynthia Peters 44 Farnsworth St. Boston, MA 02210	

Letter Writing Rubric

This rubric will be used to evaluate your letter. Study the rubric to see what the teacher will be looking for when he or she grades your letter. After you get your feedback, re-write your letter and see where you can increase your points.

	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	TOTAL
Letter parts	Your letter includes: 1) date, 2) recipient's address, 3) salutation, 4) three distinct paragraphs, 5) your signature, 6) your address.	Your letter has four out of the six letter parts.	Your letter has three of the six letter parts.	Your letter has two or fewer letter parts.	
Presentation	Margins are present. Your letter is neatly written or typed.	Margins are not consistent. Your letter is neatly written or typed.	Margins are not consistent. Your handwriting is hard to read or your typing has a lot of mistakes.	Margins are not present. Your handwriting or typing is not legible.	
Conventions	Your punctuation, spelling, and grammar are excellent. There are fewer than five errors.	Your punctuation, spelling, and grammar are very good. There are fewer than ten errors.	Your punctuation, spelling, and grammar distract the reader and interfere with meaning. There are 15 errors or less.	Punctuation, spelling, and grammar significantly distract the reader. There are more than 20 errors.	
Content	Your message is clear and precise. Your letter has three or more paragraphs and includes details. Your letter encourages a response from the reader.	Your message is clear and demonstrates understanding. Your letter contains only two paragraphs. Your letter does not encourage a response from the reader.	Your message is mostly clear. Your letter is only one paragraph in length.	Your message is unclear or disorganized.	
Voice	Your voice is strong, clear, and passionate. You show that you care about the issue.	Your voice is strong but not very passionate.	Your voice is not very strong or passionate	Your voice is weak.	
TOTAL					