

## **"Indigenous Peoples' Day," formerly called "Columbus Day"**

The debates about what we should call or celebrate on October 12th are vast and happen in different degrees. The request to eliminate "Columbus Day" from the calendar and replace it with "Indigenous Peoples' Day" (a more appropriate term, but still not used everywhere) is not recent. In Vermont, governor Peter Shumlin signed in 2016 a proclamation that rebranded this holiday as Indigenous Peoples' Day. In 2019, as a continuation of this tradition, current governor Phil Scott passed the bill that constituted Indigenous Peoples' Day as the officially recognized holiday. Many indigenous groups, as well as non-indigenous people, throughout the Americas, are claiming this day as a form of recognition of the indigenous groups as inhabitants of these lands in the narratives of history.

After the death of George Floyd at the hands of a white police officer, thousands of people have congregated in the streets in different cities of this country demanding justice and an end of police brutality and white supremacy. This sentiment was echoed around the world. As a form of protest, many statues of Christopher Columbus have been toppled.

Just like removing those statues of colonizers and enslavers, renaming this date is another form of continuing to decolonize a whitewashed history that perpetuates white supremacy.

However, it is not as simple as changing the name or tearing down a statue. While this is important, it does nothing if we do not engage in new learning about history and indigenous cultures as well as unlearning the white supremacist history that we have all been taught and conditioned by.

At Hilltop Montessori School, we are working to bring these conversations to each classroom. Teachers and staff are committed to working on exploring the narratives that for centuries have portrayed indigenous peoples as outsiders of these lands. We believe that by understanding and learning about the history from the voices of those

who were forcibly silenced, is a step forward in the process of decolonizing education and honoring the legacy and land of indigenous peoples.

I have organized and shared with the different programs a series of articles/videos/podcasts related to Indigenous Peoples' Day and the controversies about Columbus Day and historical accounts (links included below). Each program will have the opportunity to read and discuss ideas among themselves before our biweekly meetings. The ideas and suggestions discussed during our meetings will be translated into lessons in each program, as part of the students' curriculum. Understanding the history and current realities of indigenous peoples on this continent, country, and region allows us, as a community of educators, to see the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the Abenaki land that we are on today.

Marco Yunga Tacuri - Equity, Justice, and Inclusion Director

- <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/14/769083847/columbus-day-or-indigenous-peoples-day>
- <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2020/06/08/the-performance-of-white-bodies/>
- <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/unmaking-hispanic-teaching-the-creation-of-hispanic-identity>
- <https://youtu.be/9DviNNxaJJk>
- [https://youtu.be/aF\\_unlvjccA](https://youtu.be/aF_unlvjccA)