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Image Courtesy of the Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness (<https://www.mcnaa.org>)

## **VOTE YES ON MAY 2 FOR THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY BALLOT QUESTION** ***Westford School Committee Passes Resolution in Support***

The Indigenous Peoples Day ballot question is part of a process started when the Fall 2020 Town Meeting directed Westford's Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee to study and recommend an approach. Since then, the DEI Committee has engaged in a thorough and open process including an online survey and a virtual listening session. The results of each were mixed with respondents and participants expressing support and opposition for IPD and others suggesting that IPD and Columbus Day be celebrated on different days. For a recording of the 2022 listening session, search DEI Listening Session – Westford on YouTube.

The inspiration for the ballot question, which the DEI recommended to and was approved by the Westford Select Board in August 2022, stems not only from the Fall 2020 Town Meeting, but also from the growing recognition that indigenous people suffered for centuries in this country and that understanding their history and embracing their cultural is an important step toward the overall reckoning regarding intolerance this country and state are engaged in.

**On March 14, 2023 the Westford School Committee adopted a resolution supporting the recognition of Indigenous Peoples Day in Westford.**

**On May 2 Westford voters will have the opportunity to make history and strengthen Westford's character as a welcoming community that embraces diversity and fosters belonging, by approving a ballot question that would establish Indigenous Peoples Day in Westford, superseding Columbus Day.**

Westford would join **20 other cities and towns** in Massachusetts that have done the same including: Amherst, Arlington, Bedford, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Easthampton, Falmouth, Great Barrington, Holyoke, Marblehead, Mashpee, Maynard, Melrose, Newton, Northampton, Provincetown, Salem, Somerville, and Wellesley. **Across the country "More than 130 cities have adopted the holiday,** choosing to heed calls from Indigenous groups and other activists not to celebrate Christopher Columbus, the Italian navigator after whom the holiday is named," New York Times, October 9, 2022. **And 15 states** across the country have adopted the holiday including Vermont, Maine, Michigan, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Iowa, California, Virginia, South Dakota, North Carolina, New Mexico, Alaska, Minnesota, Oregon, and Texas.

Along with other cities and towns in Massachusetts considering the question, there are two pieces of legislation at the State House ([S.1976](#) and [H. 2989](#)), that would establish Indigenous Peoples Day statewide. Here is a [link](#) to an article that summarizes the legislation.

Several organizations support IPD including: Italian Americans for Indigenous Peoples Day (<https://italiansforipd.org>), Mass Indigenous Legislative Agenda (<http://mainindigenoussagenda.org>), Indigenous Peoples Day MA (<http://www.indigenousspeoplesdayma.org>), and Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness (<https://www.mcnaa.org>).

Italian Americans for Indigenous Peoples Day note at its website: "Italian Americans for Indigenous Peoples Day was formed in solidarity with thousands of Native peoples from many tribal nations who live in Massachusetts who are working to rename Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day."

Please cast your vote on May 2 for Indigenous Peoples Day in Westford.

-Westford DEI Committee