



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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## Navajo Nation supports congressional bill to replace Columbus Day with “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” nationwide

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued several letters of support to members of Congress this week, supporting a new bill introduced by U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.), and U.S. Rep. Norma Torres (D-Calif.) that would replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples’ Day as a federally recognized holiday on the second Monday of October.

“The Navajo Nation has long been opposed to celebrating Columbus Day. He is credited by many with ‘discovering’ the Americas, but this characterization ignores the fact that the land was already inhabited by numerous peoples with advanced cultures, technologies, and systems of government that rivaled the Europeans at the time. For generations, Indigenous communities throughout the Americas have fought to survive colonization, assimilation, disease, and genocide. Many of these same atrocities continue today, but the Native peoples of this land continue to be resilient, strong, and prosperous. Recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ Day will help our future generations revel in their identities and promote the survival of our cultures, languages, and indigeneity. Transforming Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day will encourage young Navajos to have pride in the place and people they come from and the beauty they hold within,” said President Nez.

In 2019, the New Mexico State Legislature voted to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples’ Day. It was signed into law by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham. A total of 13 states and more than 100 cities have recognized Indigenous Peoples’ Day. President Nez said that more states and local governments should take the initiative to recognize Indigenous peoples and their contributions to America and beyond.

Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer agrees with President Nez that it’s time to stop honoring Columbus and start celebrating the resilience and success of Native peoples. “A nationwide shift to Indigenous Peoples’ Day would send a strong message to the descendants of our ancestors who continue to persevere to this day. It’s not only about acknowledging the wrongdoings of the past, but the path to healing for our people. Today, we have so many Native

Americans excelling in their fields of study, science, the arts, sports, and other avenues. We have to heal, support one another, and continue to prosper for our future generations.”

“I’m proud to help lead the effort in the Senate to recognize Indigenous Peoples’ Day – an important recognition of Native Americans’ contributions to our society, economy and history. New Mexico, which is home to 23 Tribal Nations and Pueblos, made history in 2019 by recognizing Indigenous Peoples’ Day as an official holiday, and I’m hopeful that Congress can make this a reality for the entire nation. Let this day serve as a celebration of our country’s Tribal Nations and Native communities, and a reminder of the work ahead, to continue to strengthen and improve the federal government’s relationship with Tribal governments and Indigenous peoples,” said Sen. Luján.

The congressional bill is also supported by the Indigenous People’s Day Initiative, the National Council of Urban Indian Health, the National Congress of American Indians, the Association of American Indian Affairs, and the All Pueblo Council of Governors.

“By celebrating Indigenous Peoples’ Day, we lift up the strength and resilience of America’s Tribal Nations,” said Sen. Heinrich. “I’m proud to stand with New Mexico’s tribes and Pueblos who have led the way to re-frame this national holiday to honor all of the significant contributions and diverse cultures of our Native communities.”

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