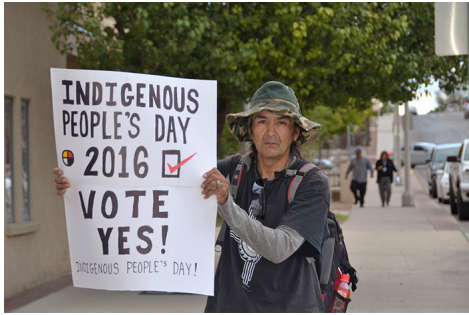


## Gallup declares 'Indigenous Peoples' Day'

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 30 September 2016 07:12

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### Church Rock activist Mervyn Tilden spearheads movement

The Gallup City Council unanimously passed a resolution at its Sept. 27 regular meeting that establishes a Gallup Indigenous Peoples' Day. The matter received some discussion, and in the end, council members agreed with area civil rights activist Mervyn Tilden that the naming was long overdue.

The vote declares the second Monday in October as Gallup Indigenous Peoples' Day — the day is also nationally recognized as Columbus Day. Mayor Jackie McKinney presented the matter to council members, saying the city, obviously, has no power to eliminate federal holidays like Columbus Day, a day Tilden dislikes, but it can support, honor, and respect Native Americans by instituting a day like Indigenous Peoples' Day.

The comment didn't fall on deaf ears. It was pointed out that the McKinley County Board of Commissioners annually recognizes such a day.

"This has been a long time coming for Gallup," City Councilman Yogash Kumar said. "It's a shame it didn't happen sooner."

Tilden thanked council members for the act, but not before he spoke about oppression and Native Americans. Tilden carried a sign outside city hall before the meeting. The sign encouraged people to say yes to 'Indigenous Peoples' Day.'

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"Cristoforo Colombo left Spain in the Santa Maria, the Pinta and the Nina alongside in 1492," Tilden said. "Despite what the history books tell us, he and his crew were lost when we, the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, found him. The so-called discovery is in fact a great lie – a hoax upon humanity. Since his arrival, over 100 million Indigenous people have been killed, starved, raped, sold into slavery, exploited and imprisoned. Is this a man that you would honor?"

The Navajo-born Tilden told council members he's long advocated the change from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day; in 2010, he began demonstrating along Historic Highway 66 in support of the change.

City Councilors Allan Landavazo and Fran Palochak suggested the city fall alongside the county and enact something like a Gallup-McKinley County Indigenous Day.

"If the county has it, we might want to go with what they've got," Landavazo said. "What do we think of that?"

Landavazo said he'd researched the matter prior to the meeting. He said there are 370,000 million Indigenous peoples in the world, representing 5,000 different groups. The United Nations, he said, has designated Aug. 9 as the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

"If you look across the world, there are a number of communities that have an Indigenous Peoples' Day," Landavazo said.

McKinney cautioned that whatever the outcome, it's confined to the city and no other entity. After the meeting, Tilden said he'll be in front of the Gallup Cultural Center, 201 E. Hwy. 66, come Oct. 10. He invited the full council to join in the recognition.

"This will be a first for the mayor and city council and will set a precedent for all other administrations that follow," he said.

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