

Letter to the editor: Recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 18 October 2019 00:45



Editor,

In July 1990, representatives from 120 Indian nations from every part of the Americas met in Quito, Ecuador in the First Continental Conference (Encuentro) joining many human rights, peace, social justice, and environmental organizations to recognize 500 Years of Native resistance against the continued colonization of our original homelands.

This was in preparation for the 500th anniversary of Native resistance to the European invasion of the Americas from 1492 to 1992, and to address the deaths of millions of indigenous peoples through the rampant slaughter of innocents, war, famine, forced relocations, imprisonment, extreme poverty and every communicable disease. There has been the “Indigenous Peoples Day” celebration of life by the Native civilizations that promote the ideals of self-governance and tireless determination that are the framework of our nations.

It is proper that “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” be officially recognized even as much as the City of Gallup touts itself as the “Indian Capital of the World” and the many contributions that Native Americans and Navajo individuals have made can be seen everywhere from the exquisite art work and murals to the annual events held here and the land base that once was Navajo territory.

On September 27, 2016, the City of Gallup passed Resolution/Proclamation R2016–40,

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declaring the second Monday of October as "Indigenous Peoples' Day" into perpetuity. Accordingly, the McKinley County Commission also approved Resolution/Proclamation No. OCT 17-085 on October 17, 2017 Designating the Second Monday in October of each year as "Indigenous Peoples' Day".

To its credit, Gallup also has an Indigenous Peoples' Commission as an Advisory Board (City Ordinance #C2018-5) to advocate on behalf of the Native population in the city and is well-deserving of official support. But to date, the Commission has yet to endorse the official Resolution/Proclamation.

In January 2019 the New Mexico State Legislature took the opportunity to make history and vote on legislation to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day. Democratic Governor-elect Michelle Lujan Grisham supported the proposal to rename the state holiday on the second Monday in October. New Mexico is home to 23 sovereign indigenous nations. The state's population is 10.9% Native American, according to 2018 estimates from the United States census.

The Navajo Nation is the largest tribe in America. President Jonathan Nez also stated on Facebook that "For many years, indigenous people have protested Columbus Day because it celebrates colonialism, oppression, and injustice inflicted on indigenous peoples. Observing Indigenous Peoples' Day allows citizens to recognize our rich heritage and represents a step toward healing and growth."

There are 573 federally recognized tribes in the United States of America. And every year, the number of states and cities are added to the list that acknowledges the Indigenous Nations and our contributions.

On Monday, October 14, 2019, join us as we celebrate the Annual "Celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day" Event that will take place from 12 pm to 5pm at the Gallup Cultural Center located at 201 East Highway 66. Bring your signs, banners, drums, songs and prayers. Everyday is Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Mervyn Tilden
Gallup, N. M.

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