



# Cornell University Student Assembly

Originally Presented on:	11/19/2015
Type of Action:	Sense of the Body
Status/Result:	New Business

## S.A. Resolution #30 Indigenous Peoples' Day

1  
2  
3  
4 ABSTRACT: This legislation seeks to amend the Cornell Academic Calendar to recognize  
5 Indigenous Peoples' Day on the second Monday of October, which is commonly referred to as  
6 Columbus Day.

7  
8 Sponsored by: Maria Chak '18, Saim Chaudhary '17  
9

10 **Whereas**, Columbus Day, a federal holiday in the United States of America, is celebrated on second  
11 Monday of October every year to signify the landing of Christopher Columbus in what is now  
12 known as and called the Americas  
13

14 **Whereas**, millions of Native Americans were either killed or driven out of their native lands as a result  
15 of the colonization that ensued after Columbus' voyage;  
16

17 **Whereas**, according to reasonable estimates, 20 million indigenous people resided on the lands now  
18 known as and called the Americas before Christopher Columbus discovered what is now called  
19 the Americas;  
20

21 **Whereas**, roughly 19 out of 20 indigenous people lost their lives during colonization,  
22

23 **Whereas**, Cornell University and the City of Ithaca were established on the ruins of indigenous societies  
24 that were brutally devastated throughout the course of colonization that ensued after Christopher  
25 Columbus' arrival,  
26

27 **Whereas**, the land that Cornell University sits upon was seized from the Cayuga Nation during a  
28 scorched earth campaign commissioned by General George Washington in 1779,  
29

30 **Whereas**, at Cornell, there is no formal acknowledgement of the violent colonialist history behind the  
31 seizure of lands later granted to the university,  
32

33 **Whereas**, at Cornell, there is no formal acknowledgement of Cornell's ongoing occupation of native  
34 territories,  
35

36 **Whereas**, Cornell University has an ethical obligation as a land-grant institution of higher  
37 education to promote the public good and confront systems of oppression,  
38

39 **Whereas**, the commemoration of Columbus Day ignores the loss of lives and territories of the  
40 indigenous people, which was a direct result of the actions of colonizers  
41

42 **Whereas**, Columbus Day memorializes the ethnic cleansing of the lands now called the Americas and  
43 consecrates the arrival of colonizers whose arrival to lands known as the Americas marked the  
44 liquidation of hundreds of indigenous cultures,  
45

46 **Whereas**, Indigenous Peoples' Day claims space after an erasure of the violent land seizures, giving  
47 voice to an often invisible and marginalized group of people.  
48

49 **Whereas**, the celebration began in Berkeley, California, through the International Indian Treaty Council  
50 and Denver, Colorado

51  
52 **Whereas**, there are 9 cities in the lands now called the United States celebrating Indigenous Peoples’  
53 Day, including: Albuquerque, New Mexico; Lawrence, KS; Portland, OR; St. Paul, MN; Bexar  
54 County, TX; Anadarko, OK; Olympia, WA; Alpena, MI; and Seattle, Washington.

55  
56 **Whereas**, the students of Cornell’s peer institutions, specifically Harvard and Brown, are advocating and  
57 pushing for Indigenous Peoples’ Day

58  
59 **Whereas**, institutional recognition and affirmation of Indigenous People’s Day at Cornell University will  
60 aid the efforts to transfer spaces and voices to indigenous people as a step towards  
61 acknowledging the university’s role in an invisible, large part of history, as well as empower  
62 marginalized, local indigenous communities that still exist to this day

63  
64 **Be it therefore resolved**, that the Student Assembly recommends that the Provost amends Cornell  
65 University’s Academic Calendar to annually recognize Indigenous Peoples’ Day on the day on  
66 which Columbus Day is federally observed

67  
68 Respectfully Submitted,

69  
70 Maria Chak ‘18  
71 *Vice President of Outreach, Student Assembly*  
72 *Co-President of Amnesty International*

73  
74 Christopher Hanna ‘18  
75 *Co-President of Amnesty International*  
76 *Assistant Director of the Cornell Roosevelt Institute Center for Foreign Policy and International Affairs*

77  
78 Saim Chaudhary ‘17  
79 *Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Student Assembly*

80  
81 *(Reviewed by: Diversity and Inclusion Committee, 11/15/15, 14-0-0)*