



**The
Portland Youth &
Elders Council**

NAYA Family Center
5135 NE Columbia Blvd.
Portland, OR 97218
(503) 288-8177 x 284
donitasf@nayapdx.org
www.nayapdx.org

September 29, 2015

Metro Council
600 NE Grand Boulevard
Portland, OR 97232

Dear Metro Council members,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Portland Youth and Elders Council (PYEC) and the Native American Advisory Council (NACAC) to the City of Portland Parks and Recreation. This communication is in regards to a community initiative that emerged earlier this year to request our local and regional governments to recognize Indigenous Peoples day over the more commonly acknowledged federal holiday known as “Columbus Day”.

PYEC and NACAC exist to facilitate a community driven participatory process in identifying community priorities and ideals that drive community goals aimed at highlighting cultural identity and acknowledgment of Native American history in our public spaces. Native American history is American history and should be highlighted in a very intentional way to acknowledge the daily contributions of our Indigenous leaders and ancestors – everything that we do as a nation is on ceded land from Native tribes.

Members of the local Native American community feel that learning about the history of Columbus and transforming this day into a celebration of indigenous people and a celebration of social justice allows us to make a connection between a painful history of oppression, forced assimilation and the ongoing marginalization, discrimination and poverty that indigenous communities face to this day. This is about taking a stand against racism and discrimination, Christopher Columbus played such a pivotal role in the worst genocide humankind has ever known – more Native American lives were lost post contact than were lost in the Jewish Holocaust.

State and local governments from Minnesota to Hawaii have enacted their own holidays to serve as an alternative to Columbus Day. Here are a few:

- Berkeley was the first city to celebrate Indigenous People’s Day, in 1992.
- In Hawaii, the second Monday in October is known as Discoverers Day, in honor of the Polynesians who first inhabited the islands.
- In South Dakota, it’s known as Native Americans' Day.
- Some state governments, including Oregon’s, haven’t adopted a holiday for Native Americans but have chosen not to recognize Columbus Day as an official holiday.

- Minneapolis was the first major city to make such a declaration this year, with the city council's vote in April.
- Finally, Seattle's city government and school board adopted Indigenous People's Day, in step with the Portland vote.

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners will be reading a proclamation in support of Indigenous People's Day on Thursday, October 8, 2015 at their weekly board meeting. Community members will be gathering there in support of this monumental change in how people view our heritage.

I hope you choose to join our vibrant Indigenous community and no longer acknowledge a time of genocide and glamorized history. Won't you join us in celebrating the important history and culture on which our home was built? By becoming a supporter of this effort, it means you are invested in reclaiming history and elevating awareness around a vast portion of our region's culture that has shaped where we live today.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donita S. Fry".

Donita S. Fry
Portland Youth and Elders Council Coordinator
NAYA Family Center
5135 NE Columbia Boulevard
Portland, OR 97218