

## RESOLUTION NO. 2899

### **Recognizing the Second Monday of October as Indigenous Peoples' Day**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Alexandria recognizes that Indigenous Peoples of the lands that would later become known as the Americas have occupied these lands since time immemorial; and

**WHEREAS**, Indigenous Peoples' Day was first proposed in 1977 by a delegation of Native Nations to the United Nations-sponsored International Conference on the Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Virginia is home to Indigenous Peoples and the Commonwealth of Virginia currently recognizes 11 Indigenous tribes; and

**WHEREAS**, Indigenous Peoples' unique and valuable legacy has largely been treated as a footnote in history. In Virginia schools, Indigenous history is taught insofar as it relates to the eventual European colonization; and

**WHEREAS**, 50,000 Indigenous Peoples comprised at least 15 separate Nations prior to the arrival of English settlers in Virginia. These include the Doege Indian village, which was cited on John Smith's 1608 map, and the Nottoway, Mattaponi, Nansemond, Pamunkey, Manahoac, Tutelo, Patawomeck, Sappony, Shawnee, Occaneechi, Meherrin, Paspahegh, Appommatoc, Chisca, and Westo; and

**WHEREAS**, the Namaengbquend Tribe is believed to be the indigenous owners of present-day Alexandria. The tribes that inhabited Northern Virginia and the area that is now the City of Alexandria were parts of, or allies with, the powerful Powhatan Confederacy. Many Indigenous People were displaced from their homelands and driven onto reservations as the English, and later, American colonial settlers, pushed to occupy more land in the region. Many of the Indigenous Peoples' in Virginia had been subjugated, killed, or removed by the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; and

**WHEREAS**, as of January 2018, there are only seven federally recognized nations in Virginia—they are the Pamunkey Indian Tribe, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Rappahannock, Upper Mattaponi, Nansemond, and Monacan tribes. There remain three State recognized Tribes: Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Nottaway Tribe and the Patawomeck Tribe; and

**WHEREAS**, the City recognizes that Indigenous People have been and continue to be the victims of prejudice and systematic discrimination, which perpetuates high rates of income inequality and exacerbates disproportionate health, education, and social standing. The City has a duty to oppose such discrimination, promote opportunity for those of Indigenous descent, and foster a welcoming, inclusive, equitable, and just community for all; and

**WHEREAS**, recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Day would be a crucial first step in acknowledging the deliberate and systematic oppression of Indigenous People, to celebrate their resiliency and contributions while acknowledging the current presence of Native Nations and their thriving cultures, while also sharing current issues facing their communities; and

**WHEREAS**, since 1994, more than 130 cities across the country have renamed Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day; and

**WHEREAS**, the renaming of the holiday would not have an impact on the existing federal or City holiday and will still occur on the second Monday in October; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the City Council of the City of Alexandria does hereby proclaim that the second Monday of each October shall perpetually be known and celebrated as Indigenous Peoples' Day;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the City recognizes and values the vast contributions made to our community and our country through Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, science, governance, philosophy, arts, and culture;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Alexandria strongly encourages Alexandria's State representatives to vigorously introduce legislation to recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day on the second Monday of each October instead of the day before Thanksgiving;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Alexandria affirms that it is the City's policy to participate in the annual Indigenous Peoples' Day celebrations and that City departments work with the Indigenous People, the Alexandria Office of Human Rights and the Alexandria Human Rights Commission to encourage participation on a citywide basis;

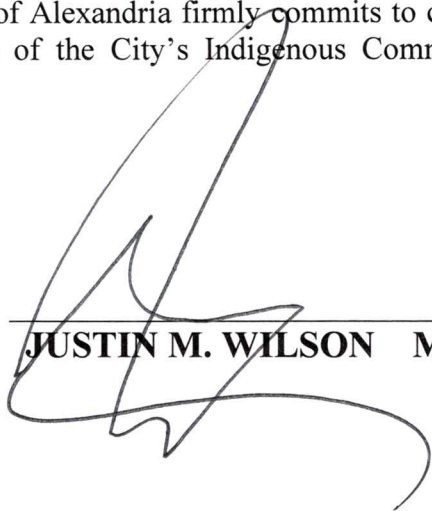
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Alexandria strongly encourages Alexandria City Public Schools to include the teaching of Indigenous Peoples' history with contemporary context and celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day on the aforementioned time;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Alexandria encourages other businesses, organizations, and public institutions to recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day in a meaningful way and in partnership with local Native Nations;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Alexandria calls on all sports organization operating in the Commonwealth of Virginia to cease the heinous use of Indigenous Peoples' liken as mascots; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the City of Alexandria firmly commits to continue its efforts to promote the well-being and growth of the City's Indigenous Community and Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Adopted: September 10, 2019

  
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**JUSTIN M. WILSON** MAYOR

ATTEST:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gloria A Sitton, CMC City Clerk



# Attachment 1

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** JULY 12, 2019

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR, MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** COUNCILMAN MO SEIFELDEIN & VICE MAYOR ELIZABETH BENNETT-PARKER

**SUBJECT:** INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY

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Alexandria's history is one of its many attractions and we shall continue to celebrate it and protect it. While it is crucial to recognize the contributions European explorers and the founding fathers have made, it is equally important to understand that places like Alexandria were home to many Indigenous people, commonly known as Native Americans, for thousands of years. Before Alexandria was a crucial port city for colonial America, it was a center of trade for Native Americans. At the time of European contact, there were several established villages of the Doeg tribe nearby including Assaomeck, Namassingakent, and Tauxenent. Today there are seven federally recognized tribes in Virginia - the Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Upper Mattaponi, Rappahannock, Nansemond and Monacan tribes. The purpose of this memo is to ask for your support to rebrand Columbus Day as Indigenous People's Day.

Renaming Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day would provide an opportunity to acknowledge the overlooked history of oppression and the decimation of Native Americans. This would be a crucial step towards balancing the existing dominant historical narrative, which utilizes the term "New World," to refer to a land that was inhabited by Indigenous people for an estimated 12,000 years prior to Columbus's arrival in 1492. At the time, approximately 10 million Native Americans were living on the continent. Forty years after contact with Europeans, the Native population shrunk by two-thirds due to contact with diseases, land conflicts, and other factors. By 1900, this number was reduced to fewer than 300,000.

Many Indigenous people were responsible for the success of Europeans in America, which led to the survival of colonized lands in Virginia and the continent. Columbus Day is not a per se celebration of America's foundation and our principles, which are celebrated through the Fourth of July and George Washington's Birthday. As a result, we are proposing that the City of Alexandria, Virginia, acknowledges the contribution, hospitality, and the plight of Native Americans by renaming Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day.

Many cities, states, and universities have already changed Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day to commemorate Indigenous contributions to America<sup>1</sup>. This rebranding will not impact the existing federal

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<sup>1</sup> In 1994, Berkeley, California became the first city to rename Columbus Day as Indigenous People's Day. Since then, more than 130 other cities across the country have done the same, including: Seattle; Minneapolis; Denver; Los Angeles; Cincinnati; Atlanta; Nashville; Madison; Salt Lake City; Austin; Tulsa; Phoenix; San Francisco, which

or city holiday, and will still occur on the second Monday in October, the only difference being a cause for celebration of Native Americans. Recognition of the Native American communities through this holiday would celebrate Indigenous culture and contributions as well as highlight the ongoing struggles Indigenous Americans face. We ask for your support in having staff draft a resolution to this effect and ask you to engage the community regarding this matter.

cc: Mark Jinks, City Manager  
Joanna Anderson, City Attorney  
Gloria Sitton, City Clerk  
Human Rights Commission  
Gretchen Bulova, Office of Historic Alexandria

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was the first city to celebrate Columbus Day; and many more, along with the states of Alaska, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Dakota and Vermont. Within the Commonwealth of Virginia, the towns of Charlottesville and Dumfries, along with Virginia Tech, have made this change.