

Samantha Gray

Subject: RE: Columbus Day Ballot Question Discussion 8/23/2022 - for pkt

From: Cathy Creed <cathycreed1@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, August 18, 2022 3:10 PM

To: Andrea Peraner-sweet <ASweet@westfordma.gov>; Tom Clay <tclay@westfordma.gov>; John Cunningham <JCunningham@westfordma.gov>; Scott Hazelton <SHazelton@westfordma.gov>; Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen <anguyen@westfordma.gov>; Town Clerk <townclerk@westfordma.gov>; Jodi Ross <jross@westfordma.gov>

Subject: Columbus Day Ballot Question Discussion 8/23/2022

Dear Select Board Members,

Now that we can see the results of the March 2022 DEI Survey regarding replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day, I am looking forward to your discussion on Tuesday, August 23 regarding the related ballot question.

As you can see in the graphic below, 62% of DEI survey respondents were against replacing Columbus Day. At the DEI Listening Session on August 2, residents explained that this ballot action would be divisive, rather than unifying to our community. 80% of session respondents respectfully disagreed with eliminating Columbus Day citing past discrimination against Italian Americans, pride in Italian American immigrant heritage, and knowledge of Columbus' navigational accomplishments. Residents were in favor of recognizing a separate Indigenous People's Day.

All towns bordering Westford have NOT cancelled Columbus Day. Most have chosen to acknowledge both Native American and Italian American heritage. Also, 94% (331/351) of MA cities and towns have NOT cancelled Columbus Day, and the Legislature has NOT passed a bill to eliminate Columbus Day.

I look forward to hearing the discussion of how the DEI committee weighed and incorporated the overwhelming feedback from both the survey and the listening session and how that affected their decision for the ballot question.

Sincerely,
Cathy Creed
10 Vose Hill Road

Summary of Westford Community Input

Special Town Meeting, Oct. 2020

"Rename... Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day"

FAILED to Pass:
111-No, 108-Yes

Indigenous Peoples Day - Citizens Petition

Failed for lack of majority 108-yes, 111-no



Westford Community Survey, March 2022

- Do you support changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day on the second Monday of October?

62% of Residents OPPOSED
Removing Columbus DAY:
449 out of 720 residents (62.3%)

Note: Results above removed ALL duplicate responses by IP Address (720 Unique IPs). This would penalize spouses with shared computer. 63.9% opposed, otherwise.

Community Listening Session, Aug. 2022

- 19 comments made by 11 Westford residents at session

80% of Residents OPPOSED
Removing Columbus DAY:
9 out of 11 speakers (80%)

Note: Plurality supported having a day to honor Native American heritage

Listening Session for Westford's Ballot Question on Indigenous People's Day

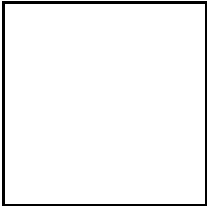


Massachusetts Towns Decisions

- 94% (331/351) of Massachusetts towns have **NOT** cancelled Columbus Day
- All towns bordering Westford have **NOT** cancelled Columbus Day
 - Chelmsford (Acknowledges Columbus Day)
 - Tyngsborough (Acknowledges Columbus Day)
 - Groton (Acknowledges both Columbus and IPD)
 - Littleton (Acknowledges both Columbus and IPD)
 - Acton (Acknowledges both Columbus and IPD)
 - Carlisle (Combined Columbus/Italian and Native American heritage)



Town residents have shown in **every** instance that they do **not** support cancelling Italian-American heritage. Most residents support honoring tribal communities, but NOT at expense of Columbus.



Follow-up to request for community input

Mere Kelly <meredith2kelly@gmail.com>

Tue 8/16/2022 10:54 PM

To: Mamatha Jagannathan <mamathasilas@yahoo.com>; Eric Barber-Mingo <EBarber-Mingo@westfordma.gov>; Anjali Rajput <ARajput@westfordma.gov>; Patricia Reppucci <PReppucci@westfordma.gov>; Seema Pusalkar <SPusalkar@westfordma.gov>; Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen <anguyen@westfordma.gov>; Haining Bao <HBao@westfordma.gov>; Nancy Cook <ncook@westfordma.gov>;

[External !](#)

25 August 2022
M. Kelly

Town of Westford
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
M. Jagganathan and E. Barber-Mingo, Co-Chairs

Dear DEI Committee Members,

Thank you for facilitating the discussion on Columbus Day and Indigenous Peoples Day on 2August. It was very informative to hear different opinions and life experiences tied to those of Italian and Native American ancestry.

During the meeting, I believe the DEI co-chair, Ms. Mamatha Jagannathan requested community input on wording for an Indigenous People/Native American Heritage Day declaration. I did not respond right away, as I wanted to research and examine the town of Westford's past and interactions with tribal communities. Additionally, I think much of political discourse dwells on negative interaction between people groups. I had hoped to highlight (if it could be found) a positive interaction between tribal and early Westford communities, to inspire continued respect, dialogue, and understanding.

As you can imagine, it takes time to consider such a complex question. I believe I have found an example of caring for Native Tribal communities from past Westford residents that should be honored and highlighted on either 13February or 5July. We can designate the chosen day as a day to honor local tribal communities. Individual references are captured in footnotes.

This research was conducted examining

- local historical texts and resources at the Fletcher Library,
- newspaper archived articles,
- records from the Westford Cemetery Department,
- National Park Service documentation on the Westford Historic District of Parker Village.

To summarize the research results, local dignitaries gathered the first weekend in July in 1975 to dedicate the Old Pioneer Burying Ground at the corner of Old Lowell and Carlisle Road. Persons present included:

- Captain Ted Engel of Westford Minutemen group
- Allister MacDougal, local historian
- Streeter Stuart, WBZ News Commentator
- Alex Belida, President of Westford Historical Society
- Rev. George Johnson, Westford Baptist Temple
- Father Armand Morrisete

Historian Allister MacDougal gave the primary address discussing the Old Pioneer Burying Ground's history. In his remarks, MacDougal noted that

"In our [Westford] Town History in the chapter telling of the period between the Revolution and 1800, is the small item headed, 'Death of an Indian (Native American).' It says 'February 13, 1788, Pay to Leonard Parker, 1 pound, 10 shillings for the nursing and taking care of the Indian, James Symons, when he was sick at the Parker's house, and trouble of an

Indian funeral, when dead... Parker cared for and tended to his [James Symons] funeral. Leonard was born in 1745, great grandson of the first [pioneer] Aaron."

National Park Service documentation for the Parker Village Historic District notes that in the Old Pioneer Burying ground lies the final resting place for "buried members of the Parker & Corey families, James Symons, a Native American, and other early settlers."

Those many years ago on 13February 1788, Westford residents provided a bequest to care for an ill member of a native tribal community (likely Nipmuc or Pennacook tribe). In what was possibly an illness that affected tribal and pioneers alike, Westford chose to provide respectful hospice care and final interment for James Symons. I believe this act of quiet caring and dignity is the type of kindness and consideration that should be honored in these troubled times.

I believe an official Westford Native American Heritage Day on 13February (town notice for care rendered to Native American) or 5July (cemetery dedication) would do much to acknowledge the importance of Westford's native tribal peoples. Personally, I have deep misgivings about the term indigenous, as there are many historical instances of that term being used in a derisive fashion.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meredith Kelly

References:

- 1) 5July 1975, June W. Kennedy for Westford Eagle: *Old Pioneer Burying Ground Dedication*.
[\(http://westford.advantage-preservation.com/\)](http://westford.advantage-preservation.com/)
- 2) 16November 1989, June W. Kennedy for Westford Eagle: *Early Pioneers Key to Mystery Plots*.
[\(http://westford.advantage-preservation.com/\)](http://westford.advantage-preservation.com/)
- 3) 5November 1989, June W. Kennedy for Westford Eagle: *Who Rests in Old Burying Ground*.
<http://westford.advantage-preservation.com/>
- 4) Westford Cemetery Department, Profile Page: *Old Pioneer Burying Ground*.
<https://www.westfordma.gov/1065/Old-Pioneer-Burying-Ground>
- 5) 7November 2002, National Park Service Archives, Massachusetts Parker Village Historic District in Westford, MA. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63795532>

Fw: Virtual Listening Session on Indigenous Peoples Day

Mamatha Silas <mamathasilas@yahoo.com>

Wed 8/3/2022 9:08 AM

To: Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen <anguyen@westfordma.gov>; Joseph Diamond (personal) <joepdiamond@comcast.net>; Omar Laurino <OLaurino@westfordma.gov>; Madonna McKenzie (Personal) <mckenzmj@gmail.com>; Eric Barber-Mingo <EBarber-Mingo@westfordma.gov>; Seema Pusalkar <SPusalkar@westfordma.gov>; Kun Luo <kun.luo@gmail.com>; Haining Bao <HBao@westfordma.gov>; Yibing Li <annieyli9@gmail.com>; Patricia Reppucci <PReppucci@westfordma.gov>; Scott Harkness (Personal) <marshhaven128@yahoo.com>; Anjali Rajput (Personal) <anjali Rajput1@gmail.com>; Lawrence Bentley (Personal) <lawrence.bentley@comcast.net>;

Incase you have not recd this

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: jilldeeodeep@verizon.net <jilldeeodeep@verizon.net>

To: mamathasilas@yahoo.com <mamathasilas@yahoo.com>; ebarber-mingo@westfordma.gov <ebarber-mingo@westfordma.gov>; ARajput@westfordma.gov <arajput@westfordma.gov>; sharkness@westfordma.gov <sharkness@westfordma.gov>; ncook@westfordma.gov <ncook@westfordma.gov>; SPusalkar@westfordma.gov <spusalkar@westfordma.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, August 2, 2022 at 11:02:04 PM EDT

Subject: Virtual Listening Session on Indigenous Peoples Day

Good evening,

I want to thank the DEI Committee for the presentation this Tuesday night on the subject of Indigenous Peoples Day in Westford.

I apologize for not being a better speaker when it was my turn to comment. I have some social anxieties and my thoughts tend to flood all at once, and emotion doesn't help.

I appreciate your efforts towards getting this important issue brought to Town meeting.

On the surface it did seem like a respectful conversation, there was no name calling or hot arguments but there were many ignorant comments and misconceptions spoken tonight to further the argument for keeping Columbus Day. It's why I usually stay away from these conversations.

A lot of Indigenous people choose not to participate in conversations about Columbus Day. Its not because we don't feel strongly one way or the other, its because it's salt in the wound to listen to people perpetuate untruths and demonize the ancestors bolster the argument in order to support Columbus Day after losing so much to genocide.

I would like to correct some of what was spoken this Tuesday night.

1. The Indians here practiced brutality too. They practiced warfare and cannibalism

Cannibalism was rarely practiced, before colonialism, food and water were plentiful, there was little to war over. Most wars were short lived, fought with insults and not the wholesale killing you see in movies. If you killed an enemy, it was common practice to send their family a replacement.

Would anyone in this day and age suggest that the Jewish people were dishonest thugs in Germany and then defend celebrating Hitler?

Would anyone say to an African American that their own people sold them to slavery and therefore the responsibility is a wash? (actually people do say those things and it's appalling, and many Black communities are still struggling with equity and equality and fair treatment.)

And, is not half the world intent on killing each other at the moment?

2. The Pennacook were brutal, they almost wiped out the Nipmuc

Actually, the Nashaway who were considered Nipmuc were a part of the Pennacook Confederation. The Penacook Confederation later joined with the Wabanaki Confederation and during King Phillip's War, the Nipmuc were given refuge by the Abenaki in Canada. Passaconaway's son who was Pennacook married a Nipmuc woman and later became a chief of her people.

Again,, the tired and go-to "whata-bouts" and misconceptions people pull out.

3. Columbus' discovery paved the way for this country to be formed and based in civil rights.

The Papal Bull and the Doctrine of Discovery paved the way for the people already here to be dispossessed of their lands, rights, language and religion. Indigenous people fought in WWI and weren't granted citizenship until 1924. President Carter signed into law religious freedom for Indigenous people in 1978. African Americans and other people of color fought through slavery and are still fighting for rights, as well as their lives.

I am not an activist, just a citizen of my Band and of Westford who just wanted to attend the meeting to listen in.

I can understand where people's emotion comes from when faced with losing something that they have been brought up with. But by the same token, it pales in comparison to what Indigenous people have lost and are still fighting to hold onto. And below is why it becomes an emotionally charged subject for us.

1. Loss of land though removal, encroachments allotment policies.
2. Clean water issues, hazardous waste dumping, oil pipelines
3. Language (due to assimilation and decades of residential schooling where the language was forbidden and punishable)
4. Religion/spirituality (destruction of sacred sites, forced conversions to Christianity though early missionary work and forced relocations to praying Indian Towns)
5. There are still remains of ancestors (ancient and within the last hundred and 50 years or so) and grave goods warehoused in museums across the country that need to be returned, but requests are still being met with resistance.
5. There are thousands of missing and murdered women, young men and children every year that go uninvestigated in the US and Canada because they are "just Indians" I know people personally that were told this by law enforcement.
6. For decades in the United States and Canada, children and babies were taken forcibly from their families living on reservations and put into residential schools run by the government and churches. The children were physically and sexually abused and punished for speaking their language. In Canada so far, over 10,0000 bodies of children have been found in mass graves at former residential school sites. Surveying hasn't begun in the US yet.

So in closing, have the discussions,, make the decisions, but stop the hurtful language being used to support the Columbus Day argument.

Thank you.
Jill Cresey-Gross

Nulhegan Abenaki Citizen.

Westford Citizen

Samantha Gray

Subject: RE: Agend Item: Columbus Day Cancelation

From: Dan <dandaddieco@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 7:06 PM
To: Eric Heideman <eheideman@westfordma.gov>
Cc: Chris Karpinsky (Personal) <chris.karpinsky@gmail.com>
Subject: Agend Item: Columbus Day Cancelation

Mr. Heideman:

Below you will find a copy of an email sent to the Select Board. If you would please, voice my support for Mr. Karpinsky's sentiments at tonight's Town Meeting.

As a long term resident of Westford, and person that is a 2nd generation Italian-American, I would appreciate you voicing my objection to any effort to cancel and rename our Italian Holiday – Columbus Day. I am specifically offended by the actions of the Diversity Committee to categorically deny a long-standing Italian holiday that has become an American tradition of celebration for Italian-Americans.

Cancel culture has over-reached in its quest to generalize our culture and history. Denying its existing does nothing to create cooperation among ethnic groups and cultures. It achieves the exact opposite.

More specifically, the more these cancel culture groups work to deny our history, the more we will overtly celebrate what is our heritage.

Columbus Day has traditionally and quietly been celebrated with family gatherings with a multitude of ethnic food and good spirit. Should these cancel-culture groups achieve their un-American goals, be certain that we will more steadfastly and overtly celebrate those holidays, and the heroes that risked their lives in the discovery of America.

Best to you,
Dan Daddieco
8 Balsam Circle

Samantha Gray

Subject: RE: Letter to the Select Board regarding Agenda Item "Rename Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day" - please upload to pkt 3/22

From: Chris Karpinsky <chris.karpinsky@icloud.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 1:00 PM

To: Andrea Peraner-sweet <ASweet@westfordma.gov>; Tom Clay <tclay@westfordma.gov>; John Cunningham <JCunningham@westfordma.gov>; Scott Hazelton <SHazelton@westfordma.gov>; Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen <anguyen@westfordma.gov>

Cc: Jodi Ross <jross@westfordma.gov>; Eric Heideman <eheideman@westfordma.gov>

Subject: Letter to the Select Board regarding Agenda Item "Rename Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day"

Dear members of the Select Board:

I am writing to recommend the Select Board NOT replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day for the following reasons:

- Any action the Select Board would take replacing Columbus Day would be at best a symbolic proclamation.
- An act of REPLACING Columbus Day by the Select Board would at most be a symbolic proclamation not impacting Federal or State law, however at worst it would be interpreted as:
 - Select Board proclaims to engage in revisionist historical rhetoric
 - Select Board proclaims it refuses to believe the history of Native Americans holding of slaves prior to Columbus[1]
 - Select Board proclaims to be non-inclusive of the views of residents who choose to honor their observance of Columbus Day
 - Select Board proclaims it wishes to foment divisiveness in the Town of Westford
 - Select Board proclaims it is leaving the domain of protecting the safety and rights of the residents of the Town of Westford and is entering the domain of limiting personal liberties

As an alternative, the Select Board may suggest the ADDITION of an Indigenous Peoples Day on a different date that does not conflict with existing Federal or State holidays. Such an act would be interpreted as:

- Select Board proclaims it wishes to listen to all voices
- Select Board proclaims it respects the personal liberties of all residents of the Town of Westford
- Select Board proclaims it respects and defends the cultural traditions that pull people together in our Community and in our Nation, whatever those traditions may be as interpreted by each resident

Thank you for your time and consideration.

All the best,

-Chris Karpinsky, 116 Carlisle Road

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_among_Native_Americans_in_the_United_States

[2] <http://www.truthaboutcolumbus.com>

[3] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiqlbPrXv3o>

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_among_Native_Americans_in_the_United_States

chris.karpinsky@icloud.com | 978.490.4103 | semper ubi sub ubi

March 21, 2022

Dear Westford Select Board Members:

Being a first generation Italian and Spaniard, I am writing to say that I am vehemently opposed to turning Columbus Day into Indigenous People's Day. I am fine with a day to recognize the first settlers of our country, but I find it quite divisive to try to replace Columbus Day. Why is the DEI committee insisting on pitting one group of people against another? Columbus Day was initially established to highlight and build up the Italian American community that had been mistreated. All people deserve to be recognized and represented. I suggest naming August 9 as the day to honor our first settlers, as it coincides with the International Day of the World's Indigenous People.

Columbus Day has been celebrated in this country for over 200 years in some cities. Columbus as a fearless explorer and brilliant navigator. His discovery changed the world. He had the foresight, courage and ability to sail and make his way back attempting to find a new water route to Asia. (When is the last time you went on a long trip without the GPS app on your phone?) Just think about it! This was an amazing feat!

But now we find out that he was actually a scoundrel? Where is this information coming from? Why all of a sudden do we now have this new history of Columbus? What is going on? Are these arguments against Columbus based on secondary sources written by people who had a political agenda? Are Columbus detractors cherry picking information to make him look bad? Could there be outright lying? You can find arguments for anything on the internet. How accurate is it? I just question why all this now?

We also must remember that we cannot judge historical figures by present standards. They need to be judged according to the standards of that day.

I believe that Columbus Day should not be "excluded" in Westford. It is divisive to replace Columbus Day with a holiday recognizing a different group of people. Columbus Day should be maintained as it has been for hundreds of years and August 9 can be set aside for our native peoples. This would be a way to recognize both important aspects of our history.

Finally and importantly, I don't think this is something that the Select Board should be voting on because town meeting had this debate already and it was voted down.

Sincerely,
Cathy Creed
10 Vose Hill