

ALBANY CALIFORNIA



CITY OF ALBANY
1000 SAN PABLO AVENUE
ALBANY, CA 94706
www.AlbanyCA.org

DATE: 05/3/2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Albany City Council Members

From: Mayor Ge'Nell Gary

Re: Holiday change of name from Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day

RECOMMENDATION

That the City of Albany permanently refer to the holiday formerly known as Columbus Day as Indigenous People's Day.

BACKGROUND

For thousands of years, the Ohlone people tended to and cared for the land that is now known as Albany, fishing, cultivating, building villages, trading, practicing rituals, building shellmounds, and in other ways treating this land with honor and veneration. Those patterns of life were disrupted by the Spanish conquest of California and the growth of enslavement in the mission system, the utilization of forced labor in ranchos during Mexican governance, and the arrivals of hundreds of thousands of settlers who claimed land and warred with native peoples during the United States conquest. This area was known as Huchiun. Their descendants include members of the Confederated Villages of Lisjan and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area and are visibly represented in Albany in the Sogorea Te' Land Trust. When we consider the centuries of warfare, land seizure, rape, murder, and what prominent California historians call the attempted genocide of California native peoples, the celebration of settler colonialism in the Columbus Day holiday is inappropriate for a community with Albany's values.

In 1934, President Franklin Roosevelt designated Columbus Day a national holiday, in response to a popular campaign led by the Knights of Columbus and other groups as a way of celebrating Italian American contributions to U.S. history. Since then, however, Italian-American scholars and activists (including the consortium of Italian-Americans and scholars of Italian-America who petition under the No Columbus Day name at <https://nocolumbusday.wordpress.com/about/>) have called publicly and repeatedly for a renaming, on the grounds that Columbus Day does not (and was not intended to) honor all Italian-Americans, that Columbus is an inappropriate symbol of Italian-Americans contributions, and that the naming improperly pits Native American History against Italian-American History.

DISCUSSION

Berkeley changed the name to Indigenous Peoples Day in 1992, and since then more than 100 states and cities (including at least 13 in California) have renamed the day to Native Americans' Day. Governor Gavin Newsom proclaimed the holiday Indigenous Peoples' Day in 2019 and 2020. This change will ensure that Albany permanently changes its designation in the city, without the necessity of a gubernatorial proclamation.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

No direct impact on sustainability.

SOCIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY CONSIDERATIONS

The name change would help bring attention to and center indigenous people's history on the land that is now known as Albany and will be one lever for increasing residents' awareness and engagement.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES

This supports City Council initiatives on representing and promoting Albany's diverse population.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

None/minimal.