



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Maine Chapter

565 Congress St. Ste. 206B, Portland, ME 04101

Phone: (207) 761-5616

www.sierraclub.org/maine

To: Joint Standing Committee State and Local Government

From: Tony Donovan, Chair, Executive Committee Sierra Club Maine

Date: February 11, 2019

Re: Testimony In support of LD 179 by Representative Benjamin Collings: "An Act to Change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day"

Chairperson Claxton, Chairperson Martin, and members of the Joint Standing Committee State and Local Government, my name is Tony Donovan and I am a resident of Portland and a member of Sierra Club Maine's executive committee, representing over 18,000 Sierra Club Maine members and supporters. We stand proudly in expressing our **support of LD 179** for the renaming of this holiday in celebration of the 1st Nations to inhabit the lands we all now consider our home.

Much of the history learned in celebration of the founding of the government of the United States is not shared in truth. Prior to the date in 1492 that we have been taught to celebrate, there was on these lands a multitude of nations, governed by a "Great Law of Peace", much of which we might now recognize in the structure of the U. S. Constitution, including notions of individual liberties and separation of powers. Native American symbols, including the American Eagle were adopted by our founding fathers.

These nations of people had advanced agriculture that sustained themselves for hundreds of generations. They fought wars and brought peace much as humans have throughout history. There is evidence that the 1st nations of this land numbered as many as 100 million prior to the day in 1492 that a European explorer stepped foot on the shores of an island in the Caribbean. Columbus didn't "discover" America — he never set foot in North America. During four separate trips that started with the one in 1492, Columbus landed on various Caribbean islands that are now the Bahamas as well as the island later called Hispaniola.

History now tells us that this explorer we celebrate in fact wrought death and destruction to the civilizations he encountered. That in fact European settlers brought disease that ended these civilizations. That in fact, rather than celebrate the discovery of a nation of peoples, the explorers robbed these people of their treasures, their culture and their future.

Sierra Club Maine is devoted to the conservation of our forests, mountains, rivers, coasts and other natural areas. We are committed to protect Maine's wilderness heritage, fight global warming & safeguard Maine's clean water and coastline. We promote and act upon equity, inclusion, and justice for all. And, we hold public officials accountable.

Sierra Club asks that we make right the name of the day we celebrate the Americas. We all stand with the First Nation peoples, as we stand with all peoples of this great land that should know the truth and celebrate our place in sustaining it.



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Please vote LD 179 Ought to Pass