

From: Evan Young

Sent: Friday, February 22, 2019 2:42 PM

Subject: Re: H.119 An act relating to Indigenous Peoples' Day

Dear Members of the House Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs,

I am writing today in support of H.119. I am a Brattleboro resident but I hope everyone on the committee and in the house, in addition to my representatives, will support this bill. Why? I'm sure you'll hear from wiser heads than me so I'll be as brief as I can.

1. Ceasing the celebration of unworthy person.

While there is no doubt that Christopher Columbus had a profound impact on history and Vermonters should learn about him in school I strongly argue that he is not someone who should be celebrated to the degree of having a state or national holiday. Even a cursory reading of history shows that he often acted out of greed, hubris, and without compassion even by the standards of his day (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/aug/07/books.spain>). He enslaved and brutally treated Caribbean indigenous peoples so badly that he was ostracized in his day (<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/columbus-sex-slaves/>). Do we really want to be celebrating someone who enslaves, slaughters, and abuses the rights of others?

2. Recognizing the unique contributions of the Indigenous peoples of Vermont

The Abenaki and other indigenous peoples in Vermont have made unique and tremendous contributions to Vermont's history. Vermont would have had totally different history if they had not been here when settlers arrived and their post-contact contributions have been unfairly denigrated in my opinion. Why on earth should we be lifting up Christopher Columbus instead of them?

3. Economic benefits

The work of the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association, as well as many other groups, clearly demonstrates the vibrancy of Vermont native culture. I know I have personally purchased crafts, taken classes, and visited museums based on the strength of the local indigenous communities. I firmly believe that if Indigenous People's Day were to be celebrated yearly it would attract tourists to the state, allow native-run Vermont businesses valuable marketing and outreach opportunities, and in general promote the growth of businesses and economic development.

4. Redressing past wrongs

Although this is more controversial I would submit that indigenous peoples of America, including the Abenaki and other Vermont native peoples, have been very ill-treated (to put it mildly). They have been forcibly removed from ancestral lands, killed, had their children take away...just to name a few things. Dr. Frederick Wiseman (in his book Reclaiming the Ancestors: Decolonizing a Taken Prehistory of the Far Northeast) and others have documented this extensively. Creating a state holiday may be a small step in redressing these wrongs but it is at least a step. Personally I feel that any house member who does not vote for this bill (or proposes other legislation redressing wrongs) would be complicit in carrying past wrongs forward. This is an opportunity for a small healing step, let's take it!

For all these reasons and more I hope this bill will pass by overwhelming margins.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Evan Young

Brattleboro VT 05301