

Indigenous Peoples' Day Family Action Toolkit



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Created by members of [The Student Ignition Society](#)

www.booksforlittles.com

Hey Grown-ups,

The kids know something *fishy* is going on.

We teach our kids that barging in, stealing, and bullying is not okay. And yet - we also celebrate the genocide of the Taíno and Arawak people as a federal holiday. This is an act of hypocrisy.

Celebrating Columbus Day hurts Indigenous people. Our kids can't trust us or feel safe when we tell them to be kind, but see us hurting people.

Our kids deserve better. They deserve to feel safe. They deserve the truth.

1. Raising kids to value **honesty** means we must have age-appropriate conversations about colonization and its impact on Indigenous people.
2. Raising kids to act for **justice** means we must empower kids with simple action tools toward reconciliation.
3. Raising kids to be **inclusive** means we must listen to Indigenous people and follow their lead in decolonization.

If you're looking for a way to acknowledge and honor Indigenous Peoples' Day, start with the simple steps in this toolkit to make big changes.

Support your children in being the kind and courageous people they want to be.

You are raising the next generation of kind & brilliant leaders.

In solidarity,

Ashia Ray
[Student Ignition Society of Raising Luminaries](#)

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Kid-Friendly Word Bank

Terms to give kids a framework of what we're talking about. When we talk about family, this includes family of origin, adoptive and chosen family.

- **Indigenous** - The first people to live in an area.
- **Culture** - The rules and behavior we see as normal in our family and community.
- **Values** - The things people in our culture care about, what we see as right and good goals and ideas.
- **Ancestors** - People in our family who lived before us and contributed to how we live today.
- **Descendants** - People in our family who are born after us.
- **Heritage** - The family history and cultural practices given to us by our Ancestors. Many people have more than one heritage.
- **Tribe, Nation, or Band** - An official group of people who share cultural traditions, beliefs, family, and/or language. *DO*: refer to individual Indigenous people by their official group. *DON'T*: Use the word 'tribe' unless you're talking about an official Indigenous group.
- **Colonization / Colonialism** - Invading and controlling another country and the people who live there. Colonization hurts Indigenous people, both intentionally and unintentionally. Colonizers take Indigenous land and homes, stop them from practicing Indigenous cultural traditions, and often hurt and kill Indigenous people.
- **Oppression** - Cruelty and abuse towards people with less power, caused by unfair rules made by people who abuse and take advantage of power.
- **Decolonize** - To bring back independence for Indigenous people who have been harmed by colonization so all people inhabiting an area are free from oppression.
- **Hypocrisy** - Saying we care about something but doing things that show we don't actually care about it.
- **Immigrant**: An immigrant is anyone who moves to one nation from another and plans to stay for a very long time.
- **Colonist** - People who occupy and take power over another country, and take advantage of the land, resources, and actively or unintentionally oppress people Indigenous to the land.
- **Settler** - Immigrants and their descendants who continue the harm of colonization, but by learning and taking action, can assist Indigenous people in decolonization.
- **Land Acknowledgement** - Naming and honoring the Indigenous people who have original and special relationships with the land you are on, with a promise to take steps toward their freedom and safety.
- **Reconciliation** - Listening to people who we are harming and doing what they ask of us so we can all heal together.

Bear's Home (Or is it Horse's?) - A Conundrum

Version 1 - Advanced: Oral Story

Wanna hear a story? It goes like this...

Long ago, Horse bought a little cottage by a lake from Sparrow.

But it turned out that Sparrow didn't own that cottage. It wasn't hers to sell. Sparrow stole that cottage from Bear!

Before Sparrow stole it, Bear had helped Sparrow when she hit hard times - even baked her cupcakes for her birthday! Sparrow gives great hugs, donates to charity, but sometimes she can do thoughtless, selfish things. And this particularly selfish thing takes the cake.

Here's the thing - Bear and his family cared for the lake and lived on this land for thousands of years. Bear built this cottage and named it the Bristly Burrow, generations ago. They know all about this lake, and how to take care of it.

But now - Horse has moved all of their feed bags and tchotchkes and videogames into the cottage. They've had a bunch of foals and they've repaired, re-roofed, and added a foosball table - really made the place their own. At this point, three generations of Horse's descendants have been born and lived their entire lives in Sugarcube Hollow. (They renamed it, too).

Meanwhile - after Sparrow broke in, changed all the locks, and stole his cottage, Bear and his family had nowhere to go, and were forced to move to another lake. They don't have documents there, and they're worried they could get kicked out if the authorities arrive.

Bear still loves his home. He's annoyed to hear of Horse littering the place with their coffee cups and sugar cube boxes and pooping in the lake. (Horse gives good hugs too, but they still haven't learned how to clean up after themselves.)

Recently, Horse's grandchildren found out the home they love is stolen land. (They feel pretty terrible about that.) But it's been so long, there is nowhere else for them to go, either.

So my question to you is - whose home *is this*, exactly? Is it Bristly Burrow, or Sugarcube Hollow? Or, could it be both, somehow? Is there a way for Horse, Bear, and their families to live together in peace?

Good thing you're smart. I think I'm gonna need your help figuring this out.

Version 2 - Simpler Story

For easier comprehension, use finger puppets or stuffies to act out the story.

First, Bear's family lived on the lake and built a little house a long, long time ago.

Bear was born here, and he and his family have never lived anywhere else.

Then, Sparrow broke into the house, kicked Bear out, and took the cottage for herself.

After that, Bear and his family had to move away from home.

And then - Sparrow sold the home and all the land near it to Horse.

Horse didn't know it was a stolen home on stolen land.

Since then, Horse has had foals. And then grand-foals. They've been there a long time. This is the only home these generations had ever known.

Ever since Sparrow kicked them out, Bear and his family miss their home. They aren't as safe and happy as they used to be.

And finally - Horse's grand-foals found out this land was stolen. They want Bear's family to feel safe and happy. They feel terrible about living in a stolen home - but they have nowhere else to go.

Now - can we help Bear's family, and Horse's family, feel safe and happy?

Version 3 - Very simple principles

It makes us sad when people take from us.

Taking things away from people without permission hurts them.

Don't take. If we do accidentally take, we should be honest and admit it.

If we can, we should give it back.

If we got it dirty, broke it, or can't give it back - it's our job to listen to the person we hurt. We can look for ways to help them. We should do what we can to make amends.

Learning to make up for mistakes is an important part of growing.

Why we start with a Land Acknowledgement

What would you do if you were in this tricky situation?

Both Horse and Bear want safe and peaceful homes for their children. What would you do if you were Horse, or Bear?

1. **Start with the truth** - the truth is the land beneath us, the air, water, plants, animals, and people around us. What's the history and truth of what happened here - *Way Back When*, through to *Today*?
2. **Acknowledge how we are connected** to this place, and our relationship with the land - the same way Bear and Horse have relationships with their lakeside cottage.
3. **Brainstorm how we can help** the people who got the worst of this bad deal - like Bear's family, without just re-doing that same harm to Horse.

If we live in a place that was stolen from another people, we can state the truth with a **Land Acknowledgement** - which helps us learn about the history of our home and the people who have relationships with this place.

Land Acknowledgement Example: Starting with this toolkit

This toolkit was created by settlers April B. and Ashia R. to help kids start decolonizing their learning. Ashia lives in the original homelands of the [Wampanoag](#) and [Massachusetts](#) Tribal Nations. April lives on [Tonkawa, Karankawa, and Comanche](#) land (plus more, she's still searching for information).

We are grateful to the First People for caring and fighting for this land - and hope to honor their stories, ancestors, traditions, and cultures.

By living here as settlers, we benefit from the violence colonization has done (and continues to do) to Indigenous people. Even though we don't intend it - our being here makes life harder for Indigenous people.

This means we must understand the history of colonization, how we are harming Indigenous people local to us right now. We must take action to stop and repair that harm.

It's our responsibility to listen to Indigenous people and support their efforts. Learning is only the *first* step. We must take daily action as parents and educators to dismantle colonialism. If (when) we overstep or make mistakes, [we are grateful for the gift of honest feedback](#) from Indigenous people whom we are harming on how we can do better.

My Land Acknowledgement: Learning About Our Connection To The Land

1. **What do you call this place you live in? What other names has this land been known as?**

I live in a place that is currently called _____, also known as _____

2. **Who lived here before you? Were they *your* ancestors - or someone else's?**

Are your family **Indigenous** (like Bear), **Colonizers** (like Sparrow), **Settlers** (like Horse), or a mix of these?

My ancestors are: _____

And I am: _____

3. **If someone else lived here before your family - where do you think the First People went? Do you think they left *willingly*, or *unwillingly*?**

The people Indigenous to this place are called the _____,
 Their descendants currently live in _____
 because _____

4. **How did *you* come to be in this place? Did you, or your ancestors, leave another place to come here? If so, was it *willingly*, or *unwillingly*?**

My family is originally from _____

We stayed/left because _____

5. **If you were Bear, and want good things for Horse *and* for Horse to help make things right - what would you want Horse to do?**

6. If you were Horse's family, and want Bear to feel safe and free - how could you help Bear?
-

How Write An Advocacy Letter

Kid-friendly templates to send letters & drawings to Community Leaders.

1. Choose who to send letters to:

Ask an adult to help you find the contact information of your teachers, principal, and mayor. Send a letter to one - or all of them. They would love to hear from you!

2. Educate your community leaders

As you've probably figured out, grown-ups don't know everything. Many adult settlers never learned about our local Indigenous communities!

In the '*Getting Started*' section, find the names of your local Indigenous communities. Tell your community leaders about them, which can help them get started.

3. For Caregivers:

Many community leaders have never heard of Indigenous People's Day or why it's important. We've included a sample letter to help you support your child's advocacy work. Adjust as needed!

4. For pre-writers:

Use the pre-written letter. Follow the drawing prompt. Drawings don't have to be recognizable to make an impact!

5. For emerging writers:

Write-in a short statement, using the templates for inspiration.

6. For advanced readers & writers:

Discuss the '*5 talking points*' in this toolkit. Write from the heart, or use a template - what matters is sending *any* letter, not a perfect one.

Companion Letter - From Adult Caregiver To Teachers

Dear **[Teacher]**,

[My child] enjoys your class so much, especially **[favorite subject]**. I appreciate how you teach the children to respectfully listen and work together. Such an important tool you're providing our children!

When I saw the Columbus Day project that my child came home with, I remember my own school days, and all the projects I was proud of. While I have nostalgia for these memories, that pride has turned to regret.

As students, our generation was taught that Columbus was a hero who discovered a wild, uncivilized land where people from Europe could find sanctuary.

I later learned that in seeking his fortune, Columbus and his men committed horrific acts against the Taino and Arawak people. Columbus and his men cruelly hunted, raped, and murdered not just adults, but children the same age as ours. He kidnapped 5,000 people to be sold as slaves in Europe. Girls as young as nine years old were sold into sexual slavery. There's more - too many brutal acts to list here.

Modern Indigenous parents and children have reported feeling hurt and unsafe when their teachers and peers celebrate Columbus Day. Many Italian Americans believe Columbus Day diminishes and dishonors the struggles of Italian Americans who faced discrimination, exploitation, and racial violence just a generation ago.

I'd hate for our children to learn that it's okay to ignore friends and peers when they tell us we are frightening and hurting them.

Many cities and schools across the country are using this as an opportunity to teach critical thinking. I think you might enjoy this, too. Educators are eliminating Columbus Day from the classroom and celebrating Indigenous People's Day! This day encourages students to learn about the Indigenous people of the Americans - and how we can support Indigenous family and friends here today.

You are a great teacher because you care deeply about all our kids and value fairness and equality. This is why I felt you might be open to my sharing this idea. Thank you so much for taking time to consider it!

Sincerely, **[Your name here]**

A Letter To My Community Leader - Pre & Emerging Writers

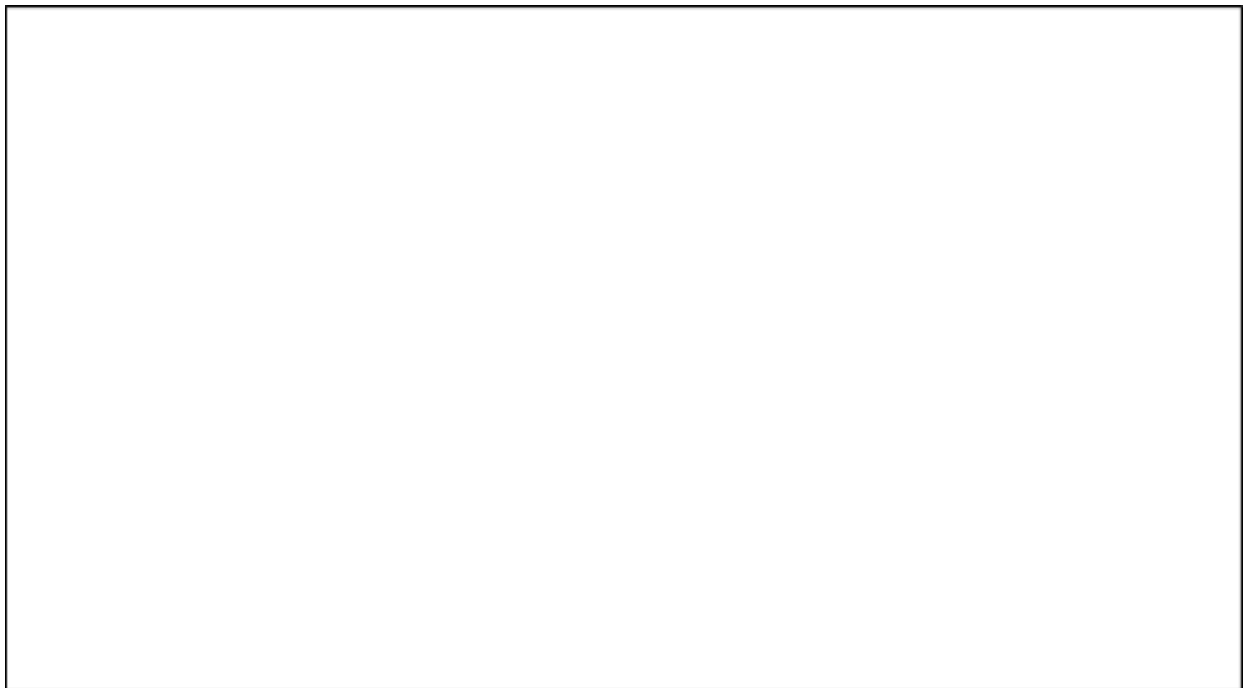
Date: _____

Dear _____,

We should celebrate Indigenous People's Day instead of Columbus Day. Let's learn about our local Indigenous communities!

Some of the Indigenous tribes, nations, and bands local to my home:

Draw: *Our community is home to many people. What does your home look like?*



Sincerely,

Name, City & State

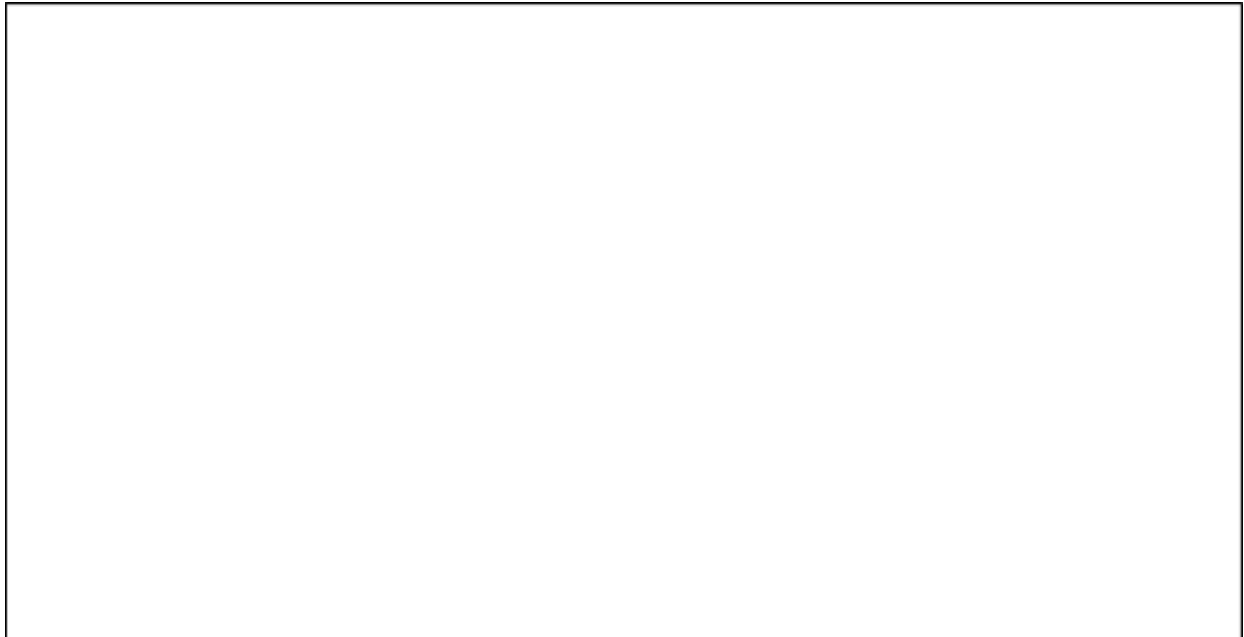
Date: _____

Dear _____,

Indigenous people are still here. They are our friends and family. We must celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day to support our community.

Some of the Indigenous tribes, nations, and bands that my friends and family share heritage with:

Drawing Exercise: *Children should be free to celebrate their culture and heritage. Draw a time when you celebrated a family tradition.*



Sincerely,

Name, City & State

5 Talking Points for Kids Writing Their Own Letters

1. How do you feel about the celebration of Christopher Columbus and his actions when he encountered the Taino people?
2. How do (or *would*) you feel if your class celebrates violence against your ancestors and honors someone who hurt them?
3. Do you believe we should celebrate Indigenous People's Day or Columbus Day? Tell us why.
4. What is one way we can honor and respect your local Indigenous communities with our words or actions?
5. What unfair things is our government doing to Indigenous communities in the land we currently call North America right now? Who can you ask to find out?

A Letter To My Community Leader - Independent Writers

Date: _____

Dear _____,

I believe:

We need to stop:

We should:

Sincerely,

Name, City & State

Kid-Friendly Collaborative Action Bingo

Kids learn that their actions matter by *doing*. Help them choose five actions to complete within the next five weeks and put them on your calendar!

Watch 'Indigenous' Explained	Find out: Who else has a relationship with the land of your home?	Discuss with family: Are we Indigenous or Settlers or a mix of both?	Can you find your local Indigenous community's website?	Visit an Indigenous-led history museum near you.
Watch Coyote And The Ducks	Listen to Mamaqtug And This is Ohlone Land	Ask a friend: What are ways we can share information without reading or writing?	Ask an elder to tell you a story important to them.. Listen <i>closely</i> .	Ask for permission to share your elder's story. Tell, sing, draw, sculpt, or dance it out!
Listen to Autumn Peltier advocate for clean water.	Find out: What does it mean to be an advocate ?	Discuss with a friend: How can you advocate for climate justice?	Create a poster to speak for the Earth. Ask a school, library, or public place to display it.	Be a good steward of the land. Pick up litter in your neighborhood with a friend.
Watch Molly of Denali's Grampa's Drum	Brainstorm with a friend: Why is it important to have a voice ?	Discuss with family - What are our family's core values?	Draw a picture: Which traditions (actions) affirm our family values?	Ask for permission from an elder to tell or share a family tradition with a friend.
Read When A Bully Is President	Ask a teacher: Who writes our school books?	Discuss with a grown-up: what does colonization mean?	Write a letter to your <i>teacher</i> : How will we acknowledge Indigenous Peoples' Day?	Write a letter to your <i>mayor</i> : Acknowledge Indigenous People's Day!

If you printed this document and can't click links, find the urls for links in the Resources section below.

KEEP GOING! Additional Resources

Colonization is an ongoing process that started a long time ago, but is still happening. Which means we must start *decolonizing* right away and keep doing it every day.

We can start with the land acknowledgement, advocacy letters, and action bingo this month. From there - there are so many interesting and fun ways to decolonize - new ways to decolonize are being invented by Indigenous kids your age, *right now*.

Support Indigenous-Led Organizations!

- Visit <https://www.whose.land/en/> to start searching for your local Indigenous community's website.
- Support the [International Indigenous Youth Council](#)

Action Bingo Links (for folks who printed this document)

- Watch '[Indigenous' Explained](#)
 - <https://youtu.be/CISeEFTsgDA>
- Find out: [Who else has a relationship](#) with the land of your home?
 - <https://www.whose.land/en/>
- Visit an [Indigenous-led history museum](#) near you.
 - <http://bit.ly/SIS-IndigenousMuseum>
- Watch [Coyote And The Ducks](#)
 - <https://youtu.be/s8b4Ml2vl4Y>
- Listen to [Mamaqtug](#)
 - <https://youtu.be/HapT7BjSAYw>
- Listen to [Autumn Peltier](#) advocate for clean water.
 - https://youtu.be/_EodBINYV7A
- Watch Molly of Denali's [Grampa's Drum](#)
 - <http://bit.ly/SIS-GrampasDrum>
- Read [When A Bully Is President](#)
 - <http://bit.ly/SIS-Bully>

Children's Books - Keep reading!

- Starter Picture Books:
 - [The People Shall Continue](#) - Simon J. Ortiz
 - [Coyote Columbus Story](#) - Thomas King
 - [My Wounded Island](#) - Jacques Pasquet
 - [Young Water Protectors](#) - Aslan Tudor
- #OwnVoices Indigenous reading lists
 - [American Indians in Children's Literature](#)
 - [Oyate](#)
 - [Des Colores: The Raza Experience In Books For Children](#)

- Books for older kids
 - [An Indigenous People's History of the United States For Young People](#)

Kid-Friendly Activities - Keep showing up!

- **Understand Discovery:** [Role Play Activity for Indigenous Peoples' Day](#), ages 6-10. Can you discover something that already exists - and belongs to someone else? Credit: Maureen Ally (settler, teacher)
- **End racist mascots:** Does your local school, town, state, or sports team use a [dehumanizing stereotype of Indigenous culture as a mascot](#)? Write a letter to tell your principal, mayor, governor, or coach about why this is hurtful and what their mascot should be instead.
- **Advocate** to stop celebrating Columbus's violence and acknowledge [Indigenous People's Day](#) (and history, and culture) in your local area. [Check this map](#) to see where IPD is celebrated. Those letter templates above come in handy for this!

Resources for Educators & Caregivers

- [Rethinking Columbus](#) - Zinn Education Project
- [Lessons from Turtle Island](#) by Guy W. Jones and Sally Moomaw
- [An Indigenous People's History Of The United States](#) - Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
- [Respecting The Indigenous Curtain](#) - AICL: Concerns about Roanhorse's Trail of Lightning
- [Truth & Reconciliation Content for Educators](#) - via [OISE Library](#)
- [Why we should stop using the term 'nation of immigrants'](#) - a list of definitions by Beverly Slapin

Contributions & Credits

We still need help! This is a living document still in progress, and we're still tweaking it with help from members of the [Student Ignition Society](#). Membership is free - come join us!

- If you are an #OwnVoices Indigenous educator or parent and have [advice](#) for how to do better, we would be grateful, and would love to show our appreciation in a way meaningful to you.
- Our next step is to create a hub of Indigenous Educator-created lesson plans. Have one to share? Post about it in the Student Ignition Society so we can get started!
- Are you a contributor to this document and we forgot to credit you, or you'd like us to add a link to your internet space or digital tip jar? Let us know and we're happy to add it.

Contributions	Contributor(s)
Caregiver letter to teacher	Kerry Prasad
Collaborative Action Bingo	Maureen Alley, Sarae P.,
Next Step Resources + Ideas	Maureen Ally, Sarae P., K. Krieger,
Accurate Tribal Map Sources	Rebecca S., Carly H., Alexa F., Glenda N.,

Indigenous-led Museums	Rebecca B., Megan R., Alison B., Alison L., K. Krieger, Tanya B.
Toolkit Coordinators	April Brown of Mrs. Brown's Blog , Ashia Ray of Books For Littles

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Last updated: 10/14/19 (Ashia R.) - Minor grammar & syntax edits.