

# Understanding Indigenous People's Day

Can our understanding of history change over time?  
How can we expand our understanding of history  
without erasing it?



**OBJECTIVE:** Students will be able to analyze data from a variety of sources and use secondary information to identify possible solutions.

**GRADES:** 6-12

**MATERIALS:** Copies of the "[Understanding Indigenous People's Day Chart](#)"

## Directions

### INTRODUCTION

1. Draw T-chart on the board with one side saying Columbus Day and one side saying Indigenous People's Day.
2. Ask students to raise their hands if they have heard about Columbus Day. Then, ask students what they know about Columbus Day. Write student ideas on board or screen.
3. Ask students to raise their hands if they have heard about Indigenous People's Day. Then, ask students what they know about Indigenous People's Day. Write student ideas on board or screen.
4. Ask students to compare and contrast the two sides of the T-chart. Which holiday does the class seem to have more collective knowledge about? How did they learn or know about each of these holidays? Pose these questions and have students share their ideas.
5. Provide disclaimer to students that history is not always what we imagine it to be. Ask students to share any examples of this.
  - a. Examples to spark your students' thinking:
    - i. Benjamin Franklin was not the first person to "discover" electricity, and he

may not have actually tied a key to a kite!

- ii. Martin Luther King, Jr. was more than just his "I Have a Dream" speech. He believed in peace, but he also believed that unrest was sometimes necessary in order for change to happen.

### DIRECT INSTRUCTION

1. Tell students that today they will be exploring resources to help them better understand the shift from Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day.
2. Hand out copies of the [Understanding Indigenous People's Day chart](#) students will use for today's activity. Explain the three sections of the chart and the expectations for each.
  - a. *Students will use the "What I learned" column to identify three things they learned about Columbus Day and three things they learned about Indigenous People's Day based on the articles/videos. Students will then answer the "Where I stand" reflection questions based on their new knowledge. Then, students will fill out the "What Comes Next" section about how we could reimagine the ways we teach or talk about Indigenous People's Day.*

**3.** Explain to students that some of the images and examples in the videos and articles we will explore today could be triggering or difficult to watch. Remind students of your classroom norms around discussing complex topics. If you do not currently have classroom norms—watch this video to help you get started!

[How to Set the Stage for Challenging Classroom Discussions | Edutopia](#)

### GUIDED PRACTICE

**1.** Watch Vox video about the history of Columbus Day as a class:

[Why the US Celebrates Columbus Day | Vox](#)

**2.** Ask students to identify one thing they learned from the video and add it to the “What I learned” section of the chart. Then, have students share out with a partner or the whole class their examples.

### INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

**1.** Students will complete the chart independently or with a partner. They can view a variety of resources to complete this, but they are not required to view all of them!

**a.** Articles:

- i. [“Goodbye, Columbus? Here’s what Indigenous Peoples’ Day means to Native Americans,”](#) from NPR
- ii. [“What Indigenous Peoples’ Day means to Native Americans,”](#) from CNN
- iii. [“What is Indigenous Peoples’ Day? Does it replace Columbus Day? Everything you need to know,”](#) from USA Today

**b.** Videos:

- i. [Can Americans celebrate Columbus Day and Indigenous People’s Day?](#)
- ii. [Why Columbus Day Is Being Replaced by Indigenous Peoples’ Day | NowThis](#)
- iii. [US recognizes Indigenous Peoples’ Day](#)



**2.** If students finish their chart early, they can view more of the above resources or begin working on the [Action Plan extension activity](#).

### CLOSING ACTIVITY

**1.** Explain to students that you will be doing a “Where I Stand” activity to share out their ideas from the chart.

**2.** Write or project on the board the statement “It is possible to honor indigenous people AND celebrate Columbus Day at the same time.” Have students who agree with the statement stand on one side of the classroom and students who disagree with the statement stand on the other side of the classroom.

**3.** Remind students of your discussion norms before beginning the share out. If you do not have discussion norms yet, you could use the following as a launching point:

- a. Only one person speaks at a time
- b. Address the idea, not the person stating it
- c. Seek to understand rather than seek to be “right”
- d. Approach with curiosity and ask follow-up questions

4. Ask students to raise their hands and share why they chose the side they are on. Have students take turns (allow one voice from one side to speak, and then allow one voice from the other side to speak)---a talking token or ball toss is a great way to facilitate this in a tactile way! Allow students to move to the other side of the room if their perspective shifts because of what their classmates say.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 with the second “Where I Stand” topic: “Is replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous People’s Day erasing our history or expanding our understanding of it?” Have students go to one side of the classroom if they think it erases our history and the other side of the classroom if they think it expands our understanding of it.
6. If time, share out ideas about the “What Comes Next” section of the chart. Write student ideas on board. If you run out of time for this, it could be a great anticipatory set the next day to connect back to today’s lesson!

### SCAFFOLDS/ACCOMODATIONS

Students will have the opportunity to work independently or with a partner to build collective knowledge and offer support, if needed.

Students are given the option to read articles or watch videos for their chart resources. This supports student learning in a variety of modalities.

Student learning is assessed on both their completion of the chart and their participation in the “Where I Stand” activity to allow students to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways.

### LEARNING EXTENSIONS

If students finish their chart early or would like to continue their thinking, they can complete the Action Plan Extension Activity.

### ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on their completion of the chart as well as their participation in the “Where I Stand” discussion activity. This is a formative assessment that can be assessed in a variety of ways: checkmark for participation in the discussion, specific focus on using resources to inform ideas, etc.



