



Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
Government Center

**TESTIMONY OF PRAIRIE BAND POTAWATOMI NATION TRIBAL
COUNCIL**

CHAIRMAN JOSEPH P. RUPNICK

IN SUPPORT OF HB 2009

February 6, 2019

Dear Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you in support of House Bill 2009 to change the designation of Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day.

Since 1934, when former President Franklin D. Roosevelt first declared Columbus Day a national holiday, we the Indigenous Nations, have viewed this holiday as a celebration of the eradication of a culture and society that existed for thousands of years. We witnessed generations and entire populations decimated through diseases that were formerly unknown to our peoples. Our ancestors saw our lands and the wildlife that flourished there and all that was our livelihood destroyed, as well as our culture, languages, and traditions erased and forgotten by the survivors of forced assimilation.

But today, many cities and states across the Nation have begun the observance of Indigenous People's Day instead of recognizing Columbus Day. This is a respectful recognition and acknowledgment that the first inhabitants of what eventually became the United States, were native peoples, Native Americans.

While we cannot undo the many tragic events that occurred to Native Americans in the past, I believe we must recognize and embrace that our Nation, the United States, is a multicultural nation, comprised of millions of peoples with diverse backgrounds, nationalities and experiences, including Native Americans, the first occupants of this great country. We must remind ourselves of the history of contribution by the plurality of peoples to make this Nation great. Furthermore, I believe that with the adoption of House Bill 2009, we will shift the focus to those Native Americans who were successfully living in their communities prior to the arrival of Columbus. By the adoption of House Bill 2009, we will give honor and recognition due to the first peoples of this country and allow us to rethink the historical narrative; and to hold in remembrance all those who suffered along the way.

Thank you for your consideration and support. I look forward to working with you to advance this important piece of legislation.