

My name is Bushra Amiwala. I serve on the Board of Education of Skokie School District 73.5 which changed Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day this January. I am submitting my written statement to urge you all to be on the right side of history and replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Specifically, Commissioner and Chair of this Committee, Larry Suffredin, I'd like to share what Teddy Peterson of the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian located in your District said at Monday's Town Hall Rally.

"Illinois doesn't have any reservations. It is one of a handful of states that doesn't have any land put aside for Native Americans, which speaks to the relocation efforts that happened as part of Westward expansion...We urge, Cook County Commissioner Larry Suffredin, on behalf of the Mitchell Museum to support Indigenous Peoples' Day on a County level."

Commissioner Suffredin, your district also includes Northwestern University whose Native American Inclusion Initiative began in 2014. Evanston is named for John Evans, who was one of the founders of Northwestern University. Evans was the governor and superintendent of Indian Affairs of the Colorado Territory when U.S. Army cavalry soldiers slaughtered approximately 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho Native Americans, most of them women and children, in 1864 in southeastern Colorado. Indigenous Peoples' Day is ONE SMALL STEP towards acknowledging the harms of the past, and providing opportunities to heal for our collective future.

Evanston and [Niles Township District 219](#) have celebrated Indigenous Peoples' Day annually since 2016! Skokie District 68 began celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day in 2020. A HUGE percentage of your constituents support this change!

Teddy Peterson from the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian also addressed his Commissioner, Commissioner Bridgid Gainer directly, "[Your] district includes Uptown. Chicago has such a large Native American population because the 1960s relocation efforts of the Federal government meant going to reservations and begging Native Americans to come to urban areas for post-war production, and exploitation of Native Americans for cheap labor." The Indigenous Peoples' Day Coalition – Illinois has shared with me that *all* the other elected officials that Gainer shares an office with are supportive of these efforts: Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, State Senator Mike Simmons, State Representative Kelly Cassidy, and Alderman Harry Osterman.

For all the Commissioners, UIC Professor and activist David Stovall said at Monday's Rally that accurate depictions of history can be a pathway to empowerment. He said, "When Columbus said the Taino people would make the greatest of slaves...we are living in a reckoning of that." Stovall continued, "Columbus (was) not a discoverer but a colonizer. That (false) history is still taught to young people in classes today. We need Indigenous Peoples' Day."

I stand with my Native and Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist sisters and brothers who support this effort to call on you to do the right thing and have Cook

County join the 14 states, 9 counties, and more than 150 cities across the nation in replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day!