

OCTOBER 9, 2015

Olympia's first Indigenous Peoples' Day celebration set for Oct. 12



Bathed in the setting summer sun Aug. 17 at Olympia's Heritage Park, the Nisqually Canoe Family sings during the Indigenous Peoples' Day rally which focused on the theme of officially changing the national holiday know as Columbus Day to that of Indigenous Peoples Day. Organized by Brian Frisina the rally featured speakers including Squaxin tribal council members Jim Peters and Nisqually council vice-chair Willie Frank Jr. III and was opened by a song from the Squaxin Island Drum Group. **Steve Bloom** Staff photographer

BY ANDY HOBBS

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Olympia's first Indigenous Peoples' Day will be celebrated Monday with a tribute to the area's Native American heritage.

The family-friendly event will run from 4-8 p.m. at Sylvester Park, located at Capitol Way and Legion Way in downtown Olympia. Representatives from local tribes, including Lummi, Nisqually, Puyallup, Squaxin, Quileute and others, are scheduled to speak.

[Olympia recently joined a short list of cities](#) to declare the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples' Day. This date is typically observed as Columbus Day, a legal holiday in some states that honors the arrival of European explorer Christopher Columbus in the Americas.

However, history often glosses over the atrocities associated with the arrival of Europeans: slavery, genocide and the brutal exploitation of Native Americans.

"Most Americans are in complete denial of what happened here in the Americas," said Brian Frisina, also known as Raven Redbone, who hosts a weekly radio program about indigenous peoples on KAOS-89.3 FM. "It was a big step for the city of Olympia to make that move toward healing and reconciliation with the tribes."

The seeds for the local Indigenous Peoples' Day were planted in October 2014, when organizer Lucas Anderson and several supporters urged the Olympia City Council to rename Columbus Day.

One year later, Anderson is amazed at the way Olympia has embraced the concept. He hopes to see the movement spread across Washington.

"That shows a lot of people are more educated and aware of some of the things that are misportrayed in history," he said. "Olympia is really smart to just go ahead and do this now."

Monday's event will start with a welcome from the Nisqually and Squaxin tribes along with songs from the Squaxin Island Drum Group, according to organizers. [Other participants will include:](#)

- Nancy Shippentower-Games, a tribal leader with the Puyallup Nation.

- State Sen. John McCoy, a Democrat from the Tulalip Nation who successfully pushed for teaching tribal history in the state's public schools.
- Swil Kanim of the Lummi Nation, who is a violin virtuoso, native storyteller and actor.
- Douglas Skarhoniatai of the Mohawk Nation, who will share songs and debut "Uncle Billy Says."
- Olympia resident Ben Sittingbull of the Lakota Nation.
- The Native Student Alliance from The Evergreen State College.
- Olympia Mayor Stephen Buxbaum and Mayor Pro-tem Nathaniel Jones.

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