Undergraduates of the University of Rhode Island:

The Student Senate Executive Committee has determined to attempt to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day at the University of Rhode Island. This has been a project of the Senate for three years.

In Spring of 2016, it was brought to the Senate’s attention that Columbus Day was causing damage to the University’s sense of community by celebrating the often violent colonization of their historical lands. The Senate followed up with a poll, in which 67.5% of 117 undergraduates said that they would support changing the name of Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day on URI academic calendars and syllabi.

In Fall of 2017, Student Senate and Faculty Senate both decided to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day on academic calendars and syllabi. This decision was vetoed by President Dooley on the grounds that Columbus Day was a state holiday, which the University could not ignore.

The last chance to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day is to pursue the change at a state level. In order to gauge students’ opinions there will a referendum question during our elections Thursday February 14 and Friday February 15 asking for your opinion on whether you support any future action by Student Senate in regards to our efforts to work with state legislators to accomplish one of our long standing goal.

Another one of our goals, is to better educate our student body about Indigenous Peoples’ Day and why there has been vocalization against Columbus Day. To do so, we have found some resources we feel will help us educate one another and listed them below. Please feel free to take a look at any number of these resources or others you may find before casting your referendum vote.

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate
Resources:

Indigenous Peoples’ Day: Rethinking American History

Columbus Day-Indigenous Peoples Day Fast Facts
https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/14/us/columbus-day-fast-facts/index.html

Columbus Day and Indigenous People’s Day: A Short History
https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2018/10/08/columbus-day-indigenous-peoples-day-history/

Recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day
http://blog.nativepartnership.org/recognizing-indigenous-peoples-day/

The Tribes of Rhode Island
http://omp.gso.uri.edu/ompweb/doee/history/nativeam/na2.htm