

# HONORING O

## AS YOU READ

Think about why many people believe it's important to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day.

**A**marara will be off from school on the second Monday of October.

That's Columbus Day. Most kids across the country will also be off from school. But 13-year-old Amara's school in Santa Fe, New Mexico, will be closed for a different reason this year.

New Mexico recently joined a growing number of states and cities that have replaced Columbus Day. Instead they'll celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day. The holiday honors the indigenous, or native, people

who had been living in America long before Columbus arrived.

"This is a big deal to our people," says Amara, who is Native American. "We should be celebrated and recognized."

## A Stolen Past

Christopher Columbus set sail in 1492 from Spain. That's a country in Europe. He was looking for a faster route to Asia. But he landed on an island in what is now North America.

Columbus wasn't the first to set foot on that continent. Millions of indigenous people had already been living there. They'd been there for more than 10,000 years.

Columbus's crew started what

would become centuries of mistreatment of Native Americans. They enslaved or killed many Native people. They also stole their land.

Indigenous people continued to suffer as more European settlers arrived. The mistreatment continued after the United States became a country. The U.S. government repeatedly broke agreements with many tribes. Many Native Americans were forced to abandon their **culture**, language, and land.

## Rethinking History

More than 5 million Native Americans live in the U.S. today.

## What Amara Wants You to Know

I am a member of Tesuque (tuh-SOOK) Pueblo. The term *pueblo* describes both the land that my tribe lives on and the tribe itself. I spend weekends and holidays on the pueblo.

- 1 The Tesuque is one of 19 pueblos in New Mexico.** Each pueblo has its own traditions, land, and government.
- 2 My tribe is one of the smallest in New Mexico.** Its population is about 800. But other tribes and nations, like the Cherokee and Navajo, have hundreds of thousands of members.
- 3 Like many native tribes, the Tesuque Pueblo holds traditional ceremonies.** One of my favorites is the Blessing of the Fields in June. Female members of the pueblo take part in a Corn Dance. We dance barefoot, hoping for rain to help our crops grow.



# OUR PAST

Why are so many cities and states celebrating a new holiday?

They belong to nearly 600 tribes or nations. Each has its own history and **heritage**. But some people mistakenly think of Native Americans as one group.

That has a lot to do with the way Native Americans have been represented. Nearly all U.S. public schools teach about Columbus. But not many students learn about individual Native American tribes.

“We were never taught about our history and culture in school,” Amara says. “And it’s important to learn about indigenous peoples so that we are not forgotten.”

Derrick Lente hopes Indigenous Peoples’ Day will help change that. Lente is a state representative in New Mexico. He helped make the holiday official in the state.

“We can’t change or erase history,” he says. “But with this holiday, kids will be able to celebrate indigenous peoples in a bigger way.”

—by *Tricia Culligan*

## WORDS TO KNOW

**culture** *noun*. the habits, beliefs, and traditions of a people, place, or time

**heritage** *noun*. traditions that are handed down from generation to generation



A member of the Sioux (soo) tribe at a ceremony in South Dakota