

CSS officially recognizes Indigenous Peoples' Day for first time in 110 year history

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On Monday, Oct. 11, the College of St. Scholastica officially recognized Indigenous Peoples' Day for the first time in its 110 year history.

Indigenous Peoples' Day is comparatively new, at least in its official capacity. President Joe Biden is the first U.S. president to issue a proclamation officially recognizing Oct. 11 as Indigenous Peoples' Day. Columbus Day, which also falls on the second Monday in October, became a federal holiday in 1937.

"Since the early 1990s, there had been a movement to replace Columbus Day, to instead honor the Indigenous peoples and communities that faced genocide during and preceding his arrival," said Director of Native Studies Jennifer Niemi in email correspondence with The Script. "It is a way to honor the original inhabitants of this land."

Niemi, along with Chief Diversity Officer Amy Bergstrom, organized the event.

Events at the College commenced at 9:00 a.m. in the Mitchell Auditorium with President Barbara McDonald's reading of the College's Indigenous

Peoples' Day proclamation.

A performance followed. Brian Kingfisher, a global, cultural and languages studies lecturer, performed an Honor Song with Jeremy Wilson.

Educational programming was also included in the day's itinerary. At 3:00 p.m., Student Support and Engagement Specialist Cassie Brown delivered a Zoom presentation entitled "Diversity Dish: Ojibwe 101."

The College's celebration of Indigenous Peoples' Day concluded with a traditional Dewe'igan feast, which began at 5:00 p.m. in the Benedictine Commons and was open to the public.

Indigenous Peoples' Day inspired mixed emotions for one CSS student. Dustin Blacketter, a senior psychology and organizational leadership major, McNair Scholar and enrolled member of the Fond du Lac Ojibwe/Anishinaabe band, called the day "bittersweet."

"On one hand, I have a strong sense of pride in the perseverance, resilience and strength of the many tribes that still remain intact today," he said in email correspondence with The Script. "However, on the other hand, I can't help but recognize the fact that we are but mere remnants of what we once were."

A family history of forced cultural assimilation makes it

"unrealistic" for Blacketter to teach his children the Ojibwe language and to pass on other Ojibwe traditions to future generations, he said. "[It's] impossible because they were never taught to me, as my grandparents attended the boarding schools that were designed to brutally assimilate Indigenous children to be American."

For Blacketter, Indigenous Peoples' Day is a day of celebration and reflection.

"It is a day where I can wake up in the morning, look upon the innocent faces of my Indigenous children, braid their hair and send them off to school safely, silently praying that my son is not ridiculed for wearing his hair long, or my daughter for the color of her skin," he said. "It is a day where I can stay home from work, and allow myself to feel the overwhelming grief, locked away in my heart, that I carry with me everywhere, for all of the Indigenous people who died so our descendants can live on."

This grief, however "overwhelming," brings Indigenous people together, in Blacketter's view. "Since we are no longer connected by the stories, and the language, and the traditions, let us be bound by grief, then. And I shall be honored to bear this grief for [those who died], so that they are never forgotten."



Members of the CSS community gather for the Dewe'igan feast in the Benedictine Commons. Script photo/Ashley Etter

Keeping traditions alive and honoring the memory of the deceased is, for him, Indigenous Peoples' Day's primary purpose.

It's "[a] day to formally practice our culture and celebrate the good things that we still have left in our families, traditions, stories and language," he said. "It is a day for us to hear the drum and the singers, and to watch the dancers dance for those who could not dance. It's a day to honor the ones who left the Earth before their time."

Asked about the significance of the College's official recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Day, Blacketter said, "it is something, a baby-step in the right direction."

The Oct. 11 celebrations were emotionally charged and uplifting, according to Niemi, who said, "Hearing President McDonald read the official CSS Proclamation really choked me up. Having that acknowledgement for our Native students, staff and faculty, as well as the community, felt amazing."

The St. Scholastica Monastery's support was especially heartwarming, suggested Niemi. "I can not even begin to tell you how happy my heart felt when I heard that the sisters asked for a recording of the proclamation reading so they could watch it later,

together. This is also a great step in sharing the true, albeit messy history of our nation."

Blacketter said he hoped that people "don't forget, don't dissociate what it cost Indigenous people to be here today, with the day's celebrations," and Niemi expressed a similar sentiment.

She said that she hopes that the CSS community will remember "[t]hat [Indigenous peoples]" are very much still here; vibrant and thriving communities. "I have been overjoyed to see how the community has embraced the resources and information we have shared, not just on Indigenous Peoples' Day, but everyday."

Not forgetting means, among other things, not participating in cultural appropriation. "If I had to give one piece of advice as we move closer to Halloween," Niemi said, "please don't parody us; it is so disrespectful and hurtful."

CSS community members can take advantage of a variety of resources to learn more about Indigenous peoples, cultures and traditions.

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Happy Homecoming! ...or Harry Potter Week

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Harry Potter Week returned to CSS for its third year running. However, this was the first year that it overlapped with the College's Homecoming weekend, which is more alumni and family-orientated than the boisterous Harry Potter week. Either way, it worked out for both parties, as each was respectively a success.

Harry Potter week began on Monday, Oct. 11 with a sorting hat ceremony in Storm's Atrium, complete with donuts and coffee to get students through their day. There were also homemade buttons for students to choose their Hogwarts house. Additionally, Tower Hall was transformed into Hogwarts itself, complete with Hagrid's hut, Gringotts, Honeyduke's and more, with each department on campus decorating their hallway for the week.

Tuesday was a day of herbology, as Student

Activities provided over 200 succulents for students to pot and keep, taking place in Storm's Atrium. Additionally, there was Harry Potter-themed bingo Tuesday evening with items in each of the four Hogwarts house colors for students to choose from.

Wednesday was a slight break in the action, as the big event didn't take place until that evening with the 3 Broomstick Coffeehouse, complete with butterbeer floats, just like in Hogsmeade.

Thursday brought about Honeydukes at The Port, complete with everything needed to satisfy a sweet tooth. That evening, there was a showing of Harry Potter movies in the Science Auditorium.

Friday begins the start of Homecoming, as there is to be a talent show in the Mitchell Auditorium with cash prizes for the top three performances.

The Saturday of Homecoming, Oct. 16 will prove to look a little different than in years past. Due to the change of UMAC to MIAC,

there will not be a tailgate event before the sporting events of the day. Instead, there will be a post-football tailgate catered by Famous Dave's. Students will be able to grab a plate free of charge, but there will be a fee of \$15 dollars for families visiting for the Homecoming festivities. Students will also have the opportunity to be shuttled to and from the football game at Public School Stadium to remove the worry of having a ride to the game.

Things to watch out for all week include the "Hunt for Horcruxes," as there will be an item hidden every day of Harry Potter week. These will be given small clues until they are found. However, there will only be one golden snitch to find, with daily clues and a larger prize if found.

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