



Support the 2023-2024 Massachusetts Indigenous Legislative Agenda

The MA Indigenous Legislative Agenda is a coalition of organizations working to pass Indigenous-centered legislation in Massachusetts. One of the bills, seeking a redesign of the state flag and seal, passed in 2021. The five bills below were introduced in the 2021-2022 MA legislative session, but unfortunately none of them was brought to the floor for a vote despite the thousands of letters of support sent to state reps and senators. We will be filing these bills again in January of 2023.

Prohibiting Native Mascots in MA: *An Act prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth.* Currently about 38 public high schools in the state use Native American mascots. This bill would task the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education with establishing regulations to prohibit Native American mascots in MA public schools. Decades of social science research shows that Native American mascots are harmful to both Native American and non-Native youth, and perpetuate stereotypes. The National Congress of American Indians and over 115 tribal, government, education, professional, civil rights, and religious organizations in the United States have recognized the negative health impacts of Native American mascots and called for their elimination.

Establishing a Statewide Indigenous Peoples Day: *An Act establishing an Indigenous Peoples Day.* This bill replaces Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day in the Massachusetts General Laws. Changing the 2nd Monday in October to Indigenous People's Day acknowledges the harmful impact of celebrating Columbus as a hero. Historical accounts prove that wherever they went, Columbus and his men murdered and enslaved Indigenous People. The repercussions continue to be keenly felt even now. Indigenous Peoples Day replaces something negative with something positive - an increased awareness of Indigenous Peoples and a celebration of Indigenous resilience and survival, in MA as well as throughout the Americas. Please contact info@IndigenousPeoplesDayMA.org directly for more information about celebrating the day and how to pass Indigenous Peoples Day resolutions.

Promoting Education on Native American Culture and History: *An Act relative to celebrating and teaching Native American culture and history.* This bill addresses the lack of Indigenous curriculum in Massachusetts public schools. Schoolchildren rarely learn about the Native American history of the region nor about the contemporary Indigenous peoples who live here, including the Massachusett, Nipmuc, Aquinnah Wampanoag, Mashpee Wampanoag, and other bands of the Wampanoag as well as Native people in Massachusetts enrolled in tribal nations throughout the US and Canada. The goal is to develop a curriculum by working with tribal nations in-state and ensure that all children in the schools attain cultural competency in understanding Native history, cultures and current issues.

Improving Indigenous Educational Outcomes: *An Act providing for the creation of a permanent commission relative to the education of American Indian and Alaska Native residents of the Commonwealth.* As a State Education Agency, the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must engage in timely and meaningful consultation with stakeholders. Representatives of Indian tribes located in the state are explicitly identified as stakeholders.

Protecting Native American Heritage: *An Act to protect Native American Heritage.* This would ensure that Native American funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony (those of cultural, traditional or historical importance to their heritage) held in governmental, municipal or non-profit collections are not sold for profit. Law enforcement efforts to preserve heritage and to deter trafficking of these objects currently rely on Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA). NAGPRA currently only applies to publicly funded entities that receive federal funding.

For more information and updates about how you can support, please go to <http://mainindigenousagenda.org/sign-up-for-email-updates/> or email info@MAIndigenousAgenda.org