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Christopher Columbus and the potato that changed the world

Columbus Day Gets Dropped in Favor of Indigenous Peoples Day in More Parts of the US

Around the world, Indigenous communities continue to confront threats to traditional lands

It's Indigenous Peoples Day. Do you know whose stolen land you're on?

Havasupai victory!

This Robotic Jellyfish Could Help Save Our Reefs From Climate Change Rare Colorado River fish pulled back from extinction

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Shiprock



McDermitt by Laurel Weaver

Christopher Columbus and the potato that changed the world

The Washington Post

The crops that came from the Americas after Christopher Columbus's voyage in 1492 remade the world. [Read the full story](#)

[Columbus Day Gets Dropped in Favor of Indigenous Peoples Day in More Parts of the US](#)

Holly Yan, CNN

Yan writes: "Just this year, at least a dozen US cities - including San Francisco and Cincinnati - decided to stop observing Columbus Day and will instead celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day on Monday."

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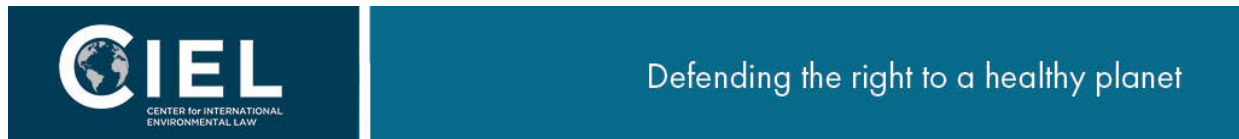


Photo by Sarah and Jason via Flickr

Today, we're celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day in the United States — a time to commemorate the history and culture of Indigenous Peoples across the country and reflect on how we can deepen our solidarity with them in light of the current and historical oppression many Indigenous communities have faced.

Around the world, **Indigenous communities continue to confront threats to their traditional lands, cultures, and livelihoods.** In a new case, **we are supporting Indigenous Ngäbe and Buglé communities who live on Panama's Atlantic Coast to [contest a project that would threaten their very way of life](#):** a 330-km electrical transmission line. The transmission line puts the rights of local communities at risk, traversing the ancestral lands and territories of the Ngäbe and Buglé and some of the last untouched rainforests in the country.

The Ngäbe and Buglé have lived on these lands for thousands of years, yet the Panamanian government has yet to legally recognize the rights of all Indigenous groups in the region to their land — a collective right protected under international law. This lack of recognition has made it incredibly difficult for communities to exercise their right to free, prior, and informed consent regarding development projects, like the [transmission line](#), that could threaten their homes — and the cultural values, traditions, and ethnic identities that are tied to those ancestral territories.

Yet it's not the transmission line alone that has communities worried. It's the threat of an even bigger rush of development that would come along with it — from new roads that would tear up the land to massive mining projects that would pollute the rivers.

Backing this project is some \$2 million from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private lending arm. **With CIEL's support, communities are [bringing their concerns](#) to both the Bank and Panama's state-owned National Transmission Company ETESA.** They are requesting a dialogue with the company and an investigation into whether the failure to consult local Indigenous communities violates the IFC's own social and environmental policies.

Now, the IFC's accountability office is moving forward with the complaint: Communities will be meeting with the accountability office this week in Panama as the first step toward a dialogue with the company behind the project.

The Ngäbe and Buglé communities are working to [ensure their right to participate in decision-making that affects them](#), and we are honored to support their struggle; join us in celebrating Indigenous Peoples in Panama and around the world, today and every day.

In Solidarity,



Carla García Zendejas
Director, People, Land, & Resources

P.S. Indigenous communities are on the frontlines of many environmental threats, including climate change. That's why we're also working with partners from the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change to highlight States' commitments to respect and protect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge when implementing the Paris Climate Agreement. Our joint report will help advocates push for rights-based climate action at the upcoming climate negotiations in Katowice, Poland, in December. [Learn](#)

It's Indigenous Peoples Day. Do you know whose stolen land you're on?



**HONOR
NATIVE
LAND**

As a child, I was taught about the explorer Christopher Columbus, who allegedly discovered America. I still remember my elementary school teacher reading “In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue” during story time in class. We were taught that he deserved the honor of having a holiday in his name. It wasn’t until years later that I learned how his legacy has been incredibly whitewashed. He didn’t even really discover America!

Fortunately, the number of states and municipalities rejecting Columbus Day in favor of honoring Indigenous Peoples Day, like [Minnesota](#); [Alaska](#); [Vermont](#); and [Somerville, Massachusetts](#), is growing. Hawaii celebrates [Discoverers' Day](#), and South Dakota has [Native American Day](#). Honoring the millions of people who lived here long before and after Columbus’ non-discovery instead of the genocidal rapist himself feels like a no-brainer. It counters the act of forgetting and rendering indigenous peoples invisible.

One easy way for us to remember and honor indigenous peoples in our lives is by recognizing that the rest of us are living on stolen land. One way is to do it through [land acknowledgment](#), which is an intentional and formal statement made in tribute to the land’s original inhabitants. A grassroots action network called the [U.S. Department of Arts and Culture](#) explains why it’s so important:

Acknowledgment is a simple, powerful way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people’s history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth. Imagine this practice widely adopted: imagine cultural venues, classrooms, conference settings, places of worship, sports stadiums, and town halls, acknowledging

traditional lands. Millions would be exposed—many for the first time—to the names of the traditional Indigenous inhabitants of the lands they are on, inspiring them to ongoing awareness and action.

Not all of us are leaders of states, cities, or events, but we can do our part: look up whose land we're on right now. Use it as an opportunity to consider how colonization has contributed to where we are today. People in North America can use the map on native-land.ca to find out whose native land they're on, with information about those people. The site also features a [useful guide](#) to help visitors think critically about the information at hand.

The map says I am on the occupied land of the [Gabrielino/Tongva Nation](#). The tribe has been indigenous to the Los Angeles Basin for 7,000 years. Yet the [Gabrielino-Tongva write](#) that they are one of two tribes that don't have federal recognition, in spite of being state-recognized. They [sued the government](#) for it earlier this year.

Whose land are you on? What can you learn about their history and present?

Learn more about the value of land acknowledgment by checking out the [#HonorNativeLand](#) campaign and watching the official video

Havasupai victory!

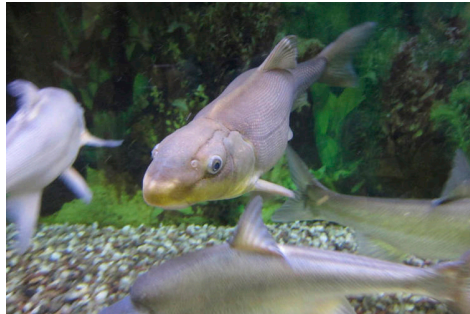
<https://www.google.com/amp/s/thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/409328-supreme-court-rejects-industrys-plea-to-hear-grand-canyon-uranium%3famp>



[This Robotic Jellyfish Could Help Save Our Reefs From Climate Change](#)

Shoshana Wodinsky, NBC News

Wodinsky writes: "A squishy robotic jellyfish that can ride ocean currents and squeeze harmlessly into tight spaces could soon give scientists a better tool for studying coral reefs and tracking their response to waters that are warming as a result of climate change." [READ MORE](#)



[Rare Colorado River fish pulled back from extinction](#)

DENVER -- Another rare Colorado River fish has been pulled back from the brink of extinction, wildlife officials said Thursday, the second comeback this year for a species unique to the Southwestern U.S.

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National Opportunities
Opportunities throughout the U.S.

[Support for Projects to Assist People Living with Paralysis](#)

The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation is dedicated to curing spinal cord injury by funding innovative research, and improving the quality of life for people living with paralysis through grants, information, and advocacy.

[Nonprofit Organizations Advancing Community Solutions Recognized](#)

The Renewal Awards program, sponsored by The Atlantic and the Allstate Insurance Company, was created to celebrate the social innovation demonstrated by nonprofit organizations that are finding creative solutions to America's most pressing problems.

[Film Festival and Education Programs Funded](#)

The Academy Grants Program, an initiative of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, seeks to inspire imagination and connect the world through the medium of motion pictures.

[Grants Promote K-12 Aerospace Education Activities](#)

The Air Force Association's (AFA) Educator Grant Program is designed to promote aerospace education activities in classrooms from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Regional Opportunities

[Legal Services for Georgia Women and Children Supported](#)

The mission of the Georgia Association for Women Lawyers (GAWL) Foundation is to encourage philanthropy by women lawyers in Georgia for the benefit of the greater community.

[Funds for Social Programs in Colorado](#)

The Kush Desai Foundation is dedicated to making a positive difference in the state of Colorado.

[Grants Strengthen Washington State Community Organizations](#)

The vision of the Washington Women's Foundation is to change the course of women's philanthropy through the power of collective giving.

[Support for Sea Turtle Research, Education, and Conservation Efforts in Florida](#)

The Florida Sea Turtle Grants Program, funded by a portion of revenues from Florida's Sea Turtle Specialty License Plate and administered by the Sea Turtle Conservancy, provides grants each year to support sea turtle research, conservation, and education programs throughout Florida.

Federal Opportunities

[Program Supports HIV Prevention](#)

The Capacity Building Assistance for High Impact HIV Prevention Program Integration initiative provides support to accelerate the nation's progress toward a goal of no new HIV infections.

[Funds Available for Rural Health Networks](#)

The Rural Health Network Development Planning Program supports the development of integrated healthcare networks in order to achieve efficiencies; expand access to, coordinate, and improve the quality of essential healthcare services; and strengthen the rural healthcare system as a whole.

Federal Water Tap:

EPA wants to know which unregulated contaminants utilities should monitor. An FAA reauthorization bill aims to reduce use of PFAS chemicals at commercial airports. Republican senators object to states using water quality permits to block fossil fuel projects. Congress advances water-related bills. And lastly, Congress will weigh a new trade deal with Canada and Mexico that changes how investor disputes are settled.

“We are firmly committed to states’ and tribes’ central role in protecting water resources, as we have maintained in other contexts. In the few instances mentioned above, Section 401 is currently being used inappropriately to ‘fight’ projects rather than protect water quality.” — [Letter](#) from five Republican senators to Andrew Wheeler, acting administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The senators, most of whom hail from major fossil fuel producing states, object to states using Clean Water Act authority to deny water quality permits to fossil fuel developments, thereby blocking the projects. Examples include a natural gas

pipeline in New York and a coal terminal in Washington state. Earlier this year the senators [introduced a bill](#) that would curtail state power in this regard.

34,050 acre-feet: Annual water supply that a new reservoir in northern Texas is designed to provide cities north of Dallas. Lake Ralph Hall is a project of the Upper Trinity Regional Water District and includes a 32-mile pipeline that will cross 59 streams. ([Army Corps of Engineers](#))

Congress Acts on PFAS in Firefighting Foam

Congress passed the [FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018](#), which includes a section that allows airports to use foams that do not contain fluorine compounds.

Fluorine compounds, including PFAS chemicals, have fire-retarding properties that are useful for putting out conflagrations. But they are also a threat to the environment and human health. Military performance standards still require the use of fluorine foams, but the FAA bill gives commercial airports the option to use less damaging alternatives.

“While there’s a lot of work to be done related to remediation, human health research, filter technology, and more, we must stop making this problem worse,” [said Sen. Gary Peters \(D-MI\)](#) during Senate debate. Peters, who advocated for the provision, noted that airports in other countries already employ fluorine-free foams.

Drinking Water Contaminant Monitoring

The EPA [wants to know](#) which unregulated contaminants it should require utilities to monitor in drinking water.

The Contaminant Candidate List (CCL) is the first step in the process for regulating a chemical or microbial contaminant. By testing for unregulated substances, the EPA begins to understand how frequently they occur in drinking water

This fifth round of CCL sampling will take place in roughly five years. Utilities that serve more than 10,000 people are required to test. For at least five of the contaminants on the list, the agency is required, after the testing is completed, to determine whether to regulate them.

The [fourth round](#) of testing, for 97 chemicals and a dozen microbial contaminants, is ongoing and includes 10 cyanotoxins produced by harmful algae. The third round provided data on six PFAS chemicals

Nominations for CCL 5 are due December 4 and should be submitted via www.regulations.gov using docket number EPA-HQ-OW-2018-0594. The [Federal Register announcement](#) lists information that should be included with each submission.

In context: [Regulators Will Soon Know A Lot More About Algal Toxins in U.S. Drinking Water](#)

Drinking Water Regulations Review

The EPA is also [beginning its review](#) of existing drinking water regulations. This review occurs every six years and is designed to determine whether rules need to be changed or strengthened.

Senate Advances Water Bills

Lots of action late in the session, as the Senate advanced a passel of water-related bills:

- The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs endorsed the [Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act](#), a bill that allocates water to the Navajo Nation from the San Juan River basin, a Colorado River tributary. The tribe will be allowed to deplete 81,500 acre-feet per year from surface and groundwater. (Diversions are often larger than depletions because a portion of the water applied to fields is not used by crops.) The bill also authorizes \$198 million to plan, design, and build a water delivery system for the tribe. That amount can be increased to account for inflation.
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- The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources approved the [Bureau of Reclamation Pumped Storage Hydropower Development Act](#), which allows Reclamation reservoirs to be used for pumped storage. This type of hydropower is a form of battery in which water is shifted to an upper reservoir when power prices are low in order to release it to the lower reservoir when demand is high. The House already passed the bill.
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- The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources advanced the [Land and Water Conservation Authorization and Funding Act](#), which permanently authorizes, at \$900 million per year, the federal fund for conserving lands for recreation and environmental benefits. Legal authority for the fund expired on September 30.
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- The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources also moved forward [a bill](#) that authorizes the federal government to pay up to 75 percent of the cost of two rural water systems. The systems are in Montana and North Dakota. The government, however, already has a backlog of rural water system projects that are decades behind schedule.
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- Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) introduced the [Climate Risk Disclosure Act](#), which requires publicly traded companies to file annual climate risk reports. Companies would be required to disclose their contribution to the problem — direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions — and their exposure to its damaging consequences: water shortages, sea level rise, floods, droughts, and more. They would also be required to report the risks to their business of climate action: assets that may lose value because of treaties, litigation, legislation, or new technologies.

Conservation Tillage Report

Tilling practices that conserve water and soil vary by region, crop, and year, according to a report from the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service](#).

For corn, no-till practices are more common in drier regions such as the northern and southern Great Plains, where water conservation is essential, and in warmer regions like the Deep South, where turning over the soil to warm it is not necessary.

Trade Agreement

Negotiators unveiled the [United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement](#) as a replacement for NAFTA.

One key provision of the old agreement — investor-state dispute settlement — has been largely abandoned. This allowed companies to challenge before an arbitration panel national and state laws that threatened their investments abroad. The arbitration clause allowed companies to avoid local courts. Environmental laws were often targets.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development, a Canadian think tank, [called the change](#) “significant.”

Arbitration will be phased out completely in Canada and will remain in Mexico for select sectors, such as oil and gas.

Congress, and its counterparts in Mexico and Canada, must still approve the trade deal.



Elayne Silversmith: Shiprock. when i see this beautiful monolith, i am home.