

John Trudell

Lightningbolt

& Mankiller

Activists rethink Columbus Day Monday.

Columbus Day falls on Oct. 10 this year, and, as usual, federal employees are given a day off in honor of the great explorer who fought through adversity to become the first European to set foot on American soil.

Something sounds fishy, you say? In 1492 Columbus did indeed sail the ocean blue, but he wasn't by any means the first European to drop anchor in the Americas. But, according to indigenous peoples rights activists, that recurring historical inaccuracy is only the beginning of the lies and myths surrounding the red-headed stepchild of national holidays.

Activists could talk for hours about how observing Columbus Day as a national holiday reflects a much larger dynamic of falsehoods meant to justify the genocide of Native Americans and their culture, but an event at

UO Oct. 10 is moving that message in a different direction.

Indigenous Solidarity Day is a "take back the day" event. Indigenous peoples at UO and around the world will be celebrating the survival and continuation of the native cultures that bore the brunt of centuries of colonization. The theme "Conscious Unity for Our Common Survival" alludes to the idea that this isn't just about American Indians, but displaced and marginalized native peoples everywhere.

"It's an event to raise awareness of issues happening in indigenous communities both locally and globally. It's really about gaining support," says Maria Cortez, assistant co-director of the UO Multicultural Center.

The event is being hosted by the UO Ethnic Studies Department, the UO

Multicultural Center, Native American Student Union and the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics.

The entertainment at this free event starts at 10 am as live indigenous musicians take the UO Amphitheater stage. Tom Lightningbolt, revered flutist new to the Eugene area, will perform, as will conscious Native hip-hop artist Mighty Mike Martinez. At 3 pm community speakers take the stage, including professor Chuck Hunt of the Sociology Department.

But the highlight of the day is the duo of featured speakers, John Trudell and Wilma Mankiller, being brought in for the late afternoon Public Leadership Conversation in the EMU Ballroom.



Wilma Mankiller

at this year's Sundance to solid reviews.

Trudell will always be known for fighting for the livelihood of his people. But he says violence is not the answer.

"I advocate utilizing our intelligence clearly and coherently. If we react emotionally, we won't solve the problem. It's about trying to stimulate some thinking," he says.

Mankiller is the first woman in modern history to lead a major Native American tribe. In 1985 she took over as principal chief of the Cherokee nation, the second largest tribe in U.S., and initially endured opposition mainly because of her gender. But she was re-elected in a landslide victory in 1987; then again in 1991. Her memoir *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* was a national bestseller. Mankiller, whose name might have been given to an ancestor charged with

'Mankiller represents to me the true definition of a warrior. It's more than going out and fighting. It's about going out and serving your people.'

— John Trudell

Born of mixed tribal blood, Trudell is known as a champion of indigenous issues. He spent 18 months on Alcatraz Island during the Native American occupation of the out-of-use prison, where he first met Mankiller.

Trudell is a writer, musician, activist, spoken-word poet, public speaker, Vietnam veteran, film actor and the former chairman of the American Indian Movement. He declines to pigeonhole his activism into any particular category.

"I'm just me. Yes, I do different things. It's just who I am," Trudell says. "I try to be careful about labeling myself."

Bob Dylan called Trudell's second album *AKA Graffiti Man* the best album of 1986, and Trudell acted in the films *Thunderheart*, *On Deadly Ground* and *Smoke Signals*. Not to mention a documentary of his life premiered

protecting native Cherokee lands in Oklahoma, is arguably the most celebrated Cherokee, male or female, of the 20th century.

Mankiller is in residence at the UO Ethnic Studies Program from Sept. 26 through Nov. 30 and will be teaching and giving public lectures (see www.morsechair.uoregon.edu).

"She represents to me the true definition of a warrior. It's more than going out and fighting. It's about going out and serving your people," says Trudell.

The Indigenous Solidarity Day's mixture of festivity and education goes on all day Monday, Oct. 10, at the UO Amphitheater. Music and art will begin at 10 am, community speakers at 3 pm, Trudell's poetry at 5:30 pm and the Public Leadership Conversation with Trudell and Mankiller in the EMU Ballroom at 7 pm. It's all free. **ew**

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