

# INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY: CHEROKEE LEADER STAND WATIE

[Paul Kengor](#)

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Our intrepid progressives have tossed Christopher Columbus and his special day of remembrance to their ash heap of history. They have instead created something they find much more noble. They call it Indigenous Peoples' Day. This day, they assure us, will allow Americans to honor better men, men who were not white European males who brought to this land disease, slavery, colonialism, imperialism, racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, and whatever other litany they would like to cast at the feet of the villainous Columbus – the dreaded DWEM (Dead White European Male) that he was.

Resisting the revolutionaries' new holiday gets increasingly difficult as they saturate our culture with it, much as they have with an entire Pride Month. Their presidents, including noted historian Joseph Robinette Biden (himself a descendant of DWEMs), [has encouraged](#) “the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.”

Faithful liberals now officially recognize this day each year on their ideological calendar, and damned well try to ensure that the rest of us do as well. I'm sure they have the kids in their government schools dressing up as Seminoles and Eskimos today. They build teepees in kindergarten rooms and provide rubber tomahawks and cute little squaw dolls to the girls (and gender-confused boys).

Rather than resist the zeitgeist, dear readers, I've decided that every second Monday of October henceforth, I shall pause to remember this day at The American Spectator. Your editor

shall not fail you. (For the record, in October 2022, I personally proclaimed here at The American Spectator that every second Tuesday of October henceforth be recognized as "[Western Civ Day](#)." I am saddened to report that my idea has not caught on.)

Thus, for Indigenous Peoples' Day last year, I wrote my inaugural piece, titled, "[Indigenous Slavers: American Indians Who Whipped and Owned Blacks](#)." I there gave attention to the enslavement of black people by the five so-called "Civilized Tribes" – i.e., the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole Indians. These tribes owned thousands of black African slaves and were brutal slave masters. They were so dedicated to slave ownership that many sided with the Confederacy during the Civil War. To this day, there are African American descendants of these slaves with lawsuits against these indigenous tribes seeking redress. (See my book, [The Worst of Indignities: The Catholic Church on Slavery](#).)

These Indian slavers even defied the Emancipation Proclamation, continuing to subjugate black men, women, and children well after the white man had freed slaves. For instance, [as noted by one scholar](#): "Even Emancipation and the end of the Civil War did not bring immediate relief to the enslaved living in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. Although the Choctaw and Chickasaw sided with the Confederacy during the conflict, the United States considered them to be separate political polities; therefore, the abolition of slavery as stated in the Thirteenth Amendment did not apply in Indian Territory."

### **Who Was Stand Watie?**

In that same spirit, for this year's Indigenous Peoples' Day, I'm pausing to recall one Stand Watie (1806-1871). The powerful Cherokee leader likewise not only supported black enslavement but became a fearless Confederate general. He,

too, resisted the Emancipation Proclamation. In fact, he was the last Confederate general to surrender in the Civil War. He is often referred to as "[The Last Confederate General](#)." Many articles [use that exact title](#).

Watie was born in December 1806 on Cherokee Nation territory (present-day Georgia). He was there raised in a slave-owning family. He quickly rose up the ranks of the Cherokee leadership, and was respected and feared. When fellow Indians looked to preserve the institution of slavery and keep their black folk in shackles, they looked to Watie as a "gifted field commander and a bold guerrilla leader."

As one historian [writes at History.com](#): "When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Watie wasted no time in joining the Confederacy, viewing the federal government – not the South – as the Cherokees' principal enemy. He raised the first Indian regiment of the Confederate Army, the Cherokee Mounted Rifles, and helped secure control of Indian Territory for the rebels early in the conflict."

Watie was a force to be reckoned with. He and his Indian troops orchestrated savage attacks. They were notorious, prolific scalpers. They struck terror in the enemy.

When Gen. Robert E. Lee and his Confederate troops surrendered, Watie was fit to be tied. He would not surrender his blacks. Again, here's an account at [History.com](#):

*Watie was so committed to the Southern cause that he refused to acknowledge the Union victory in the waning months of the Civil War, keeping his troops in the field for nearly a month after Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith surrendered the rest of the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Army on May 26, 1865. A full 75 days after Robert E. Lee met with Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, Watie became the last Confederate general to lay down arms, surrendering his battalion of Creek, Seminole, Cherokee, and Osage Indians to Union Lieutenant Colonel Asa C.*

*Matthews at Doaksville on June 23.*

I've here quoted [History.com](#) as a reliable popular source on Watie, but it's just one of numerous sources that could be cited. There are [government historical websites](#), [educational sites](#), [archival libraries of various battlefields](#), [Native American historical societies](#), plus articles at sources like [History.net](#) and [RealClearHistory.com](#), with detailed accounts of Watie and his life.

Interestingly, the [Wikipedia entry](#) for Watie is fairly brief, but the Cherokee general was not some minor player. Indeed, as one piece at The History Reader puts it, "[The War Had to Wait for Watie](#)." His obstinacy delayed the Civil War's formal end.

### **Most Kids Won't Learn About Watie**

Stand Watie's role in the Confederacy, stalwart support of slavery, and rebellion against black emancipation is known to those who bother to carefully, objectively study the history of the era. Of course, properly studying that history means being properly taught the history of early America, from its discovery by the great Columbus to the Mayflower to the American Founders to the Civil War. And that, pilgrim, is precisely the problem.

If you teach little Jimmy and Suzy about old Stand Watie, don't expect their public-school peers to be learning the same. Expect the kids in the government schools and lousy universities to offer nothing but a blank stare if Jimmy or Suzy raise a hand to ask the teacher, "Hey, what about Stand Watie? Didn't he and a bunch of other Indians own slaves and fight for the Confederacy?"

That would surely earn Jimmy or Suzy a quick denunciation as a "racist" or perhaps a "Christian nationalist."

But fear not, Jimmy or Suzy, at least you're getting an actual education. You're getting a much fuller presentation of

history, rather than a selective, politically correct, ideologically sanitized account. Such an education will teach you that the indigenous tribes of this land were not some perfect, pristine people living in peaceful harmony until the wretched Christopher Columbus marched in and ruined utopia.

General Stand Watie is a striking example of just that. We at The American Spectator remember him on this Indigenous Peoples' Day.

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