

With Indigenous Peoples Day coming up soon, Dr. Jessica Dolan, a scholar who has been active in the Society of Ethnobiology, shares some of the Indigenous ally-ship work she has done in her home community, as an academic and public scholar, to contribute to positive changes in public education on Indigenous histories and futures:

Thinking about the approach of Indigenous Peoples Day, which in many places in the United States is still observed as Columbus Day, and which coincides with Canadian Thanksgiving weekend, an ethnobiologist colleague reached out to a few of us to ask, “What are alternate ways that you are acknowledging this day, to people move away from the harm that it has caused?” In response, I provided descriptions of community organizing, and links to some of the community-based scholarship that I have done in my hometown of Brattleboro, Vermont over the last three years. Bridging academic work and the community, so that it is accessible and useful for engendering the broadest possible education, and especially so that it contributes to culture change that bends towards justice, is not an easy thing to navigate. With the encouragement of colleagues, I am sharing here some of the academic resources and community actions I have done in New England over the last three year. My hope is it will inspire ideas of how to do community-based ally-ship work in your hometowns, outside of academic institutions.

- I joined town government as a representative in town meeting, to help advocate and vote for changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day.
- I wrote an article to the local paper that they published on the front page, about the importance of changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day, found HERE -> [https://www.reformer.com/stories/indigenous-peoples-day-and-the-cedar-strip-canoe.521045?fbclid=IwAR1WeFnU0VwTuDfgD2ACXJr--j1Igj2HruFct\\_ySKTh3XiLPnvcEp9DcsvM](https://www.reformer.com/stories/indigenous-peoples-day-and-the-cedar-strip-canoe.521045?fbclid=IwAR1WeFnU0VwTuDfgD2ACXJr--j1Igj2HruFct_ySKTh3XiLPnvcEp9DcsvM)
- I provided suggestions for acquisitions of culturally appropriate books by Indigenous authors to the Brattleboro and Guilford Libraries, so they could update their collections, after vetting the list with two people who do extensive work with Abenaki Nations (whose homeland Vermont claims).
- I supported a friend who is Massachusetts State Commissioner on Native American Affairs (each state has these kind of commissioners) in advocating for a local high school to change their stereotyped Plains Native American Mascot, an inappropriate mural in their building, and the name of their sports team. I testified as an academic expert in Indigenous and Iroquoian Studies and, invited by the school, spoke on a panel of experts in a workshop for teachers.
- After that, I made a list of suggested Indigenous Studies resources, national, regional, local, academic, literature, podcasts, curriculum development resources, and youtube videos, for the high school teachers to use to educate themselves in building appropriate Native American Studies content, found here -> [https://ethnobiology.org/sites/default/files/j.dolan\\_curriculum\\_resources\\_for\\_teachers\\_in\\_northern\\_new\\_england.pdf](https://ethnobiology.org/sites/default/files/j.dolan_curriculum_resources_for_teachers_in_northern_new_england.pdf)
- I was asked to give a land acknowledgement at the beginning of the big youth climate rally in Brattleboro, in September of 2019, which I did. The text for that land

acknowledgement can be found on this page ->

[http://brattleborowords.org/project/research\\_contribution\\_jessica\\_dolan/?fbclid=IwAR2rvsoDR6wF\\_ecUYsHzriaXMFd1\\_Kj6gMSLD5izf-tBMuiVAI4xiHjM6o](http://brattleborowords.org/project/research_contribution_jessica_dolan/?fbclid=IwAR2rvsoDR6wF_ecUYsHzriaXMFd1_Kj6gMSLD5izf-tBMuiVAI4xiHjM6o)

Since Autumn 2018, I have been working as a scholar on a public history project, the Brattleboro Words and Places Project. This project generated a trail map of significant places and writing to the history of the area, with links for participants to explore the places and listen to podcasts about their history. I joined the project to write about Indigenous history and contemporary studies in the greater Brattleboro area. For my pieces, I interviewed two Native educators, did scholarly research, and wrote academic essays, which I then turned into podcasts with the help of a talented sound engineer. The podcasts discuss land acknowledgements, identity, geography of the Abenaki, settlement and traditional foods, misconceptions and stereotypes, Indigenous methods for learning history, oral history, and petroglyphs and creation stories. You can find out more and listen to the podcasts [here](http://brattleborowords.org/project/research_contribution_jessica_dolan/?fbclid=IwAR2rvsoDR6wF_ecUYsHzriaXMFd1_Kj6gMSLD5izf-tBMuiVAI4xiHjM6o)

These are some ideas for working as an ally for positive social change at the local level. I have also given talks to local educators and in public events for organizations such as Climate Café and 350.org, about my scholarly work in environment with Indigenous communities, and about decolonizing methods; I've written proposals for local Indigenous public education projects, sat on advisory committees about decolonization, and helped to create appropriate curriculum. I now get asked to do more work in this area than I really have time for, and unfortunately, it is mostly unremunerated, forcing me to choose carefully what I will commit to doing. However, if each of us were to choose ally-ship actions that are important to us, and follow through, those things add up over time and space. What are some ways that you have worked as an ally for human rights, environment, and social justice in your hometown?

*Caption for photo:* Dr. Dolan with Oneida sister Jocelyn Antone, paddling down the river of life together during the 2017 Two Row on the Grand in Southern Ontario.