

# Guide to Land Acknowledgement

For

City of Albuquerque Officials and Staff



DRAFT

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## Overview

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The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and to answer questions for City of Albuquerque officials and staff for conducting land acknowledgements at the beginning of meetings, public events, and conferences.

This guideline will be your hub for understanding the value of conducting land acknowledgements, as well as tips, templates, and protocols for how to do a land acknowledgement at your meetings. It will be regularly updated by the City of Albuquerque Native American Affairs Coordinator.

As you develop a Land Acknowledgement statement, you will gain an understanding of the basic Human Rights that have been ignored, by-passed, or cast aside for Indigenous Peoples. Preparing and stating a Land Acknowledgement can be seen as an effort to correct hundreds of years of injustice to Native/Indigenous Peoples. However, it is only the beginning.

Access and control to traditional Native/Indigenous lands as part of their way of life is a basic right as stated in the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Article 15. There are additional Articles from the UNDRIP that are relevant to this statement and practice they are: Articles 1, 8, 13, 15, 16, 21, 24, 26, and 31.

Annex:

*Concerned* that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests.

Article 15 states:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.
2. States (countries) shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the Indigenous Peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

There are twenty-three tribal nations who have connections within the State of New Mexico, we hope that by the City honoring and using an Indigenous Land Acknowledgment we will begin to elevate and institutionalize Native/Indigenous Peoples as a living part of the City's memory.

## What is a land acknowledgement?

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Land acknowledgment is recognizing that the Native/Indigenous Americans were here first, and this was their land until Colonization came and took it by force. Land acknowledgement is part of a worldwide movement that began many years ago in the 80's, maybe even longer by Native/Indigenous leaders and elders. It is a rejection of Colonization. It is a rejection of the

Doctrine of Discovery. The Doctrine of Discovery paved the way for the Spanish conquest of the New World. Colonization.

Land acknowledgment is also the respectful way of acknowledging who's Native/Indigenous land(s) you are on. Acknowledging the underlying harsh history of the Native/Indigenous Peoples plight where the ensuing reconciliation that is needed is also part of Land Acknowledgement. It also raises awareness of Native/Indigenous Peoples presence and land rights in our everyday life. The following is some background on Land Acknowledgement.

A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Native/Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards and caretakers of this land and the time immemorial relationship that has existed between Native/Indigenous Peoples and their traditional lands.

The land acknowledgements we hear today are based on an old tradition or protocol carried out by Indigenous communities throughout the World. It is intended as a way for guests to the land to show their respect for and payhomage to the Indigenous community with which they are visiting and engaging with.

## **Why do we do Land Acknowledgements?**

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Land acknowledgements are a practice and are practiced Worldwide. Land Acknowledgements are also part of a larger process that we are undertaking as a municipality, as individuals, towards reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Native/Indigenous Peoples. The reality is that Indigenous People are underrepresented, and their voices not heard at the majority of the meetings and events we attend, so we have to be careful to not appropriate the traditional Land Acknowledgement practice in an empty and disconnected way.

The City of Albuquerque supports the practice of land acknowledgement(s) in-order-to:

- Raise awareness of Native/Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life, for ourselves and meeting participants.
- Acknowledge our presence on the land as visitors and as a part of colonialism history.
- Recognize the history of colonialism and harms done by settlers to Native/Indigenous communities, including to acknowledge the detrimental impacts that governmental institutions have had on Native/Indigenous communities through discriminatory practices and disregard for Indigenous rights, traditions and knowledge; where decision-making that directly impacts Indigenous communities has ignored the rights of Native/Indigenous Peoples to be stewards of their own land; where there has been a lack of Free, Prior and Informed Consent from Indigenous communities with regards to natural resource or other projects that may affect them.
- Complement self reflection and cultural competency of staff and volunteers.

Land acknowledgements are not meant to:

- Threaten or alienate non-Indigenous or Native/Indigenous people.
- Speak for or represent Native/Indigenous communities.
- Appropriate Native/Indigenous ideas and knowledge
- Be the only action we take towards truth and reconciliation. (see Resource section)

## How do we do land acknowledgements?

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The aim is to practice land acknowledgements in a meaningful way. To achieve this goal, we have linked this guide to the provision of Indigenous awareness training for staff (4 Seasons of Reconciliation 2020), as well as a resource list for further learning (see Resources section).

Land Acknowledgments can be spoken at the beginning of public and private events and gatherings, for example: school programs, sporting events, public meetings, conventions, and town halls or a statement of official policy. Stating or publishing a Land Acknowledgment should be motivated by a heartfelt, authentic respect and support for Native/Indigenous peoples.

### Who are the First Peoples of this area?

The original inhabitants of this land were the Tiwa Indians, also known as Tigua, are a group of Tanoan Pueblo tribes who currently live in three geographic regions, including Taos and Picuris Pueblos in northeast New Mexico, Sandia and Isleta Pueblos near Albuquerque, and at Ysleta del Sur, near El Paso, Texas. Traditionally, they spoke one of three Tiwa languages.

New Mexico has a vibrant and highly visible Native/Indigenous American population. Native American citizens make up nearly 10.5% of the state's entire population. There are 23 federally recognized Native Nations located in New Mexico - nineteen Pueblos, three Apache nations, and the Navajo Nation. For many decades, there has also been considerable movement into New Mexico from people representing other Native Nations across the United States. This movement, along with NM-based Native peoples' movement off their homelands due to their need and desire for jobs and education, has created significant urban and border town (towns bordering reservation boundaries) populations of Native/Indigenous Americans in New Mexico.

Albuquerque alone has the 7th largest urban Native/Indigenous population (approximately 30,000 people) in the country among places with more than 100,000 citizens, according to the 2010 U.S. census. Current estimates are at 60,000 people representing over 400 Tribal Nations.

Each Native Nation is a sovereign nation with its own government, traditions, language, and cultural practices. What makes Native Nations different from other minority groups is the unique treaty-based relationship each Nation has with the federal and state governments. Along with the Navajo Nation, the specific Native Nations in NM include the Fort Sill Apache Tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, and the nineteen Pueblos are comprised of the Pueblos of Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Kewa, Laguna, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Taos, Tesuque, Zuni, and Zia.

### Pronunciation

Do not be afraid to ask questions and find out how to pronounce the local Native Americans in your acknowledgement. If you are not sure how to pronounce a Nation's name, there are a number of ways to learn, including:

- Respectfully asking someone from that pueblo, tribe, or nation, City of Albuquerque Office of Native American Affairs, or from a local organization, like the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center or the All Pueblo Council of Governors.
- Check the Pueblo, Tribe, or nation's website; they may have a phonetic pronunciation on their "About" page, an audio-recording of their name, or videos that include people saying

the nation's name.

- Call the Pueblo, Tribe, or nation after hours and listen to their answering machine recording.

## Your positionality

Speaking from the heart about colonialism and your personal path on reconciliation is challenging. A first step is to speak to what you know: your own positionality, your settler background, your relationship (or lack thereof) with Indigenous peoples.

## In-person meetings

As a visitor on this land, I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on the traditional homelands of the e.g., Tiwa Pueblo people. To do so recognizes Native/Indigenous Peoples long-standing presence. Further, this recognition and respect for Native/Indigenous Peoples and their lands is a key towards reconciliation.

## Personalization

Making the Land Acknowledgement your own is the next step. Relate your experience and the meeting itself to the native people of the land. Here are some examples:

“As a visitor on this land, coming from [describe your background], I strive to deepen my own understanding of the local Native/Indigenous communities.... Reframe my responsibilities to land and community.”

“I come with respect for this land that I am on today, and for the people who have and do reside here.” “The reason for our meeting today is to discuss a project that involves natural resources and directly impacts Indigenous communities. We acknowledge the need for meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities.”

“We acknowledge the contributions of [name Indigenous community] to the project/work we are involved in today.”

“As a settler myself, I am committed to... [describe your commitment to actively working against colonialism, towards reconciliation].”

## Online meetings

Land acknowledgements need to be part of all gatherings, including virtual meetings. Depending on the location of your participants, you may acknowledge all Indigenous groups, or research the First Peoples of the land you are on.

Here is the approved land acknowledgement you can use and personalize:

The City of Albuquerque acknowledges that Native/indigenous Peoples and Tribal nations, including the Tiwa Pueblo peoples, and our neighboring Tribal Nations, have stewarded through time immemorial and a millennium of generations, the lands, and waterways of what is now the City of Albuquerque (City). The City also honors and respects the enduring relationship that exists between these Peoples and Tribal Nations and this land and commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land the City inhabits as well.

## Written form

**Email signatures** can include a land acknowledgement. Here is an example:

“The City of Albuquerque is located on Tiwa homelands.

**Websites** can include land acknowledgements in the ‘Contact Us’ page. “The City of Albuquerque acknowledges it is located on the traditional, unceded territory of the Tiwa people.”

Other ways to acknowledge the First Peoples of the land you are located on include publications, reports, and any other formal documents. Consider the physical space that you occupy and explore ways you can ensure all visitors to your workplace are able to identify what traditional land you are located on. For example, the written land acknowledgement on a plaque in your lobby or common area.

## Examples of Land Acknowledgement

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- Painted on the side of Seattle Mennonite Church in North Seattle: “We at Seattle Mennonite church acknowledge that we are on the unceded ancestral lands of the Duwamish people. A people that are still here, continuing to honor and bring to light their ancient heritage.”
- “We want to acknowledge that we gather as Goshen College on the traditional land of the Potawatomi and Miami Peoples past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.”
- *“I (we) wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.”*
- “Yale University acknowledges that indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, and the Quinnipiac and other Algonquian speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now the state of Connecticut. We honor and respect the enduring relationship that exists between these peoples and nations and this land.”

## **Important considerations**

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Know your audience: are there Native/Indigenous people attending and participating in your meeting? They may have a perspective on the best way to acknowledge the land, so consult with them.

Doing a Land Acknowledgment at the beginning of a meeting does not mean we are done! The work we need to do towards reconciliation with Native/Indigenous Peoples is a long-term journey, specific to each individual, and is constantly evolving for the City.

## **Resources for additional learning**

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[A guide to Indigenous land acknowledgment](#)

**Native Governance Center**

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/nai/about/land-acknowledgements>

**Michigan State University – Native American Institute**

[Guide to Indigenous Land and Territorial Acknowledgements for Cultural Institutions – Cultural Institutions Guide to Land Acknowledgements](#)

**New York University**

[University of New Mexico Indigenous Peoples Land and Territory Acknowledgement White Paper](#)

<https://usdac.us/nativeland>

**U.S. Department of Arts and Culture**

[Native Land Acknowledgement Guide – Earth Ministry](#)

**Earth Ministry – Washington Interfaith Power and Light**

[Land Reparations & Indigenous Solidarity Toolkit](#)

**Resource Generation**

[Brief Guide to Transferring Land.pdf](#)

**Sustainable Economies Law Center**

[Museum of Indian Arts & Culture | Santa Fe, New Mexico](#)

**Museum of Indian Arts & Culture – Laboratory of Anthropology**

[Governor Newsom Issues Apology to Native Americans for State's Historical Wrongs, Establishes Truth and Healing Council | California Governor](#)

**Office of Governor Gavin Newsom**

[Social and Structural Determinants of Urban American Indian and Alaska Native Health: A Case Study in Los Angeles \(mededportal.org\)](#)

**MedED Portal**

[Harvard Indigenous Design Collective: "Acknowledging Land w/ Dr. Meranda Owens" - YouTube](#)

[S. Calvez., R. Roberts, 2020. Land Acknowledgements. Teaching and Learning. University of Saskatchewan](#)

### **Land Acknowledgements - Teaching and Learning**

S. Calvez, R. Roberts, University of Saskatchewan 2020

### **Land acknowledgement Baroness von Sketch Show - October 14, 2019**

<https://youtu.be/xlG17C19nYo>

### **Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory**

Canadian Association of University Teachers

<https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory>

### **Are you planning to do a Land Acknowledgement?**

Debbie Reese for American Indians in Children's Literature - March 9, 2019

<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2019/03/are-you-planning-to-do-land.html>

### **'I regret it': Hayden King on writing Ryerson University's territorial acknowledgement**

Unreserved, CBC - January 20, 2019

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/redrawing-the-lines-1.4973363/i-regret-it-hayden-king-on-writing-ryerson-university-s-territorial-acknowledgement-1.4973371>

### **How an acknowledgement of 'unceded Algonquin territory' became ubiquitous**

Ottawa Citizen - January 9, 2019

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/how-an-acknowledgment-of-unceded-algonquin-territory-became-ubiquitous/>

### **Territory Acknowledgement Panel Talk**

Centre for Teaching, & Learning Technology, University of British Columbia - October 18, 2016

<https://youtu.be/lzqe2fh4Zdc>

### **Making Coast Salish Territorial Acknowledgements Matter**

Coast Salish Cultural Network - November 25, 2016

<https://youtu.be/-Tei5tGoQ4s>

### **Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements**

Chelsea Vowel - September 23, 2016

<http://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>

### **What is the significance of acknowledging the Indigenous land we stand on?**

Ramna Shahzad, CBC - July 15, 2017

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/territorial-acknowledgements-indigenous-1.4175136>

### **Know the Land: Territories Campaign**

Laurier Students' Public Interest Research Group (LSPiRG)

<http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland/>

**Gabriel Dumont Institute- Métis Culture**

<https://gdins.org/metis-culture/>

**4 Seasons of Reconciliation Education**

A series of bilingual online resources which promote a renewed relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canadians. through transformative and engaging learning towards anti-racism education.

<https://www.reconciliationeducation.ca/>

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