

# 4H Park Burial Site

## Aug. 10, 2021 Stakeholders' Meeting Report



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## 4H Park Burial Site Facilitator’s Aug. 10, 2021 Meeting Report

### **Executive Summary**

The City of Albuquerque (COA), which manages 4-H Park and recognizes the sensitive and sacred nature of this site, invited community stakeholders who have a connection to the site to share their recommendations for the next steps in determining the future of the burial site at 4-H Park to honor the lives of the children buried there and the site itself. Sixteen of those invited participated as panelists in a facilitated Zoom meeting on August 10, 2021. Their recommendations will be presented to Mayor Tim Keller, COA Department of Parks and Rec, and COA Office of Equity and Inclusion for consideration.

There were eleven observers in this meeting, three of whom had been invited as panelists, and chose to observe instead. Additional outreach to those who were unable to attend is ongoing.

This meeting was one part of a much larger effort, which will be ongoing for years to come. As additional facets of this effort, and part of the COA “*4H Park and Albuquerque Indian School Cemetery Action Plan*” (see Appendix A), COA will engage in direct, government-to-government tribal consultation with tribes/pueblos most directly associated with the site to get their input and recommendations on the future of the site, including” Navajo, Zuni, Apache, Hopi and Pima (Salt River Pima – Maricopa Indian Community). COA will also engage with other Native American community organizations and Native America leaders who are interested stakeholders to get their input and recommendation on the future of the site. As an additional step in the Action Plan, COA will also seek input from the Albuquerque community.

Prior to this meeting, panelists were sent four informational documents. They are in the Appendix of this report.

### Emerging Themes

The panelists were asked two questions: “What is your vision for the site for future generations?” and “What actions/next steps should the City of Albuquerque take in the next 12 months to move this effort forward?” Details of their answers to these questions are below in “Meeting Details”.

#### Themes that emerged in response to Question #1: “What is your vision for the site for future generations?”:

- ◆ In whatever actions are taken, focus on the spiritual and healing aspects foremost; be very conscious of the spiritual implications of whatever is done
- ◆ The surviving family members must be the central stakeholders.
- ◆ Determine number and origin of remains
- ◆ Ceremonies should be conducted to honor and to heal
- ◆ Learn what tribes and families want done with remains – honor that
- ◆ Learn what tribes and families want done with the site – honor that
- ◆ Honor the deceased, and that they were children: Convert park to cemetery or memorial (some type of sacred site), based on the wishes of the tribes
- ◆ Close recreational aspect of park immediately
- ◆ Reveal and publicize the history of this and other sites for education and for healing
- ◆ Return the land to the Native people, through the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, or the pueblos, or all the tribes of NM.

#### Themes that emerged in response to Question #2: “What actions/next steps should the City of Albuquerque take in the next 12 months to move this effort forward?”:

- ◆ Conduct studies to learn how many/who is buried at site (research, ground-penetrating radar, mass spectrometry)
- ◆ Hold facilitated planning session(s)
- ◆ Elicit participation of all tribes – both tribal and spiritual leaders
- ◆ Elicit participation and assistance from State and Federal (Dept. of Interior) agencies and National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition
- ◆ Initiate healing conversations
- ◆ Find Indian School records
- ◆ Initiate educational processes: about the history of the site; about cultural traditions
- ◆ Provide educational/historical information at the site
- ◆ Protect the site
- ◆ Conduct tribal ceremonies
- ◆ Honor and celebrate Native Americans
- ◆ City of Albuquerque make a formal apology

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### **Meeting Details**

(This is not a transcript.)

#### Welcome:

- Kathleen Oweegon (meeting facilitator, Bridges of Peace) welcomed the panelists and observers and reviewed the purpose of the meeting.
- Terry Sloan (Intergovernmental Tribal Liaison, COA) welcomed the stakeholders and guests and thanked everyone for helping the City of Albuquerque with ideas and recommendations in this listening session. Attendees can send additional comments to [oei@cabq.gov](mailto:oei@cabq.gov).

#### Invocation:

- Lorenzo Jim gave the opening invocation, a reflection on growth and healing and positive thoughts in planning and what this will become.

#### Panelists' Introductions:

- Thelma Antonio: A member of the City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs. A representative from Laguna Pueblo.
- Jolene Holgate: Here on behalf of Jovita Belgarde. The training and education director at the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women. Gave welcome in her native language. Originally from Shonto in northeast Arizona. A transplant to so-called Albuquerque, the ancestral territory of Tewa people. Here to talk about solutions and listen to other perspectives.
- Laura Harris: A citizen of the Comanche Nation, Executive Director of Americans for Indian Opportunity, chair of Native Leadership Collective of Albuquerque.
- Lorenzo Jim: With First Nations Community Health Source. Provide services in the community for families and communities. On the City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs.
- Malachi Daw: Yaa'at'eh shik'e dóó shidine'e shi ei Malachi Daw yinishye. Beesh bich'aanii nishli, Kiyaa'aanii bashishchiin Naakai Diné'e dah shicheii Tl'izi'lani dah shinali; my greeting in Navajo language. From Albuquerque and Allentown, Arizona; A member of Red Nation; Thank you for having this happen.
- Dr. Ted Jojola: Professor at the Community and Regional Planning program at UNM. Longtime advocate of many elements around the Albuquerque Indian School and have done several exhibits on the history of the school. Invested in the conversation that's going on today.
- Dr. Lloyd Lee: Professor at UNM and on the City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs for the past 4 years. A citizen of the Navajo Nation. Thank you to everyone for being here.
- Michael Lucero: Director of Guest and Entrepreneur Experiences at IPCC, and from the Pueblo of San Felipe. I'm happy to join you.
- Rebecca Riley: Chair of the City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs. I work in early childhood, and I have been doing this work for 10-11 years. I consult and facilitate for several early education groups in New Mexico. Thank you to everyone for being here.
- Denise Zuni: A member of the City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs. I am also an attorney that does Indian housing issues, representing tribes and working with Native community development financial institutions.

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- Eldred Lesanee and Stephanie Salazar: Policy analyst and general counsel with NM Indian Affairs Department. [Both asked to be converted to observers after the start of the meeting.]
- Melodie Meyer: A member of the Red Nation in Albuquerque and where I currently live in northern California. [She asked to be converted to an observer after the start of the meeting.]
- Whisper CK: Work at Native American Community Academy in Albuquerque, our urban Native charter school that has existed for 16 years now. We occupy last standing building of the old Albuquerque Indian Boarding School. We are deeply invested in the development of this issue of our ancestral children being buried just a few blocks away from where we are located and educating our children currently. Thank you for having us today.
- Philip Farson: I am the instructional manager for the Indian Education Department at Albuquerque Public Schools. I am fairly new to Albuquerque, here about 2 years.
- Janene Yazzie: Diné entrepreneur, community organizer and human rights advocate from the Navajo Nation, Sixth World Solutions

### Q #1: What is your vision for the site for future generations?

- A. At this point, because I am a community planner, I would like to hear others first, and being also a commissioner, I feel I need to be an observer, and so I would like to answer that question later.
- B. I am here on behalf of Jovita Belgarde, who is the lead on this very important issue with the Coalition to End Violence Against Native Women. I would like to share a prepared statement: Good afternoon. Thank you for letting us speak. Our vision for the future of this site is one where voices of our community are heard, not just the select people who were invited into this virtual space – one where we invite the families of children buried at the site into the conversation. They should be able to have a say about what happens to their family members and how they should be laid to rest.

We also noticed that there may have been invitations to tribal leaders, but we feel it's important the other 20 pueblos are also invited to this meeting.

How do we know unequivocally that none of these young ones are from any of the 20 pueblos? It stands to reason some of them may be from those tribal communities, considering that many pueblo children, including Isleta children, were forcefully sent to the Albuquerque Indian School over the years. Isleta, Sandia, Santa Ana, San Felipe, Santo Domingo, Cochiti, Zia, and Jemez are all tribal communities within the closest proximity to the school, including Laguna and Acoma.

A study should be conducted to find out where these children are from. If families of the children want them back, we should return them respectfully so they can be put to rest in the ways their families and their home communities want them to be. If families and communities do not want them disturbed, the entire 4H Park should become a cemetery and be treated as such. It should no longer be used for recreation on any part. Cemeteries often have open, grassy areas, but they are not used for recreation because it is disrespectful to those laid to rest. The site should be treated with the same reverence.

Possibly a fence should be placed around the entire park with signs that denote it is a cemetery. 120 gravestones should be placed there for all the children buried there. People should be able to come and place flowers or mementos on the gravestones and clean the graves on All Souls Day like we do for other community members. It should be kept up to look nice like other cemeteries within the city.

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There are plenty of other parks in close proximity and other recreation areas that people can continue to utilize. There are no shortage of recreation areas in this part of town, in Albuquerque, or in the state of NM. Our vision also includes the Mayor, Tim Keller; he should show up and listen to the community members he represents and consider their words whole-heartedly. The City has made statements about cares and concerns about the site, but main city representative has yet to show up to hear folks out. We call on Tim Keller to stand up for all the indigenous people who reside here in Tewa territory and call this gravesite of 120 children a cemetery, and treat it with respect and reverence.

- C. I feel that we should recognize the fact that there's children buried, not adults. It was children who were expunged and used, and when no longer deemed useful or worthy by the system.

And it's not just a little area. They are tribes from all over, Ute, Apache, Diné. I think we should recognize that. They wanted all of us dead, dead or "man," (referencing: "Kill the man, save the Indian") whatever that means.

We're supposed to be who we are in this country, but we don't get the chance to be that, especially not with the boarding schools. I still feel the repercussions of the boarding schools in my family, we can't talk the way we want to, and we Natives like to laugh, it's good to laugh (Natives cope with reality and harsh news or bleak time with comedy or humor, it's something that comforts people and makes them feel good).

What I want the most is to recognize that there are Native people here. It shouldn't be a tiny thing; it should be a big thing. There should be a gravesite that says that Native kids were here when they were no longer useful or deemed to be man, and says the tribes that were affected, and has names.

- D. I think the park has to be closed down.

I think we're getting ahead of ourselves in this conversation. A lot of things have to happen, and we may be tasked with exploring this site to be in compliance with the Commission that Secretary Deb Haaland is setting up. We need to investigate this, and any other sites on that land that were dedicated to burial.

I appreciate the city understanding the government-to-government relationship and seeking tribal input, and I think the urban Indian population should also have a place in the decision-making. We come from all walks of life, all backgrounds, and many different tribal backgrounds.

The third largest tribes in Albuquerque is Lakota, and there are 400 different tribes represented in Albuquerque. I imagine the Albuquerque Indian School had something to do with that. Other Indian tribes were sent here by the federal government due to a federal program of relocation.

I'm really glad to be here and to represent the Native Leadership Collective, which is made up of 21 Native American led nonprofits and Indian-owned businesses. Our purpose is to participate in forums like this, to raise the visibility of the Albuquerque urban Native population, and to participate in civic activities.

I think we're ahead of the game. I think the site should be closed down immediately. I think there should be excavation or use of technology to assess the site, figure out how many people are there. There may also be teachers and staff buried there, and if they're not there, where there's another graveyard. I know records were destroyed, but I think we can collect data. There are folks still alive that may have some stories to tell us. That's the kind of thing that the National Commission is going to be looking for.

I think we can also look to the leadership of the national boarding school healing and reconciliation organization; they're the reason we're here today. They have brought a lot of

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visibility to this issue. Looking to them to participate, for their advice, would be worthwhile. Because of their work, all of these sites are going to be uncovered. I know there's one at Santa Ana by the casino from the Mennonite Church. What happened to the burial sites by the freeway? If we're going to get into it, we might as well get into it.

This is Land Back, taking aback our culture, and owning those children that are there and seeing they're done right by. I think closing the park immediately ought to be done.

- E. I had a small part in the process in Canada, and think it was important and a good model for what to do – really a truth and reconciliation process.

It was amazing how few people in Canada really knew about these schools, about what happened in these schools, and I'm willing to bet the same is true here in Albuquerque.

I think it's really important this process be done in a way that people come to understand what happened here, and it's not just about the past; it's about the process of healing.

It's important that we do justice by these children and others buried in these places, and we make it so it's not only something we do now and it's done, it's something that people will know and be able to come to understand going forward.

- F. Three things:

Investing in every way, what's available to make it a protected area or sacred site, and then how unique it is, doing that culturally appropriately. I think that will be another consideration or even another conversation: whose children are there and representing the families and communities. It's not a recreational area; it is sacred. When I say sacred, how I would look at it, walking upon a site where there's an ancestor, or even a place in nature, protective barriers come to mind, where there's no exposure to anything, whether that be theft, desecration, or disrespect.

Second, is deeming it as a protected and sacred site from the leaders and from different levels. Deeming it that is is protected, and it is sacred, and also recognizing who's there and why it's that way.

And third, and I think it's already started, is retelling its history in that truthful way in the words of the people, and that has to be recognized as well.

- G. I come from Thelma Antonio's perspective, what we can learn in a planning process, and making a statement would probably be better left after we can hear and distill the comments from ourselves and others who can potentially be integrated into the conversation.

Within this context, there's another site where Native children are buried - Historic Fairview Cemetery, and there needs to be an additional conversation about how to acknowledge that.

As far as where the site is, it's not very well integrated into the campus; it's somewhat adjacent to the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. In terms of integrating it back and also acknowledging what it represents, a key component is the site development around this place.

I know of a similar memorial park, the Bataan Memorial Park here in Albuquerque. It is comprised of a series of stone columns that have been erected with the names of all the NM veterans that survived or died during the Bataan Death March. Every tree in that park is memorialized to these veterans.

If the city can respectfully acknowledge that, it should invest in a monument that is just as representative and meaningful. Secretary Haaland's initiative—I think we have an opportunity to create a curriculum product, informing not only our children but the children of everyone who shares this history.

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I think this will also demystify the complexity of what went on there. I doubt we'll ever learn who was buried there, so I think we might want to include everyone who wants to remember and memorialize these burials. I don't think it would serve us to simply fence the place off and isolate the site for the long term; maybe in the short term, but in the long term, I don't feel it would serve the public.

- H. I think there are a few things everyone has brought up tied to my thought process.

Learning a bit of the history, this particular area needs to be returned back to the Native people themselves.

In the early 1970s it was transferred to the City, and it needs to be returned back to the Native people, through the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, or the pueblos, or all the tribes of NM.

How it is acknowledged, the healing process and development of curriculum to educate people in Albuquerque, New Mexico, nationally, and internationally, is part of the goal.

I think this is an opportunity for CABQ to demonstrate a commitment to do that and find a way to ensure this happens. As we go along in the process, we can identify what is needed to accomplish this goal.

- I. I have two approaches, one from an organizational standpoint.

The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center has been on the negative side of things lately. We receive a lot of backlash about the process because of the property layout.

Wanted to share a statement from our CEO, from an organizational standpoint, and addressing other properties, too: The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center is very concerned about the false accusation about burial sites on the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center campus. We feel that we must share information so future discussions can be based on accurate information. First, credible research has been available for some time about the location of the Indian school graveyard. It is well documented that the graveyard is located on what is now the 4-H Park, which is not part of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center campus. We are not aware of any documentation showing graves are located anywhere else on the former Albuquerque Indian School property. While developing the former Albuquerque Indian School property on the east side of 12<sup>th</sup> St., major ground excavation occurred, and no evidence of graves had been discovered. As an organization owned and operated by the pueblos of NM, we understand the sensitivity of the issue and the importance of not disturbing burials of ancestors. We ask that those wishing to engage in discussion of the topic take the time to research the issues before making harmful statements that have no factual basis.

Also, we're also in a position to support trying to make these issues right, and to honor and recognize, and to engage tribal leaders in future conversations to find out what they want out of this process, and that's also what we support: memorializing and looking to the families to determine what fits with them, and how do we honor those who are buried there. We will participate and be along with these endeavors to make this right.

- J. I have similar thinking as some of my fellow panelists.

I want to take this time to elevate and highlight members of the community and give them time to share their thoughts. It's good to hear where everyone is coming from, what your thoughts and feelings are, and even though we're coming from different histories and backgrounds, this moment makes me believe we can come together and make the things we know need to happen, happen.

We can inform ourselves. We can come together and reason out these hard challenges. It's about the future and our Native children, and we need to move forward with as much intention and care as possible.



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K. I also want to acknowledge our elders.

May we all walk away from this gathering feeling that we are moving in the direction of healing. Here at NACA, the definition of healing that we use is the opportunity to become more whole, and I'd like to use that as a foundation to express our desires.

We're a school that is heavily family-centered, and we try to think about how we are centralizing families. In regards to these graves, we must centralize the descendants and families of the children buried at this site as the primary stakeholders that are guiding all the decision-making in regards to how to proceed. Their wishes and input should take priority over any other stakeholders input or ideas.

One approach to identifying these families is through UNM. There is word in the community that the UNM anthropology department did a study in the 1990s. It is believed that this study has information on who these children were, who their families are and what tribes they belong to. We need to know if this study exists and what details are in the study. We must press the UNM Anthropology Department for the results of this study in order to learn anything we can about these children and where they're from.

The city can also make a highly visible call to the public to families who have stories of their children who did not come home from AIS boarding school. It's important for us to acknowledge that there are different levels of healing. If there are families that have stories about their children not coming home, they should have the opportunity to heal, and hence why they should be the centralized stakeholders in this work. I cannot emphasize this enough. The surviving family members must be the central stakeholders.

Also, we have seen as we are organizing community events around, that this is an incredibly triggering subject for many of our families in our community. There is an opportunity for collective healing.

I would like to urge the City not to just consider what is most politically appropriate in regard to liability, but also how they are being accountable and contributing to the healing of the urban and reservation-bound Native and tribal peoples.

We have found a lot of families are asking a lot of questions about what's being done and decisions that have been made. There needs to be meaningful, highly accessible, proactive visibility to the public about this issue.

There are also a lot of community members who want to contribute and be involved in doing right by this site. I want this process regarding how to move forward with this gravesite and want this not to be a paternalistic decision.

When we communicated with our Aboriginal and First Nations relatives in so-called Canada, one of the things we were told is that while ground-penetrating radar surveys are less invasive than actual archaeological digs, we cannot assume that there is not any type of spiritual implication upon the bones of our children with this ground-penetrating radar technology. They have recommended we take into consideration that if there is a survey, which we recommend be done for the entire park, that prior to those surveys that there are spiritual doings put in place by multiple different tribes to ensure that the children's bones are not being impacted.

L. When the question was asked, I envisioned a ceremony led by the tribes whose tribal members are buried at the site. Looking into the future, I envisioned an annual remembrance ceremony within the city, perhaps during the time when tribal and Native communities gathered, such as the Gathering of Nations.

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I also envisioned, I understand the site should be restricted, but there should also be access by tribes whose members are buried and others who want to give reverence to the site.

I also envisioned a plaque memorializing, if possible by name, the children who are buried there. Being from a pueblo, I had never been to a funeral in Albuquerque, and I realized when I became a Commissioner that I didn't know there were so many Native Americans who call Albuquerque their home. Many of them, maybe, do not go home after they've lived out their life here on earth. Maybe their body remains in Albuquerque. I had a family friend who was Diné, who was buried in Albuquerque, and I could not believe the expense that went into finding a burial site. Albuquerque, being Pueblo ancestral lands, our ancestors were buried throughout the Albuquerque area. I'd like at some point to have a larger discussion about a burial site for those Natives who call Albuquerque home.

M. I want to begin by upholding a lot of the excellent recommendations that were already made. This has been a powerful and healing conversation already.

I wanted to add on to the recommendations of centralizing families, and ensuring that we're incorporating our spiritual and ceremonial doings in developing a pathway forward.

This is an opportunity for the City, the State, and the people engaged in this process to create a model for a process that upholds the rights of indigenous peoples and that centers our ceremonies, our worldviews, our spiritual practices so that the healing that needs to be done is meaningful.

It has been very traumatizing for a lot of our peoples to see what is going on. Whatever happened with the plaque, it's been traumatizing to be threatened with further erasure through the neglect and the erasure of the site. I think that the recommendation to turn it into a memorial is a very powerful one.

My vision for this future site is that we never again in the future of our peoples accept the type of conditions where our children are dying nameless and invisible, and our children are taken from our communities and from our people. That's what we ultimately need to accomplish. It requires not just addressing the site, but the history that led to the creation of the site, the existence of the site in the first place, because that history is still intertwined and woven into the power imbalances in the city and the structural inequalities that our people are confronting.

To carry out this conversation in the right way, I think there are best practices and protocols that honor and uphold free prior and informed consent standards, and also new practices and protocols we need to create, so that every step of the way, we are doing this to not only right the wrongs to our babies that are there at that site, but to ensure a healthy, loving, safe future for all of our children. And that's going to require not just addressing this, but also addressing the relations that exist within our area.

Q #2: What actions/next steps should the City of Albuquerque take in the next 12 months to move this effort forward?

- A. We're starting with today's session. It needs to have more of the stakeholders present, especially the tribes who are connected to the people who are buried at this site. We need to learn more of the history, and what we're finding so far is that history involves tribes that were far away from here. Some of these are not just students, they could be employees and individuals that died at the hospital. An assessment should happen. A facilitated planning session is recommended. Knowing the history, and then seeing how to come to consensus with all of the stakeholders.
- B. I'd echo Commissioner Antonio's recommendation about looking into studies that have already taken place.

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If it has not already taken place, there is a need for a study to determine who these children are and where they come from. What technologies do we have and have access to where we're able to identify those children?

We need to be mindful of the process of contacting the families and tribal communities that they may come from. We feel that it's very important to invite all tribal communities, including the local communities here in Albuquerque, who have been very much invested in this issue.

In addition, we feel that with the momentum of the unit that Secretary Deb Haaland, regarding burial sites of children at boarding schools, we'd implore the City to advocate for the assistance of the Department of Interior to assist with this. What resources are we able to leverage through Federal partners?

Also how do we implore state partners to be part of the conversation? It may be a City matter, but you have children who are coming from several Nations throughout the state, and before colonization, there were no borders, so we don't know where these children really come from. It's really important that we have all those folks at the table and put some intentional time into bringing some real justice to this issue.

If tribal communities and local folks feel they need to leave the children where they are, this should be done in a good way, perhaps turning the park to a cemetery, memorializing it with care, adding a fence, adding a plaque that really shows the true history of what happened there so that the true story of our children is told.

We call on the City of Albuquerque to make a public statement through media and other methods to let folks know what is going to happen with this place and be transparent with the community and the tribes.

At this time, we also make a call to keep a permanent fence around the area so that no recreational activities, or any other disturbance happens in the area.

Also allowing space for folks to be at the entrance or on walkways to pay their respects, possibly leave flowers and mementos or even clean the graves on All Souls Day.

We need the city to follow through on the actions and recommendations brought forth today, and allow time for input from the families, our children, and community elders. We'd like to see the timeline of what those next action steps are going to be.

Again, I'm here on behalf of Jovita Belgarde. She is our Native Youth Project coordinator here at the Coalition to Stop Violence to Native Women.

I'd add additionally: conversations around healing – what does that look like for communities. This is a grieving process as well, and we need to remind ourselves that this isn't just a piece of land. It calls for leaning on tradition, leaning on one another to come up with a solution – creating a platform for those families and centering on the children that are there. There are ways that we can personalize this. What if it was our own family members? What if it was an ancestor of ours? How would we go through that process to make sure that there's respect and reverence in that process, allowing communities to also be a part of that so that they can do this in a way that fosters love, healing.

If you were to take it a step further, what are other systemic changes that we can do at the city, state, federal level? What are those wraparound services looking like for boarding school survivors? It's certainly an issue that is very triggering. We had some people reach out to us who are survivors of boarding schools, and they feel like their voices are being heard. We want this conversation to continue moving, but we'd also like to see healing conversations as well.

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- C. I've heard many good suggestions that I'd like to echo.

When the Indian School went away, where did the records go? Who would have them? In those records, if they can be found, there is probably a lot of information that would help us figure out who these families are, who their descendants might be. This would be part of the process and would give us a better picture of who we're talking about. There might be a way of going about this that would enable us to have a better picture.

I think it's also important to think about the children, but also the others whose lives have been impacted because of these circumstances. If they can be found, it would be good to have those conversations, and begin the process of healing for them.

How do we facilitate those conversations in a way that is respectful and brings about healing?

I'm thinking about, what does it mean to have sacred places in a city like Albuquerque, and the role of urban sacred places that are part of a community vision of ourselves?

I have the sense what will come out of this is a different sense of who we are as a city and what it means to be part of this place. That's part of the conversation, too. This is part of a fundamental transformation of how we see ourselves in this city, and it's important to be mindful of this, too.

- D. Thank you to those who organized this, to Terry, Dawn, Parks and Recreation, to Phil for being on and being part of the team. I talked to my colleagues to come up with ideas, not in order of importance.

I think the city needs to make a formal apology. They don't need to take the blame, but they should officially express their regret for this failed and horrific federal policy, and the fact that the cemetery was erased. It would show the good faith effort of the City. And the City saying it's working with the local community and tribal governments to bring healing and awareness. And that they are going to move forward and dedicate the city to improving the well-being of Natives who are living now in the city.

A good start would be to increase percentage of the City budget dedicated to Natives in the city. They could also help to find funding to bring about the research, including the ground penetrating technology, but remember to do all of these things in a good way.

Another thing is to erect signage, photos or a mini-exhibition that brings light to what took place.

Another thing is the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. I think they offer space where people can post stories and memories and names. I think they can provide technical assistance and online space. (<https://boardingschoolhealing.org>)

And I don't know about the 4-H – do they want to be part of the solution? I'm worried we're getting down a path, they should have an opportunity to be partners and collaborate in this journey.

*[Facilitator's note: Dave Simon, Director, Parks & Recreation Department, COA, clarified via chat that 4H as an organization doesn't play a role. 4H is simply part of the park's name.]*

- E. Within the next 12 months, four seasons, continue to have dialogue and take a proactive approach to community relationship-building, regarding the unique land and also the historical conversation. I applaud the conversation, the listening, the taking in consideration of how big this is, and really doing this in a good way and providing that dignity. This is important to us to have this conversation.

Also, the definition of healing, the journey of fullness – I think the City's being available and being sensitive to that process. There are multiple tribes and cultures and families involved.

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When I had spoken earlier, my first comment, as a member of Diné Hataalii Association, it's not about closing off, but it's about protection, and keeping that balance. Healing balance can be an important part of this journey.

It was really good to hear about the Children's Celebration that happened, so the City providing those resources as well as providing the space for that to happen and continue to happen. We're working on an Indigenous land base We're working on an indigenous cultural learning site with the City of Albuquerque and APS, to also have that healing balance within the city. I liked the question: "What would it look like when you make something sacred here in our community?"

Adding onto the City's ability to find resources for research and information gathering, and retelling it in our own words, and as well as what we've learned from that experience and – more importantly – how we bond in that respectful way and continue that.

- F. Twelve months isn't a long time, so most of that effort should be devoted to finding out what we know and what we don't know about this place. Embrace it as place-knowing project.

In staging the next level of conversation, I would love to see a memorial park that honors the legacy of all Native people in the growth and development of the City of Albuquerque. We're a major city that doesn't have a place like that. I think it's high time the city create that kind of place and acknowledge our contributions. I think these conversations may be a segue to accomplishing that.

- G. Some of the suggestions and thoughts have been really good and things that should be considered and followed up on.

I want to share with you a short list of suggestions:

The City should take a multi-step approach to take on what is being suggested. There needs to be a recognition/healing ceremony.

There needs to be transparent understanding of goals and plans. There need to be more listening and input sessions from the stakeholders and the public.

Tribal leadership consultation needs to continue.

There were suggestions about doing some type of planning process, using the Community and Regional Planning department at the University of New Mexico to develop a process for what needs to happen, and I think that is a good idea.

I also think you need to look at returning the land to the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center or the Native people or tribes. What is the process with 4-H?

I think this begins the process of laying out the commitment plan the City has to Indigenous peoples. What are the other things they need to do long term to show commitment?

One of the overall goals down the line is a real Native center for the people, as well as City involvement. Where would that take place? What would it look like? What would it offer?

Language classes, cultural classes, things the community needs and wants. Hundreds of different Native peoples live in Albuquerque, in addition to the 24 Native nations in New Mexico.

You start the process now and build on it over the year.

- H. So many places to start, and so many great ideas.

I want to highlight that we also need to be considerate of tribal leaders and people coming in with their thoughts. We want to have a ceremony or celebration, but that's so sacred, that might not happen away from the pueblos or the tribes. We need to be sensitive to how we honor and carry

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that out, and we also need to consider the families. This land is our home, and there's a ceremony and closure to start that beginning.

There was also something mentioned about 3% of the City of Albuquerque budget for Native Americans when they are 10% of the population, but I think recognizing the surrounding pueblos that filter more to Albuquerque for jobs and essential needs, that needs to be considered, too. And that helps transition to the community relationship building. Celebrating us as Native Americans would be a great approach to this. We do have to consider that there have been several attempts to erase us. If Albuquerque takes the approach of honoring us and recognizing who we are, that would help bridge some of those gaps with surrounding communities. We can continue building on healthy community relationships and finding ways to heal.

I also wanted to share this image of my message board [holding up board]: underground there are orange hearts, and corn stems from it, and pollen, and rainbows into our world. That is where we are at. It's a place for us to heal, to connect, and to carry on.

### I. I feel deeply moved by how this gathering has unfolded and the insight of everyone.

This is an opportunity. Aside from Carlisle Boarding School in Pennsylvania, Albuquerque is now on the map as one of the first communities in the lower 48 to take responsibility for a mass gravesite at a boarding school, and there's an opportunity to set the bar high and set a precedent. The whole reason this site exists is a result of systemic racism: the decision decades ago to change a gravesite to a park; the decision to institutionalize children; the decisions by western churches to run these schools. The opportunity the city has to do right by us is tremendous. The City must take responsibility, to create some reconciliation for those decisions. I think this is the first step with the conversation, and I'm deeply moved by everyone's contributions.

I think the City should do much more to issue a formal apology for their role in this systemic racism, and take responsibility for indigenous children and their tremendous need.

I think the Presbyterian Church should also issue an apology and take accountability for their participation in AIS.

I want to emphasize, I know some of our elders have said it might be difficult to identify who the families of these children are. But an effort must be taken to do everything in our power to identify even some of these families.

These families should be centralized as the primary decision-makers in all of these deliberations.

When we were consulting our relatives up in Canada about how to acknowledge these children, we learned about a technology called "mass spectrometry." I know that likely some local tribes will not want to exhume the children, but we do need to honor these families and tribes who do want their children sent home (if there are any). Mass spectrometry is a practice that in theory could help us identify where these children come from, and would be less invasive than DNA testing. The depositing of mineralization in children's bones as they are growing is substantially greater than adults. Hence the water that they consume as children can highly effect the mineral content in their children bones. These bone mineralizations can be tested through this mass spectrometry technology. Then it could be compared to the mineral content in the local waterways of our tribes, to begin to figure out what territories these children come from. This is controversial, but it might be useful to look into if families are interested in locating their family members.

Something else to emphasize is that it's a beautiful effort to reach out to political leaders of tribes, but it's also critical to reach out to the tribes traditionalists who might not hold the same political weight, but who will have insight into spiritual and cultural practices that may be different perspectives than the political representatives.

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Also, we should think about how to decentralize ourselves as adults and give our young people who are living today a voice in this issue. If the city would like to work directly with our school NACA, to engage Indigenous students, there are several teachers who are interested in educating and involving their students.

- J. We need to flesh out what does it look like in practice to uphold prior and informed consent standards in this process.

We also need to immediately identify and reach out to appropriate traditional knowledge holders who want to, and are capable of holding the space in this process, and in our traditional knowledge and practices and protocols.

It will be a new thing to bring traditional knowledge holders from these different Nations together and create a path forward that works for all of us.

I think that it's fundamental to get more community input, and important to identify the directly impacted families or the descendants of the babies that are there, as well as the families of the staff members, and acknowledge the brutality of the system. There is no human being that should be buried in an unmarked grave at any time.

Do what's necessary to bring peace – peace to those ancestors and to and ensure that whatever practices emerge from this process set a standard for healing other systemic injustices and other systemic inequalities, so that we can truly create a foundation for a more sustainable, more holistic, and just future for current and future generations.

This is a watershed moment requiring us to reconcile both the brutality of that past, but also the hope that can be created for the future, when processes are truly equitable, inclusive and just. I look forward to contributing to that in whatever way possible and that makes sense.

### **Wrapping up / next steps:**

#### Terry Sloan:

To address some of the questions brought up, when we first found out about this issue on 6/29, we implemented meaningful tribal consultation and Free Prior and Informed Consent. Mayor Keller contacted the eight tribes originally identified, and I also contacted the remaining tribes in the state. We also contacted NM Indian Affairs Secretary Lynn Trujillo and U.S. Interior Secretary Debra Haaland. We continue to remain open to their communications.

We're waiting for the tribes to provide guidance on what they would like us to do with the site. We're hoping to get an idea soon.

We will begin to look at solutions. I appreciate what we heard today, the honesty and the insight and what we should think about.

We're aware of the cultural and spiritual aspects of the site that we know we must address.

There are Natives working on this issue, particularly myself and Dawn Begay.

I drafted a meaningful tribal consultation process for the City, which we are following.

We have a website where we will be apprising the community of steps, processes, history of the burial site, and where we are at. We will be continuing to apprise the community.

We will also have information on the Parks and Recreation website and the Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs website.

Everyone is invited to provide written thoughts to [OEI@cabq.gov](mailto:OEI@cabq.gov).

This is a good chance for the city to take a lead on this process and show the country how it is done.

## 4H Park Burial Site Facilitator's Aug. 10, 2021 Meeting Report

### Dave Simon:

I appreciated the opportunity to listen, and appreciate the efforts of my colleagues at the City.

The issues facing us are particular difficult. This is among the hardest things we have to confront in our past. This is part of a long road that indigenous people have traveled for centuries. We have to acknowledge that difficulty and get through it together.

I honor the thoughts and input of all of the panelists, and the elders who have taught you and all of us, and the spirits of the ancestors who live on today, and we have to honor the human beings who are buried at this site.

This is a sacred site and it needs our best thoughts and best efforts.

I'm humbled and pleased to be in a position to work with the community on this matter, and I understand the significance of what we're confronting here.

I'm meeting many of you for the first time, but I want you to realize that in my personal life and career, I've listened to and learned from Native Americans many times and in many other circumstances.

I'll try my best to meet you here in this shared obligation to do the right thing and rise to the occasion.

I can't speak to why what was done, was done. I do know that information and education and awareness, many things have changed since that time.

It's not a formal apology, but I would like to apologize to the Native American community for the circumstances we find ourselves in. Guidance on how to handle a site like this should come from the most directly affected tribes and pueblos, and at the same time, had I walked into this situation sooner, this is not how I would have preferred to see a sacred place cared for. I apologize that it wasn't right by my predecessors, and that we didn't make it better sooner.

The City is committed to continue working with tribes, pueblos, and community leaders such as yourselves to determine the right path forward.

This must be a path of healing and education, and of understanding what these places represent.

Only light and love can push our darkness, and we have a challenge to do the right thing and emphasize light, learning, and love.

Continued consultation is very important and preeminent. More meetings definitely will be happening as appropriate. We want to wait for guidance as it comes in from the affected tribes and pueblos, and we also want to be careful about what we do here to make sure we're taking the right steps.



## 4H Park Burial Site Facilitator's Aug. 10, 2021 Meeting Report

**Panelists:**

First Name	Last Name	Job Title	Company
Philip	Farson	Indian Education Instructional Manager	Albuquerque Public Schools
Jolene	Holgate		Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women
Laura	Harris	Chair	Native Leaders Collective of Albuquerque
Thelma	Antonio	Member	City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
Lloyd	Lee	Member	City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
Lorenzo	Jim	Member	City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
Whisper	CK	Land Based Healing & Learning Team	Native American Community Academy
Ted	Jojola	Professor	Theodore Jojola
Denise	Zuni	Commissioner -	COA CAI/ANA
Malachi	Daw	Member	Red Nation
Michael	Lucero	Director of Guest & Entrepreneur Experiences	Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
Rebecca	Riley	Commission Member	COA CAIANA
Janene	Yazzie		

**Invited Panelists Who Chose to Observe:**

Eldred	Lesensee	Policy Analyst	NMIAD
Stephanie	Salazar	General Council	NMIAD
Melodie	Meyer	Member	Red Nation

**Facilitator:** Kathleen Oweegon, Bridges of Peace

**Co-facilitator:** Jessie Lawrence, Lawrence Meeting Resources

**COA staff:**

- Dave Simon
- Terry Sloan
- Dawn Begay
- Vicente Quevedo
- Jessica Campbell

**Observers:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giovanna</li> <li>• David Flores</li> <li>• Christopher Ortiz</li> <li>• Jonell Tafoya</li> <li>• Mark Chavez</li> <li>• Shay Armijo</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theodore Marsh</li> <li>• Aaron Nieto</li> <li>• Deidre Otero</li> <li>• Celestino Crow</li> <li>• Christina Sandoval</li> </ul> |
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Appendix A – 4H Park & Albuquerque Indian School Cemetery Action Plan

# 4H Park & Albuquerque Indian School Cemetery Action Plan

- 1** **Share information and history** about the Burial Site in 4H Park
- 2** **Engage in direct, government-to-government tribal consultation** with tribes/pueblos most directly associated with the site to get their input and recommendations on the future of the site, including: Navajo, Zuni, Apache Tribes, The Ute (Southern and Ute Mountain) Tribes, Hopi and Pima (Salt River Pima - Maricopa Indian Community) .
- 3** **Engage with other Native American community organizations and Native American leaders** that are interested stakeholders to get their input and recommendations on the future of the site
- 4** **Seek other input from the Albuquerque community**
- 5** **Implement recommendations**

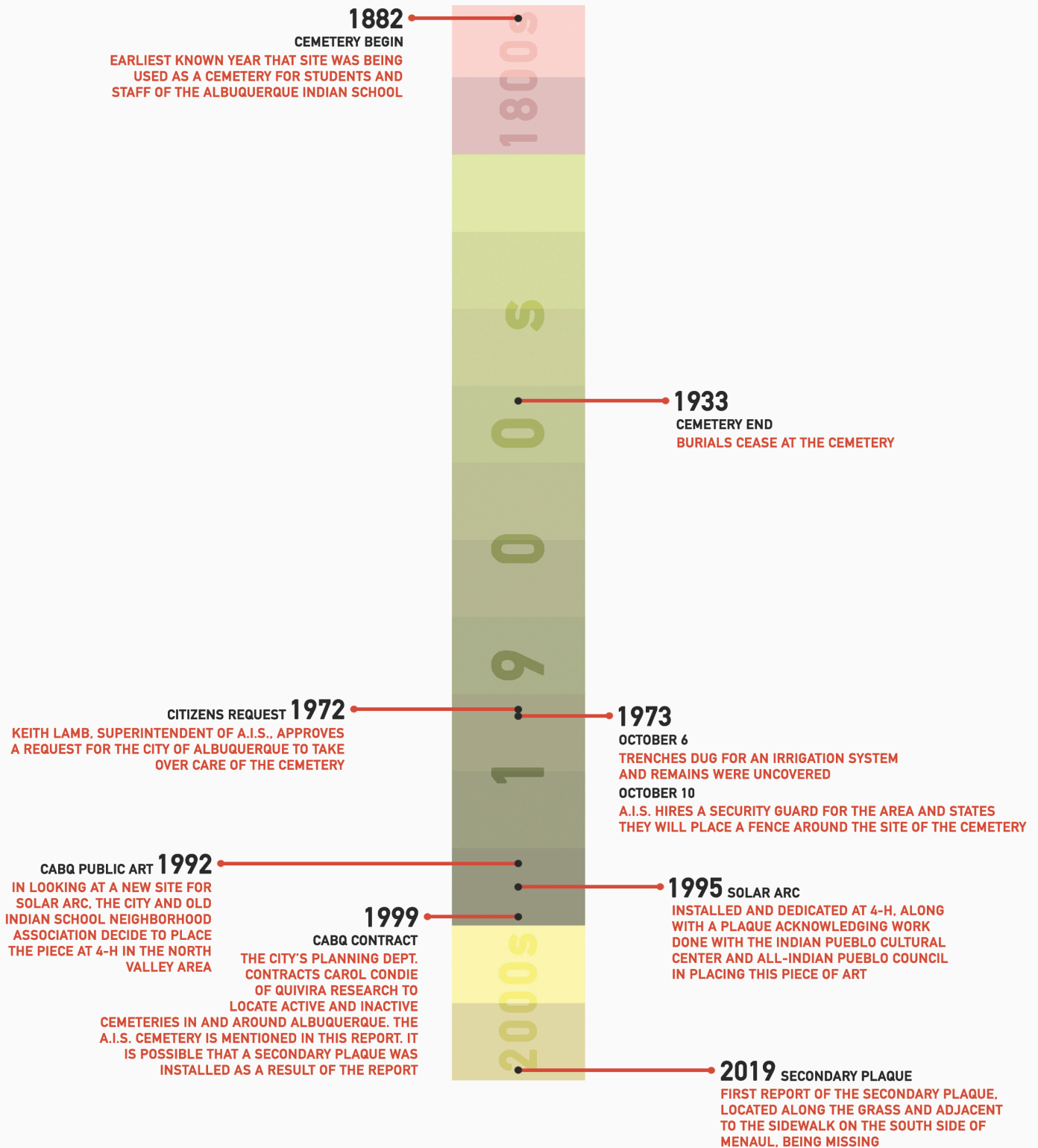


**Appendix B – List of Tribes Contacted Regarding the Burial Site at 4-H Park (as of July 31, 2021)**

- 1) Navajo,
- 2) Zuni,
- 3) Apache,
- 4) Ute (Southern and Ute Mountain),
- 5) Hopi,
- 6) Pima (Salt River Pima - Maricopa Indian Community)

Appendix C – History of 4H Park and the Albuquerque Indian School Cemetery

# History of 4H Park and the Albuquerque Indian School Cemetery



Appendix D – 4H Park Aerial View

