

**University of New Mexico**  
**Indigenous Peoples' Land and Territory Acknowledgement**  
**A Brown Paper by Native American Faculty approved by the UNM Native American**  
**Faculty Council**  
**Updated 2/25/2021**

**Introduction**

From the time of our ancestors to the present, Indigenous peoples have flourished, persisted, sustained, and rebuilt communities of sovereign nations in the lands on which the University of New Mexico (UNM) now exists. In honor of who we are as Native UNM faculty, we not only offer this paper in service to the university but also in deep respect to the communities to whom we position our contributions. This dynamic, living document has been written and distributed by collective Indigenous faculty since 2018 for the purpose of advocating UNM to implement a meaningful, responsible, and official Indigenous Peoples Land and Territory Acknowledgement statement. The remainder of this paper will consist of providing: a context of New Mexico, specific details in regards to territory, UNM's background in relation to Native peoples, the rationale for a statement, entities that use such a statement, and our articulation of the statement and recommendations for use.

**Providing Context of New Mexico (Native Nations and Native American populations)**

New Mexico has a vibrant and highly visible Native American population. Native American citizens make up nearly 10.5% of the state's entire population. There are over 20 Native Nations located in New Mexico - twenty Pueblos, three Apache nations, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, 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 and many citizens of those Nations now call New Mexico home. After the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, the Bureau of Indian Affairs administered a government relocation program designed to marginalize Indian reservations through Native urban movement. When Native people migrated they made cities and urban areas an Indigenized space. 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 Americans in New Mexico. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Albuquerque has the 7th largest urban Native population (approximately 30,000 people) in the country among places with more than 100,000 citizens.

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 distinct treaty-based relationship each Nation has with the federal and state governments. The specific Native Nations in New Mexico, or with a historical connection to the state include: the Fort Sill Apache Tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe (petitioner for federal acknowledgment), the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Pueblos of Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Kewa, Laguna, Nambe,

Ohkay Owingeh, Picuris, Pojoaque, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Sandia, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Taos, Tesuque, Ysleta del Sur (All Pueblo Council of Governors Member), Zia, and Zuni.

### **Physical Territory of University of New Mexico -main campus**

The UNM campus is located on 600 acres (2.4 km<sup>2</sup>) in Albuquerque, New Mexico on the heights a mile east of Downtown Albuquerque, and is split in three parts – central, north, and south campus. The central campus is situated between Central Avenue on the south, Girard Boulevard on the east, Lomas Boulevard on the north, and University Boulevard on the west, and is home to the main academic university. The North Campus, which includes the medical and law schools, and the University of New Mexico hospital is located on the north side of Lomas across from the central campus. The South campus is located a mile south of the central campus, centered around the intersection of University Boulevard and Avenida César Chavez, and includes most of UNM's athletic facilities.

### **UNM Background - Native American Context**

Native peoples have lived in New Mexico and the Southwestern region of the United States for thousands of years. The University of New Mexico (UNM) is located in the heart of Indian Country. It is a place where no Native American students attended for the first forty years of its existence; a college where financial sustainability has always been a concern; a place where Native Americans had to create spaces for themselves; and a college where Native Americans have regarded with the complex and complicated feelings of anger, frustration, nostalgia, and affection.

On February 28, 1889 the New Mexico Territorial Legislature approved the establishment of a state university in the town of Albuquerque. The first classes started three years later in 1892. One hundred and eight men and women took classes. None of them were Native American. From 1892 to 1927, almost no Native American students attended the University of New Mexico. During this time, education for Native students was generally limited to vocational schooling, yet some colleges like Dartmouth and Harvard committed to educating Native students alongside their general student population. Beginning with President James Zimmerman's administration in 1927, thousands of Native American students have attended and graduated from UNM.

UNM had a curriculum based on western ideology and epistemology. Many Native American students in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were sent to boarding schools run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Very few Native American men and women attended colleges and universities during this time. The primary mission of boarding school was to assimilate Native American children into an American way of life. Thousands of Native American children were educated in boarding schools and for many of them they became alienated from their own home communities as well as American society. For some, boarding school education helped them succeed in American life while for others it was a devastating and traumatic experience contributing to an early death.

A relationship was formed between the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH) and Native Americans after a federal contract was signed in 1952 between the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, the Bernalillo Board of County Commissioners, the Board of Trustees of Bernalillo County Hospital, and the State of New Mexico for Bernalillo County.

UNMH agreed to receive and treat Native American patients as part of this contract, which has been periodically updated since its original signing. Several other UNM entities have also developed and work continuously on strengthening relationships with Native Nations and Indigenous peoples.

The UNM Indigenous Peoples Land and Territory Acknowledgement statement was presented to and accepted by New Mexico tribal officials during a meeting between tribal officials and UNM President Garnett Stokes in 2020.

### **Background and Rationale on Indigenous Land and Territory Acknowledgment**

As stated before there are twenty-five tribal nations who have territorial connections within the State of New Mexico, we hope that by UNM honoring and using an Indigenous Land and Territory Acknowledgment we will begin to institutionalize Indigenous Peoples as a living part of the university's memory. The formalization of an Indigenous Land and Territory Acknowledgment began in early spring 2018. The development has now moved forward from one Native American faculty member to a group of Native American faculty who support this idea and policy to be embedded and practiced at the University of New Mexico (see DEI website for a list of authors). The hope is that the UNM administration and Board of Regents support such a statement that we begin to center an Indigenous perspective and a collective Indigenous voice. This should be inherently done but it is still lacking throughout the university's policies and practices. This is a basic right as stated by the UNDRIP (United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), article 15. There are additional articles from this document that are relevant to this statement: Articles 1, 8, 13, 15, 16, 21, 24, 26, and 31.

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 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.

### **Listing the university and organizations that utilize this type of statement**

There are few universities and colleges who have a policy and practice through the upper administration in acknowledging the Indigenous peoples and territory. Those universities include, but are not limited to, Arizona State University, University of Toronto (in Ontario, Canada), Indiana University, Colorado State University, and South Dakota State University. However, there is an increase in education based organizations who utilize a similar protocol at the opening of their conferences and events. Some of those specifically known to do this are: American Indian Studies Association, the National Indian Education Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, Association for the Study of Higher Education, and the American Educational Research Association Indigenous Peoples of the Americas Special Interest Group. Now that there is more vocalization and reclaiming of our Indigenous ways of being Indigenous scholars,

practitioners and peoples are demanding and working towards making this type of statement the new norm for academia and conference proceedings.

### **Suggested UNM Indigenous Peoples' Land and Territory Acknowledgment (updated 02/18/2020)**

The recommended acknowledgement state to be used as stated below:

#### **UNM Land Acknowledgement Statement**

*Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico – Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache – since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.*

#### **How and when it would be used**

We welcome all members, both Native and non-Natives, of the UNM community to share the land acknowledgement in their classes, on their syllabus, in meetings, public gatherings, and or prayers. The statement could be read out loud at events and shared on agendas and other documents. We recommend that this acknowledgement also be incorporated at Board of Regents meetings, convocations (university wide and college specific), and other major events held by UNM. The Indigenous Peoples' land and territory acknowledgement recognizes and shows respect for the traditional lands occupied by the Indigenous peoples in New Mexico.

#### **How to use in syllabus**

UNM Instructors may adopt this land acknowledgment statement to place in their course syllabus. Instructors could adapt the statement to show specific ways that their course honors the land acknowledgment. By having the background provided in this Brown Paper, written by Native colleagues, Instructors would have the self-assurance that including a Land Acknowledgement in their syllabus is genuine on their personal behalf.

#### **How to be adopted by other programs/departments**

UNM colleges, schools, departments, and programs may adopt this land acknowledgment and adapt it to reflect their specific values and to reflect their specific relationships and initiatives with Indigenous peoples.

#### **Student and Alumni organizations**

Student and Alumni groups are welcome to use the land acknowledgement in meetings, public gatherings and prayers.

#### **Request for use of this statement**

We formally request use of the Indigenous Peoples' Land and Territory acknowledgement statement by the UNM President, administrators, faculty, and any other staff within the university. We hereby, request this be effective immediately and that it be disseminated for support and incorporation.

## Resource List

Arizona State University Land Acknowledgment:

<https://lib.asu.edu/indigenous-land-acknowledgement>

Indiana University land acknowledgment: <https://firstnations.indiana.edu/land-acknowledgement/index.html>

UNMH agreement:

<https://unmhealth.org/patients-visitors/files/1952-lease-contract.pdf>

California College of the Arts Land Acknowledgment and Guidelines:

<https://portal.cca.edu/essentials/diversity-equity-inclusion/indigenous-land-acknowledgement/guidelines-and-uses-cca-land-acknowledgement/>