

University of New Mexico
Indigenous Peoples Land and Territory Acknowledgement
White Paper

Providing Context of New Mexico (tribal 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 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 Americans in New Mexico. Albuquerque alone has the 7th largest urban Native population (approximately 30,000 people) in the country among places with more than 100,000 citizens, according to the 2010 U.S. census

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.

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 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. 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 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.

Background and Rationale Indigenous Land and Territory Acknowledgment

The discussion for putting together an Indigenous Land and Territory Acknowledgment began in early spring 2018. The idea to push for something like this had been thought of in 2016 but 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. The hope is that by the UNM upper administration supporting such as statement that we begin to center an Indigenous perspective and voice. This should be inherently done but 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 and practice they are: 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.

As stated before there are twenty-three tribal nations who have 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 institutionalized Indigenous Peoples as a living part of the university's memory.

Listing the university and organizations that utilize this type of statement

There are few universities who have a policy and practice through the upper administration in acknowledging the Indigenous peoples and territory. Some that we are aware of who have done this are the University of Toronto (in Ontario, Canada) and South Dakota State University. However, there is an uprising of 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: the National Indian Education Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Association for the Study of Higher Education, and the American Educational Research Association Indigenous Peoples of the Americas SIG 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

Acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples land and territory is a way for UNM to recognize and show respect for the traditional lands occupied held by the Indigenous peoples in New Mexico. It can be used by Chair or Speaker at the beginning of a meeting or public gathering where the acknowledgement can be given. 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.

Request for use of this statement

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