

## **Recommended Approach to Offering Acknowledgement of Country or Acknowledgement of Indigenous People at an Event or Meeting**

An Acknowledgement of Country or Acknowledgement of Indigenous People is an opportunity to acknowledge, and pay respect, to the Traditional Owners and ongoing custodians of the land. Acknowledgements are often made at the commencement of an event, such as a meeting, speech or formal occasion. An acknowledgement can be made by anybody, Indigenous or non-Indigenous. An Acknowledgement of Country will often highlight the unique position of the local indigenous people in culture and history.

Indigenous communities owned the land on which many modern day communities/cities have been built. Conferences and events are also routinely held in these spaces. This land is essential to the identity and worldview of Indigenous groups. Often these lands were taken under unjust and violent circumstances resulting in forced relocation that continues to have devastating effects on native communities. Indigenous Land Acknowledgements are one small but tangible way institutions of culture and education in the United States can begin repairing the harm caused by mainstream historical accounts, which have excluded Indigenous voices and obscured the centrality of violence to colonialism in the United States.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement refers to the practice of recognizing an Indigenous community's ancestral ties to the land on which a meeting or event is taking place. Acknowledging the communities that have an inseparable connection to the land on which these institutions reside challenges the mainstream narrative and calls attention to the strength of Indigenous communities which have survived the devastating effects of displacement and colonization. Further, this history informs the present experience of Native American peoples, so it is essential to the contextualization of current events.

While the practice of Indigenous land acknowledgement is new to research and educational institutions in the United States, it has long been an established protocol among Indigenous groups around the world. It has even become standard in both Canada and Australia. Acknowledgement guides by [Australians Together](#), the [Canadian Association of University Teachers](#) and the [U.S. Department of Art and Culture](#) all echo many of the same sentiments. They point to a similar general format for an acknowledgement, which could sound something like: "Before we begin [description of event], I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered today on the ancestral territory of the ( ) peoples, and I pay my respect to their Elders both past and present, as well as living descendants and future generations." All three guides also state that it is important to be genuine in the acknowledgement, so this basic format can be altered to include information that it is appropriate to the specific setting. Additionally, all three emphasize the importance of reaching out to the specific Indigenous group or groups being acknowledged to ensure that the statement is respectful and accurately represents them in the way that they want to be

represented. This is particularly important because, for far too long, Indigenous peoples have been denied a say in their own representation. This inclusive approach is therefore a step toward decolonizing these institutions.

Another option is a Welcome to Country or Welcome from Indigenous People. A Welcome to Country is undertaken by a Traditional Owner, custodian, or Elder for a particular local region. This can be done through speech, dance, song or ceremony. 'Welcome to Country' is an important ceremony and inviting a custodian or elder to perform it helps non-Indigenous people recognize the local indigenous culture and history.

Why is it important?

Native American people have experienced significant exclusion from society for many years through treaties (broken promises), termination and recognition. Further, many non-Indigenous Americans have not had the opportunity to learn about, and celebrate, the rich cultures of Native American people. This contributes to a disparity between cultures that persists today.

Acknowledging Native American or Indigenous people at events is one part of ending this exclusion.

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