

## **DiA 04 27 2021 - Report of the Land Acknowledgement Working Group to IMYM**

Based on a decision made at the February meeting of the IMYM Representatives Committee, IMYM Co-Clerks Gale Toko-Ross and Valerie Ireland asked in an April 1 email for Ann E. Beauchamp (Quaker House Santa Fe), David R. Wolf (Pima), Janet Mallory (Moab), Paula Palmer (Boulder) and Tom Vaughan (Gila) to form a Land Acknowledgement Working Group. All had volunteered to participate in studying this issue. We were asked to produce a brief report by May 1 for inclusion in the documents in advance for the 2021 annual gathering.

The group met via Zoom on April 10 and again on April 18. Notes of those meetings were created and circulated among the members, which encouraged more email conversations. In addition, Janet Mallory, David Wolf and Tom Vaughan all participated in the two-hour Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples workshop put on by Friends Peace Teams on Saturday afternoon, April 17. Paula was a cohost of that workshop.

The starting question was: Why develop a land acknowledgement (LA) statement for IMYM?

Indigenous peoples the world over have suffered genocide, forced colonization, and removal from their traditional territories. They are asking governments, organizations, and non Indigenous people to acknowledge these historic injustices as well as their enduring relationships with their homelands. Indigenous organizations have issued many guidelines for creating Land Acknowledgement statements that are readily available through an internet search. Most of these guidelines encourage statements that recognize the history and current presence of Indigenous peoples in a specific geographic region, and commit the author organization to working toward right relationship with Indigenous peoples in their area. This should be a dynamic and ongoing process. LAs that are recited as a rote checking off of a to-do list do not accomplish the goal sought.

Some members asked whether an acknowledgement that is always given at the opening of a meeting, though in different terms by different clerks, becomes a ritual. Others felt that such an expression is the prerogative of the clerk. An alternative would be to, during the meeting, minute the meeting's appreciation of the relevant Native American groups (as we do in thanking host meetings); this could be more involving and more substantive.

The next topic was the difference between site-based and broad-area land acknowledgements.

At this time, IMYM meets only online and the participants are scattered over the Rockies almost from border to border with many, many tribes. Perhaps as soon as next year, the plan for IMYM to meet in-person (or in a hybrid manner) at Fort Lewis College (FLC) in Durango could materialize; then we would have a specific locale to reference.

In the former instance, something like the LA of the National Museum of the American Indian might be appropriate: "We gratefully acknowledge the Native Peoples on whose ancestral homelands we gather, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today." A general statement like this could be made more meaningful by adding a commitment to learn about and from the Indigenous peoples in our region and support their rights.

When IMYM actually gets to Fort Lewis, we can be more specific. The LA could then include the Indigenous peoples who lived in the Durango area in the past, some of whom created the World Heritage Cultural Sites of Mesa Verde and Chaco Canyon, and those who live there today.

Finally, there is the question: How do we make a land acknowledgement meaningful to the participating Friends?

The members of the working group are in unity that the Durango meeting site is rich in resources that could be used to incorporate the substance and purpose of the LA into the whole fabric of the annual gathering.

The Native American past is amply represented at Mesa Verde National Park, Aztec Ruins National Monument, the Anasazi Heritage Center and Chimney Rock National Monument, all nearby and with staff to call on. The Center of SW Studies at FLC has displays and staff, as does the Southern Ute Cultural Center in Ignacio. There is also Old Fort Lewis, which was both an Army post and an Indian boarding school. The Ute Museum in Montrose is also a possible resource.

The Southern Ute Tribe today is active in energy production. The Navajo Nation and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe both have huge agricultural enterprises. Tribal governance today takes place nearby at all three tribes. The Southern Utes operate KSUT-FM, a locally popular public radio station.

FLC is tuition-free to Native American students, so there are students from tribes and indigenous groups all across America. There is an AISES (American Indian Science and Engineering Society) chapter at FLC, plus the Diné Club, the Pueblo Alliance and Wanbli Ota among the student organizations, as well as instructors of Native American Studies courses. Two tribal colleges, Diné College and Navajo Technical University, are

further away, but are potential resources.

If the Native American past and present are warp threads to be woven into the fabric of the annual meeting experience in keeping with the land acknowledgement, exposure of Friends to these experiences while at the annual gathering will hopefully lead them to create “future” threads of their own by building relationships with the Indigenous peoples in their own communities.

Respectfully submitted;

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