

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Enacting Relationality: Remembering the Land in Land Acknowledgments

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0qh623jh>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 45(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

Authors

Beckmann, Sydney
Wilson, Khrystyne

Publication Date

2021-06-01

DOI

10.17953/aicrj.45.2.beckmann_wilson

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Enacting Relationality: Remembering the Land in Land Acknowledgments

Sydney Beckmann and Khrystyne Wilson

Here I sit in solemn reminiscence
Contemplating the evening fall.
Majestic clouds float in magnificence,
The setting sun a golden ball.
Clouds change to roses in the scene,
Blur the mountains like purple walls.
—Refugio Savala (Pascua Yaqui)

Cuk Son is a story.
Tucson is a linguistic alternative.
The story is in the many languages
still heard in this place of
Black Mountains.
They are in the echo of lost, forgotten languages
heard here even before the people arrived.

The true story of this place
recalls people walking
deserts all their lives and
continuing today, if only

SYDNEY BECKMANN is a PhD student in American Indian studies at the University of Arizona. She earned her MTS at the University of Notre Dame in 2018. Her research interests include Indigenous decolonization and race and Indigeneity. KHRYSTYNE WILSON is a PhD student in American Indian studies at the University of Arizona. She earned an MA from the University of Missouri, Columbia in 2017 and a JD in Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy at the University of Arizona in 2021. Her research focuses on American Indian law and religion.

in their dreams.
The true story is ringing
in their footsteps in a
place so quiet, they can hear
their blood moving
through their veins.
Their stories give shape to the
mountains encircling this place.

—Ofelia Zepeda (Tohono O’odham)

In April 2020, Professor Julio Cammarota of the University of Arizona wrote a letter to the university’s president Robert C. Robbins that criticized the University’s policy of “honoring” the Tohono O’odham with land acknowledgments, stating, “land recognitions are just words without action.”¹ The University of Arizona, a land grant institution, is located on Tohono O’odham and Pascua Yaqui ancestral land, in Tucson, Arizona, and it has become common for university administrators, faculty, students, and affiliates to “acknowledge” the United States government’s disruption and taking of Indigenous land through the trend of performing land acknowledgments.² This is not an isolated occurrence, but a growing trend within and without the broader academic community. These land acknowledgments are a step toward recognizing past injustices, but as the practice has gained popularity, it is now imperative to ensure land acknowledgments are serving their intended purposes. When they are used as a checklist item and lack consideration of the historical and ongoing conceptions and relationships Indigenous peoples have with place, land acknowledgments become what Cammarota critiques: words without action.

With the recent growing popularity of performing land acknowledgments within activist and academic communities, scholars are now critically engaging with the purpose and production of land acknowledgments. While the development of these discussions demonstrates an increased interest in working with Indigenous communities and recognition of the academy’s complicity in ongoing settler colonization, it is an important moment to reflect on these practices. Exploring recent critiques of land acknowledgments, we argue that these statements maintain Western conceptions of land by focusing on the people as divorced from the land. Utilizing the peoplehood matrix, we demonstrate that for Indigenous ontologies land and people are inexorably linked in an equal relationship. Rather than perpetuating Western divisions between land and people, we argue instead that, in creating and performing land acknowledgments, it is crucial to remember the relationality between Indigenous peoples and the land.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In July 2021, the University of Arizona debuted its new land acknowledgment, made in consultation with leaders from Tohono O’odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui Tribe. The land acknowledgment states:

We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.³

In presenting this land acknowledgment, the university explains: "The new land acknowledgment . . . might seem like a simple 61-word statement. But the university leaders who helped craft it in consultation with local Indigenous communities say it carries significant meaning for how the university recognizes the people whose homeland the campus occupies."⁴ Nathan Levi Esquerra (Chemehuevi), the senior vice president for Native American Advancement and Tribal Engagement, states: "This is about us truly recognizing the sovereign nations and the people who were here before us and are still here today. . . . It's about us acknowledging and recognizing their culture and knowledge so we can understand our past as we move toward the future."⁵

The inspiration for creating a university-wide statement came from university leaders traveling abroad to academic institutions in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, in which this practice had already been implemented.⁶ In Canada, territorial acknowledgments have become familiar within university and activist settings.⁷ Canadian universities, in particular, began this practice to demonstrate their shared commitment to improving opportunities for Indigenous students and communities, and in response to 2015 publications of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.⁸ Indigenous activists, both in facilitating movements and practicing the act of recognizing land history and ownership at their own events, have been crucial in the spread of this practice.⁹ Land acknowledgments have now moved beyond activist and Indigenous spaces to non-Indigenous spaces due to resurgence movements such as Idle No More and the Standing Rock protests.¹⁰ In the United States, these resurgence movements coupled with *High Country News'* pivotal article "Land-grab universities," tying theft of Indigenous lands *directly* to land-grant institutions, helped to create movement within universities across the country to develop their own land acknowledgment practices.¹¹

Land acknowledgments have become ubiquitous within the academic setting although there are differences in the methods and uses of these acknowledgments. Some institutions, such as the University of Arizona, have created and disseminated one institution-wide statement to be used "on University of Arizona websites, in email signatures, presentation slide decks and more."¹² Similar to the University of Arizona, Cornell University provides one university-wide land acknowledgment which states:

Cornell University is located on the traditional homelands of the Gayogohó:nq' (the Cayuga Nation). The Gayogohó:nq' are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign nations with a historic and contemporary presence on this land. The confederacy precedes the establishment of Cornell University, New York state and the United States of America. We acknowledge the

painful history of Gayogohó:nq' dispossession, and honor the ongoing connection of Gayogohó:nq' people, past and present, to these lands and waters.¹³

Cornell specifically identifies this statement as the one to be used “for use at public events” and provides a pronunciation guide alongside the acknowledgment.¹⁴

Other universities have left it to individual departments or schools to create their own acknowledgments. For example, the University of Georgia's Institute of Native American Studies is one such university-affiliated institution that has created their own land acknowledgment: “UGA, an R1 Institution, is located near the Oconee National Forest, the Chattahoochee River, and the Qualla Boundary. Our Institute of Native American Studies is well situated for students to get to know the old homelands of Southeastern Native peoples.”¹⁵ In Montana, the universities have come together to create a “Campus Compact,” whereby all universities within the state utilize the same land acknowledgment:

Long-time residents and newcomers, alike, it is important to recognize that for generations the region today familiar to us as the State of Montana has been peopled and stewarded by unique, distinct, and prosperous groups of Indigenous peoples. For centuries colonization, invasion, and dishonesty have resulted in the displacement of these people from their spiritual and cultural homelands and the lands reserved to their sovereign rule by treaty. Today, eight federally recognized Tribal Nations that comprise 12 different tribes exist in Montana: The Blackfeet Tribe, the Chippewa Cree Tribe, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, the Crow Tribe, the Fort Belknap Tribes, the Fort Peck Tribes, the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe, and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. These are not the only Indigenous peoples to have inhabited the Montana region and we acknowledge those tribes. In addition, this land acknowledgment identifies tribal names in their own languages. Montana Campus Compact recognizes that affiliate campuses are guests on these lands.¹⁶

This statement proceeds to list every Montana-based university and the names of the traditional occupants of each university location in English and the traditional language.

Washington State University, taking their land acknowledgments a step further, explains its involvement in taking these lands:

As a land grant institution, we also recognize that the Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant institutions by providing each state with “public” and federal lands, which are traced back to the disposition of Indigenous lands. In 1890, Washington State received 90,081 acres of Indigenous Lands designated to establish Washington State University (see data). Washington State University retains the majority of these lands to this day. We acknowledge that the disposition of Indigenous lands was often taken by coercive and violent acts, and the disregard of treaties. For that, we extend our deepest apologies. We owe our deepest gratitude to the Native peoples of this region and maintain our commitment towards reconciliation.¹⁷

Some land acknowledgments, such as the Montana Campus Compact, specifically reference treaty rights, and others, such as Washington State University, reference their involvement as a land-grant university in taking these lands from their Indigenous stewards. Most, however, simply state that the university is situated on Indigenous land, list the original occupants of the land, and indicate their desire to build relationships and work with Indigenous communities.

The recent ubiquity of these institutional statements has prompted critical scholarly engagement. Following Theresa Stewart-Ambo (Tongva/Luiseño) and K. Wayne Yang, we believe this moment provides for “real decolonizing opportunities . . . especially for those of us in (but not of) the university and other such settler institutions.”¹⁸ Scholars are now critiquing land acknowledgments for numerous reasons, including their use of revisionist history, their performative nature, and their cooptation to fulfill settler agendas. Scholars have also begun to examine the best practices for how to engage in creating and performing land acknowledgments.¹⁹

Within these conversations, there are three overarching concerns. The first involves the often ahistorical nature of land acknowledgments. These statements tend to be divorced from the historical context of the United States and the universities themselves. Recent attention has been given to the role of land-grant universities, especially after the *High Country News* exposé revealed that land-grant universities were established through the Morrill Act, which allowed lands expropriated from American Indians to be used for universities. “In all, the act redistributed nearly 11 million acres—an area larger than Massachusetts and Connecticut combined.”²⁰ Institutional land acknowledgments often present Indigenous peoples as merely historical inhabitants rather than owners of the lands that the US government forcibly took from them, and, in some cases, used to create universities.

The important question remains: For land-grant universities, whose very existence is predicated on stolen Indigenous lands, what does it mean to acknowledge the Indigenous communities on whose taken lands the university resides, especially if that acknowledgment does not address this tension? These statements often downplay or deny contemporary connections that Indigenous communities have with land, choosing instead to present the relationships as historical only. While these statements acknowledge that the university sits on the traditional homelands of a particular Indigenous community, the overall language undermines Indigenous sovereignty and downplays the culpability of the university. It amounts to a rewriting of history and an erasure of Indigenous presence.²¹

The second major critique concerns the formulaic and generic nature of institutional statements. The fundamental issue is the extent to which these stock statements invite and require university engagement with land and Indigenous communities.²² When reciting these pre-written statements, no effort is required on the part of the university or individual speakers to engage with the communities being acknowledged.²³ Sometimes the level of disengagement is acutely apparent, such as when the reciters repeatedly stumble to pronounce the names of Indigenous communities.²⁴ Rather than reinforcing a genuine commitment to engage with Indigenous communities, the recitation becomes a rote performance that potentially has an adverse effect.

Instead of encouraging individuals and institutions to continuously develop relationships with land and Indigenous peoples, the regular use of these statements can appease any sense of responsibility to further engage with these communities.²⁵ As Wark writes, “When land acknowledgements become box-ticking exercises they can negate any type of commitment to changing the status quo.”²⁶

The final area of concern regarding institutional land acknowledgments moves beyond critiquing universities’ lack of engagement with Indigenous communities to questioning how these statements reinforce rather than subvert settler-colonial structures. As Joanna Kidman (Ngāti Maniapoto/Ngāti Raukawa) notes, within neoliberal university structures, rhetoric of inclusion increasingly dominates dialogue at all campus levels and especially affects faculty demographics: “The settler-colonial university incorporates small numbers of native scholars into the professoriate. The presence of these Indigenous academics serves to reinforce the academy’s branding of itself as inclusive, tolerant and open.”²⁷ Similarly, universities use land acknowledgments to fulfill diversity and inclusion standards. The performative nature of institutional statements and the resulting disengagement with Indigenous communities have changed the practice of acknowledging land. Where originally land acknowledgments were impactful statements designed to subvert settler institutional power structures, now the performative nature of these statements maintains those structures.²⁸

The ubiquitous use of land acknowledgments to function in multiple contexts and formats—written and oral—and given to unknown audiences of varying sizes, requires institutional statements to be inoffensive.²⁹ However, subverting settler colonial structures often requires discomfort.³⁰ In making land acknowledgments inoffensive, they become symbolic gestures.³¹ As Anne Bonds and Joshua Inwood explain, “well-intended scholarship and policies—produced through white settler subjectivities and embedded within settler institutions—often rely on gestures rather than structural change, which re-entrenches rather than destabilizes settler social formations.”³² The cooptation of these statements into settler agendas begs the questions: what purpose do land acknowledgments serve and whom do they serve?

Further increasing this concern is the matter of labor exploitation. Often, elders are asked to deliver a land acknowledgment only to be quickly ushered out of the room afterwards.³³ It is commonly the case that Indigenous faculty and community members create these institutional statements for universities.³⁴ The university frames this labor as a gesture of cooperation and propriety. Indeed, it is appropriate to consult Indigenous faculty and communities in the creation of land acknowledgments. However, the cooptation of these statements by the university for its own benefit exploits Indigenous scholars and community labor. In short, the rote, performative nature of institutional land acknowledgments is not only a sign of the university’s disingenuousness and disengagement, but it also leads to the entrenchment of colonial structures and the exploitation of Indigenous scholars and communities.

The above critiques suggest that land acknowledgments do not serve Indigenous communities, nor do they cultivate relationships between universities and Indigenous communities. Nonetheless, we do not propose abolishing the practice of land acknowledgment. Rather, we hope to add to the existing conversations to help address these

concerns.³⁵ In particular, one area of these conversations that requires further discussion is the land itself.

Conversations regarding land acknowledgments often focus on large-scale issues of settler colonialism, decolonization, and the relationships between institutions and Indigenous communities.³⁶ These are necessary focal points, but they run the risk of marginalizing the other important component of acknowledgments: the land.³⁷ Broadly speaking, there exist different conceptions of land within Indigenous and Western societies.³⁸ Western connotations associated with the term *land* are that of a commodity or an object to be used and controlled by humans. Western “land” focuses on isolated entities demarcated by borders and given market values. As explained by Andrea McComb Sanchez, however, land encompasses a much larger meaning within Indigenous ontologies in that “humans are seen as being a part of place not separate from it.”³⁹ These differing conceptions of land are not relegated to the theoretical musings of different cultures but rather manifest as very different relationships between land and people. It is necessary to recognize these vastly different ways of relating to land and how they affect the creation and implementation of land acknowledgments. In the following section, we will use the peoplehood matrix as a theoretical lens to demonstrate these different conceptions of land. We believe that, by centering the land itself and in particular Indigenous conceptions of land as relationship, we can begin to address some of the existing limitations of land acknowledgments.

THE PEOPLEHOOD MATRIX

The peoplehood matrix, proposed by Tom Holm (Creek/Cherokee), J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis, is comprised of four elements: language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and place/territory (see fig.).⁴⁰ Understood within the matrix, these four

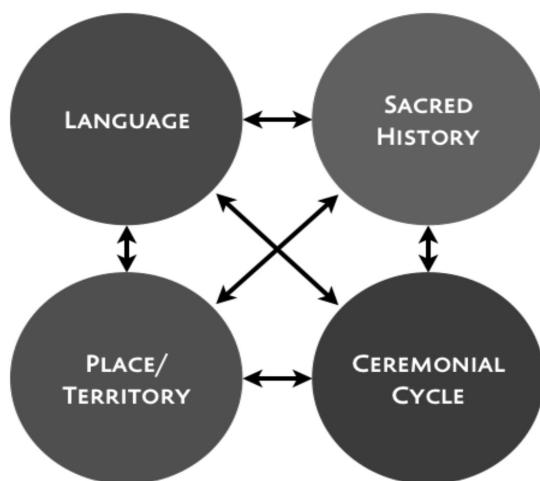


FIGURE. *The Peoplehood Matrix.* Diagram courtesy of Tom Holm.

interrelated elements create a cohesive model with which to understand Indigenous conceptions of land and to demonstrate the inseparability of land and people.

As Holm, Pearson, and Chavis explain, “Understanding the interrelationship of the four aspects of peoplehood is essential. No single factor is more important than the others and all necessarily support each other.”⁴¹ Therefore, place as a component of the matrix is fundamentally connected to the other elements. As Cushman notes, “Part of the matrix’s utility rests . . . in its usefulness as a theoretical framework from which to view any one of the four mutually sustaining aspects of the matrix.”⁴²

We use peoplehood as a lens to better understand how place interacts with the other elements and, by extension, to demonstrate the significance of land within Indigenous ontologies. As Rebecca Tsosie (Yaqui descent) explains, “For Native peoples, land is often constitutive of cultural identity. Many Indian tribes, for example, identify their origin as a distinct people with a particular geographic site. This origin place—which may be a river, mountain, plateau, or valley—becomes a central and defining feature of the tribe’s religion and cultural world view.”⁴³ To further clarify this interconnection between Indigenous identity and land, we will use the peoplehood matrix specifically to demonstrate the relational understanding of land in which humans are not viewed as separate from the land but rather intimately connected to it, and by extension to argue that this relational conception of land should be employed when constructing land acknowledgments.

Language

The ways that land and language interrelate are especially important in understanding the relationship between humans and land. As Holm, Pearson, and Chavis explain, “Language defines place and vice versa.”⁴⁴ Navajo scholar Farina King adds that language and land share an important relationship but also both contribute to a Diné sense of communal identity. She writes, “The perpetuation of the Navajo language through teachings of a sense of place connects the Diné with decision-making processes that define them.”⁴⁵ Additionally, she explains, “Diné oral traditions and historical perspectives dictate all relations, centering on memories and meanings embedded in homeland and water.”⁴⁶ She demonstrates a clear connection between land, language, and identity for the Diné, specifically in the ways that land and language create memories.

The Diné are not the only people to recognize how the interrelation between land and language facilitates the connection between land and people. In his discussion on Hopi place value, Whiteley states, “The reticulate interconnections of named places on Hopitutska carry memorate history and lived practice within them.”⁴⁷ Most notably, Keith Basso in his work *Wisdom Sits in Places* articulates the relationship between language and land, in particular the ways that stories are spatially anchored and how place is a fundamental part of all stories in Western Apache culture. He writes, “Long before the advent of literacy . . . place served humankind as durable symbols of distant events and as indispensable aids for remembering and imagining them—and this convenient arrangement, ancient but not outmoded, is with us still today.”⁴⁸ In emphasizing this relationship between land and language, Basso continues, “If place-making

is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of *doing* history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities.”⁴⁹

These examples indicate how land and language interrelate and affect Indigenous culture and communities. They highlight the symbolic nature of land and language in constructing identity, both on the individual and communal level. They also recognize how memory, shared through stories, connects people to specific places. Even on this metaphoric and symbolic level, these connections make up a fundamental component of Indigenous ontologies. However, the significance of land in relation to communities and language extends beyond the level of metaphor and symbol.⁵⁰ For example, in his discussion of place-names, Basso explains that the descriptive nature of the names “paint a picture” in the mind.⁵¹ Anyone visiting a specific location knows that they are looking at the same place their ancestors saw because the place looks like what the name describes. In this way, the past and present are linked in a tangible way. The viewer knows that they are looking at the same things their ancestors saw and touching the same things they touched.

There is a connection made between past and present through the land itself made possible by the place-name. More than just a memory of the past or a symbol of communal identity, place-names provide physical links between the past and present. The intricate and expansive relationships between language and land demonstrate the relationality that Indigenous peoples and communities share with land. For Indigenous communities, language cannot be separated from its context, from its place, and these relationships between land and language are a fundamental part of how Indigenous communities understand their place in the world. As scholar and poet Ofelia Zepeda (Tohono O’odham) explains when introducing the spoken words used in a ceremony for bringing rain: “The power of the spoken word is great. We Papagos have always believed that, and we have always relied on powerful words in our lives.”⁵² This Indigenous understanding of the power of language and interrelation between language, land, and Indigenous peoples cannot be conveyed through stock land acknowledgment statements or pronunciation guides. Land acknowledgments that do not properly comprehend the power inherent in Indigenous language or the interrelation of language with both land and Indigenous identity undermine the purpose of these statements.

Sacred History

Land is equally as important within the context of the sacred history of Indigenous communities. Holm, Pearson, and Chavis explain the concept of “sacred history” as a method for Indigenous peoples “to give each member of the group an understanding of where they come from but also to impart to them proper behavior and the ways in which they maintain group cohesion through ritualism and ceremony.”⁵³ Furthermore, they illustrate, “sacred history” also encompasses “kinship structures, the meaning of ceremonies as well as when they should be performed, and how the group fits within a particular environment.”⁵⁴ Sacred history thus becomes a guiding force, told through oral history, stories and kinship relations, which reinforce the importance of land to

the group's historical, contemporary, and future identity. Place, therefore, is central in stories, kinship, and conceptions of time.

Creation stories give credence to the interconnectedness of land with Indigenous communities. In her examination of Indigenous creation stories, Suzanne Crawford provides three distinct creation story examples to demonstrate the importance of place: the Diné animation of the world with the four directions, the Lakota's emergence from the Black Hills, and the Coast Salish's equal negotiations between humans, plants and animals. She explains that "as each tradition emerges from a particular landscape, it exists in relationship with that landscape."⁵⁵ She argues that the differences between the content in these creation stories "reflect[s] the vast differences of the ecosystems within which the traditions emerged, for each is, first and foremost, an autochthonous tradition, emerging from a people's relationship with the landscape that nurtures and sustains them."⁵⁶ Place becomes central to creation stories because for some, like the Diné, it is the animating force of the world. For other communities, such as the Lakota, place is significant because it is the physical land from which their people emerged. Creation stories can also demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between Indigenous peoples and their land, as seen in the equal negotiations between humans and nonhumans in the Coast Salish history.⁵⁷

We see these relationships and orientations towards place not only in the context of creation, but also throughout many oral histories. McComb Sanchez explains: "Much of Pueblo oral histories and stories focus on place, and on how a certain place became home in the most profound sense of the word. People are connected to that place, and this is expressed and continually reinforced through the telling or singing of origin narratives or myths and through the passing on of other more recent oral histories through stories."⁵⁸ These stories can serve as cautionary tales, rooted in a specific place, that warn listeners about ancestors' follies and outcomes.⁵⁹

Place-names themselves and the act of speaking them serve as a link between the past and present. In his work, Basso describes an experience he had in which he could not correctly pronounce a name in Western Apache. Rather than taking the time in that moment, he quickly stated that he would try again later and moved on to continue with the journey. His frustrated companion, Charles, responded in Western Apache, saying:

What he's doing isn't right. It's not good. He seems to be in a hurry. Why is he in a hurry? It's disrespectful. Our ancestors made this name. They made it just as it is. They made it of a reason. *They spoke it first, a long time ago!* He's repeating the speech of our ancestors. He doesn't know that. Tell him he's repeating the speech of our ancestors!⁶⁰

Charles emphasizes that these place-names are the verbatim speech of his ancestors. Place-names, then, act as another link between past and present in their very utterance. Rather than being just a story or an idea passed down throughout generations, the act of speaking these names is significant. Those who speak the names know that they are saying the same words and making the same sounds as their ancestors, indicating the same power in language found in Zepeda's poetry. In mispronouncing

Indigenous words in land acknowledgment statements, even with pronunciation guides, performers of these statements are undermining the power of these words and their ability to connect Indigenous peoples to their kin and sacred history.

Place-names and their corresponding place provide a multiple sensory experience connecting an individual to the past by seeing, hearing, and feeling the same things as their ancestors. As Basso summarizes, “This reciprocal relationship—a relationship in which individuals invest themselves in the landscape while incorporating its meaning into their own most fundamental experience—is the ultimate source of the rich sententious potential and functional versatility of Western Apache place-names.”⁶¹ Sacred history, told through stories, connects Indigenous peoples to their ancestral kin through place. The stories told involve ancestors within specific places and are forefront in Indigenous conceptions of identity, place, and time. Visiting places, whether physically or mentally, does not bring to mind long ago, singular historic events, but rather allows Indigenous peoples to think, feel, experience and interact with their ancestral kin, thereby creating a relationship with the land and its inhabitants. Land acknowledgments that only refer to Indigenous peoples as the one-time, historical, owners of the land only employ Western understandings of land as property, and misrepresent Indigenous peoples as having only a historical, rather than ongoing, relationship with their place.

Ceremonial Cycle

The peoplehood matrix further demonstrates the interrelation between ceremonial cycle and place/territory.⁶² Holm and his colleagues change Thomas’s original term *religion* to *ceremonial cycle*, to demonstrate that “religion” is inseparable from the other aspects of the matrix: language, sacred history, and place/territory.⁶³ While they explain that ceremonial cycle is linked inseparably to all aspects of the matrix, we will focus on the connection between ceremonial cycle and place to demonstrate how land cannot be separated from other aspects of Indigenous existence. Holm, Pearson, and Chavis point out: “Humans, especially those who have living relationships with particular territories, observe and know the cycles of natural events—solstices and equinoxes, salmon runs, buffalo calving, the blooming of particular plants, the appearance of certain stars or planets—that occur at a certain time and place.”⁶⁴ Indigenous peoples thus traditionally have ceremonies that reflect their living relationship to land, and “most often coincide with seasonal, stellar, planetary, solar, floral, or faunal change that occurs above, below, on the surface, or within a group’s territorial range.”⁶⁵

Noted scholar Vine Deloria Jr. (Lakota) echoes this concept, writing: “When an Indian thinks about traditional lands he always talks about what the people did there, the animals who lived there and how the people related to them, the seasons of the year and how people responded to their changes, the manner in which the tribe acquired possession of the area, and the ceremonial functions it was required to perform to remain worthy of living there.”⁶⁶ Therefore, ceremonial cycle is not only a marker of physical change in the territory, but it explains the community’s responsibilities in relation to the place they live.

Ceremonial cycles demonstrate the duties that Indigenous peoples must enact to maintain their relationship with the land in which they live. According to Deloria, traditional Indigenous worldviews included social contracts between the humans and the lands: “obligations demanded by the lands upon which people lived were part of their understanding of the world; indeed, their view of life was grounded in the knowledge of these responsibilities . . . thus the people perceived that a social contract existed between men and other animals. The human ceremonial life confirmed the existence of this equality and gave it sustenance.”⁶⁷ In other words, the traditional ceremonial cycle of a community not only is a marker of changes to the physical land, but it also provides a means for humans to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to all nonhuman entities within their territory. Because of this strict connection between ceremony and land, for Indigenous peoples ceremonies cannot be separated from the specific place and time in which they are to be carried out.

This necessity of human activity to maintain the land, including their relationships to the physical territories and the human and nonhuman beings therein, demonstrates the ongoing importance of land for Indigenous communities. Dennis Kelley (Chumash/Salinan descent) explains: “place also refers to [the] appropriate activities that occur in specific areas in traditional communities.”⁶⁸ Therefore, land comes to entail many aspects of Indigenous relationality to the territory, rather than describing just the physical territory itself. Colonization did more than just remove individuals from the physical land. The forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their land disrupted both the connection to the physical territory, as well as the ability to conduct obligatory ceremonies to maintain the relationships between human and nonhuman actors. Even for Indigenous communities that still live within their ancestral territory, colonization severed this relationship with land, first by targeting and criminalizing Indigenous ceremonies, and second by means of assimilation policies that forced individuals to abandon their Indigenous practices.

This does not mean, however, that the removal and assimilation policies completely severed the ties between Indigenous peoples, land, and the ceremonial cycles required to maintain the relationships between the two. Instead, Kelley argues, “the inexorable link between the place and the religious system does not necessarily mean that the removal of the people from the place deflates the system but that the system [of responsibilities] itself comes to be carried with the land held in the collective memory.”⁶⁹ Kelley describes this in terms of urban pan-Indian practices such as powwows and sweat lodges, which still draw upon connections between Indigenous peoples and the physical land. This can be seen in evoking the four directions in rounds of sweat lodges and the imagery of the concepts of male, female, earth, and animals seen in the Lakota ceremony of the Cannunpa Wakan, or Sacred Pipe, often used in pan-Indian ceremonies.⁷⁰ The connection and responsibility of Indigenous peoples to land, as seen through ceremony, is not extinguished. However, colonization has undoubtedly diminished Indigenous peoples’ ability to maintain these relationships through the physical loss of land.

In 2016, the Cherokee Nation successfully entered an agreement with the Buffalo National River, an Arkansas National Park on ancestral Cherokee land, which allowed

federally recognized tribes to gather plants within national parks with which they are traditionally associated.⁷¹ Through this agreement, Cherokee individuals not only recover access to the physical plants for medicinal properties, but they also revitalize Cherokee plant knowledge. Cherokee scholar Clint Carroll explains: “it is especially important to revitalize Cherokee plant knowledge—because, in turn, it revitalizes a way of life centered on spirituality and relationships to the land and cosmos.”⁷² The focus for the Cherokee on this reconnection to their ancestral land and plants demonstrates that the loss of land due to colonization was not only a physical loss of territory, but it also fundamentally disrupted the ability of the Cherokee to fulfill their obligations to and relationships with the land.

Ceremonial cycles provide Indigenous peoples with the knowledge and means necessary to maintain relationships between the people and their land. Contemporary land acknowledgments refuse to recognize this relationality by presenting Indigenous communities as divorced from the land, thereby only recognizing the historic, one-time, physical loss of land due to colonization. Continuing this practice perpetuates Western conceptions of land as a commodity and ignore the inexorably linked relationship between Indigenous peoples and their lands.

Place/Territory

As the previous three sections show, land is central to Indigenous identity. Nez Perce scholar Jeremy FiveCrows explains: “I am of this land. Growing up on the Nez Perce reservation, I often heard this simple phrase and believe that it captures the essence of who the Nez Perce are.”⁷³ For FiveCrows, the substance of Nez Perce identity is linked to the land of his people. Vine Deloria Jr. argues that this relationship to land that FiveCrows details is inherent for all Indigenous peoples. He states, “American Indians hold their lands—places—as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind.”⁷⁴ Indigenous peoples thus conceptualize their identities based on their relationship to the land. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s call for action exhorts her Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg people to maintain this relationship with land: “If we do not create a generation of people attached to the land and committed to living out our culturally inherent ways of coming to know, we risk losing what it means to be Nishnaabeg within our own thought systems.”⁷⁵ Thus, land acknowledgments, in only referencing communities who previously “owned” the land, are failing to encapsulate Indigenous conceptions of land and people as having an inseparable relationship intricately linked to Indigenous identity.

Indigenous peoples maintain a continued relationship with land regardless of physical location. Having a strong relationship with land does not mean that both historically and contemporarily, Indigenous peoples do not move around or leave their land. In the case of Hopi runners, Hopi historian Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert argues: “Since the beginning of Hopi time, Hopis have been in a constant state of movement to and away from home. Similar to many other Indigenous peoples, Hopis have explained these movements in very detailed origin and emergence accounts. The stories connect the people to the land and give Hopis a worldview to understand and

interpret their past, present, and future.”⁷⁶ Creation stories are examples of these types of stories wherein distance does not dampen the influence of land on identity, but rather gives a reference point from which to orient.

Even though singular, physical places can be important to the Hopi—for example, some places may disclose their importance to the Hopi as a site of creation—the Hopi also understand the world through a place-based understanding of relationality. Sakiestewa Gilbert explains: “Hopi messenger runners of long ago routinely ran barefoot and navigated their high plateaus and deserts, sometimes in the darkness of night, by studying their mountains, valleys, the moon, and the stars.”⁷⁷ Hopis can move away from their physical places without losing their relationship to them. This is equally the case for many other Indigenous groups who have been displaced from their land both through colonization and subsequent US policies. In her study on the effect of the second-generation Navajo relocation due to the Navajo Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974, Navajo scholar Aresta Tsosie-Paddock describes how this more recent, second loss of land has impacted many aspects of Navajo identity, including the ability of individuals to learn language and cultural practices such as ceremonies away from Navajo Nation. However, she explains that while the loss of land is an ongoing struggle for Navajo second-generation relocatees, “despite living in an urban environment, they are confident and secure in who they are as Diné people.”⁷⁸ Removal from land does not mean that the connection between the Diné and their place is gone, but rather it becomes a struggle and a critical point “of having land, holding on to culture and tradition, and education opportunities to sustain a livelihood for second-generation Navajo relocatees and subsequent generations.”⁷⁹

Even though Indigenous communities maintain this relationship with land despite colonial disruption, a problem arises in cross-cultural exchanges, highlighting differences between Indigenous and Western understandings of land, which ultimately leads to problematic land acknowledgments. Brandi Denison documented one such exchange. In 2009, the Ute hosted the Smoking River powwow in an effort towards healing and reconciling differences with white community members. Because of the underlying cultural differences, the non-Ute participants maintained Western conceptions of land. As Denison observes: “For many white participants, it allowed them to condemn the actions of their predecessors by spiritualizing the Ute connection to the land. It even allowed white allies to protest against unevenly applied treaty rights and ongoing social injustices. However, the powwow did not force white allies to engage their relationship to property ownership critically.”⁸⁰ The powwow allowed white community members to show their support for Ute culture. However, it did not force these individuals to change any conceptions or practices regarding land. Instead, “the Smoking River Powwow drew on Ute ceremonial practices, and rather than understanding the powwow dances as products of the modern interconnected world, [the white participants] understood the ceremonial dances as a static representation of a sacred relationship with the land.”⁸¹ This ultimately led to non-Utes believing that the Utes had no interest in physical land for economic, or ownership purposes, but rather had a “pure” interest in the land for religious purposes “unmediated by materialistic desires.”⁸²

This same misconception of land as a physical and material entity to which Indigenous peoples at one time lost ownership, coupled with the idea that Indigenous peoples have only a nonmaterial, static interest in this physical property, pervades land acknowledgments. Land acknowledgments made based on these Western concepts ignore the Indigenous understanding of land as well as the colonial history that disrupted the relationship between Indigenous peoples and their ancestral land.

As can be seen from the above discussion, the peoplehood matrix demonstrates that land is an integral part of Indigenous culture and identities. The connections between land and language provide both symbolic and physical sensory experiences connecting the past and present, as well as generations of Indigenous peoples. Land and language also connect people through shared origin stories and solidify communal identity rooted in a particular place. These shared origins and relationships to land are celebrated and maintained through the ceremonial practices of communities. All four elements of peoplehood relate in intricate and mutually beneficial ways that, taken altogether, reinforce Indigenous identities and demonstrate the importance of land. Like the peoplehood matrix, land acknowledgments must be comprehensive and recognize the intricacies of Indigenous identities and communities, as well as recognize the particular relationships that Indigenous peoples share with the land.

REMATRIATING LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The above discussion of the peoplehood matrix demonstrates the differing conceptions of land within Western and Indigenous societies.⁸³ Rather than taking for granted the significance of land within Indigenous ontologies, using the peoplehood matrix allows for a more complete understanding of the integral role that land serves within Indigenous communities. It also allows us to further explicate the overarching differences between Indigenous and Western conceptions of land. In short, for Indigenous communities, land cannot be understood outside of its relational context with all other aspects of life. This relational context includes humans. As McComb Sanchez reminds us, “humans are seen as being a part of place not separate from it.”⁸⁴ Similarly, Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree) explains, “there is no distinction made between relationships that are made with other people and those that are made with our environment. Both are equally sacred.”⁸⁵

Despite this connection, many of the conversations about land acknowledgments are anthropocentric and work within Western frameworks that separate people and land and specifically consider land as something belonging to people. Unfortunately, despite intentions, it becomes too easy for conversations about land acknowledgments to focus more on to whom the land belongs, that is, universities or Indigenous communities. The conversations then quickly morph into larger debates about colonization, sovereignty and social justice.⁸⁶ To be clear, our intention is not to diminish or set aside the demands for the return of land to Indigenous communities. In fact, we previously discuss the problematic nature of this attempt to downplay the theft of Indigenous lands. Our intention here is to highlight the power of settler institutions to frame conversations and the need to critically engage and oppose those frameworks.

As the peoplehood matrix demonstrates, Indigenous frameworks do not allow for the separation of people from land. Furthermore, the relationship between the two is not one in which land is property owned by humans but rather is something for humans to be in relation with and responsible to. In returning to the University of Arizona's land acknowledgment, the anthropocentrism of the statement is clear. It does not implement a relational framework of land and neither does it avoid the critiques outlined earlier. This particular version of the statement recently was implemented in July 2021. In his announcement, President Robbins thanked the university's Office of Native American Advancement and Engagement as well as the Tohono O'odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui Tribe for their consultation and help in creating the university's statement.

There are marked improvements to this updated version. There is more specificity in recognizing the unique nature of the state of Arizona, in which there are twenty-two federally recognized tribes. The previous version described the lands on which the university resides as being the "original homelands" of the Tohono O'odham and the Pascua Yaqui. This wording relegated the relationship that these communities share with that particular place as one of historical significance only, rather than acknowledging the contemporary and ongoing relationships that exist. Most importantly, and unlike the previous version, this acknowledgment explicitly states the university's goal "to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities," a point which the president reiterates in his announcement of the update.⁸⁷ These improvements indicate a positive step forward for the relationship between the university and Indigenous communities.

Despite these changes, issues with the statement persist. First, the land acknowledgment ironically discusses the land only once, in the first sentence. The rest of the statement is devoted to communities and relationships between people, primarily the university and Indigenous communities. This recognition by itself is not the problem. The statement importantly recognizes Indigenous sovereignty. Rather, the issue is the way those nations and communities are highlighted at the expense of the land. This separation between communities and land is suspect, especially given the university's status as a land-grant institution. This leads to the second issue—the statement's complete silence on the institution's land-grant status. The statement does not acknowledge the fact that its existence is predicated on stolen Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui lands.⁸⁸

This issue with separating land and people is that it gives settler institutions the opportunity to conceal their ongoing colonialism while at the same time employing the language of sovereignty, diversity and inclusion, and "sustainable relationships." Given the statement's refusal to acknowledge the ongoing tension and culpability of the university's land-grant status, the concern is that this statement is yet another example of land acknowledgments being coopted into fulfilling diversity and inclusion quota. It is important to note the acknowledgment explicitly states this intention. Finally, the president credits the university's Office of Native American Advancement and Engagement as well as the Tohono O'odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui Tribe for their consultation and help in creating the university's statement. This consultation

is appropriate and necessary, but, given the questions of the statement's efficacy and the university's intent, to what extent is "consultation with" simply "exploitation of" Indigenous faculty and communities? To what extent will the university continue to cultivate relationships beyond the recitation of this paragraph?

Though the university's statement demonstrates improvements, Suzanne Keeptwo (Métis) succinctly summarizes the problem of stock statements like the University of Arizona's:

A Land Acknowledgement that simply lists off the various peoples that lived in, around, or passed through an area over the course of different time frames does not do justice to the history of the place and the story of the Land. Nor does it explain the true nature of the Indigenous mindset and worldview *in relationship* to that Land with those who have settled in, developed, and now claim *ownership* of that Land.⁸⁹

It is beyond the scope of this article to do an in-depth exploration of alternatives to stock statements. Additionally, we believe there cannot, and should not be, one correct way of enacting land acknowledgments. Relationality is a process that requires individual time and effort to cultivate. Therefore, it is not our intention to outline how to acknowledge land, but rather we invite individuals to participate in the communal responsibility of engaging in that process.⁹⁰

This work is not only possible, but is already being done. In his blog *Beyond the Mesas*, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert provides a good example of what implementing a relational concept of land can look like.⁹¹ In his post, he shares a land acknowledgment that he gave during a keynote address for the Annual Celebration of Diversity Breakfast at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Sakiestewa Gilbert begins by addressing the university's new, faculty-created land acknowledgment. He states his intention to explain what he believes is "at the heart of this statement" as well as his own connection to the land, having lived and worked there for several years. He then proceeds to examine a brief history of the area and notes the difference between its physical features and its historical appearance. Interspersed throughout these explanations is the reminder that "Wherever you are in the Americas, you are on Indian land." Finally, Sakiestewa Gilbert concludes: "The land has memory, and it still speaks to us. The question, of course, is whether you and I are willing to listen?"⁹² In his acknowledgment, Sakiestewa Gilbert enacts a relational concept of land in several important ways. He recognizes other attempts to explain the importance of the land on which the university sits, as well as the individuals who helped to create that acknowledgment.

While he notes his appreciation and respect for those individuals, he chooses to deliver his own acknowledgment to explain his relationship to the land while reminding his listeners of the historical relationships connected to the area, using the repeated phrase "Wherever you are in the Americas, you are on Indian land." This phrase indicates the relationships held by the Indigenous peoples who first inhabited the land, relationships that continue today. His statements also reference the continued interaction between Indigenous peoples and colonizers. Through these

many references, Sakiestewa Gilbert establishes a complex web of relationships that are a historical and living part of the land on which the university is situated. His acknowledgment surpasses prewritten, stock statements by recognizing historical and contemporary relationships as well as his own relationship with the particular land. The specificity and thoroughness of his acknowledgment is itself an act of establishing a relationship with the land. We offer Sakiestewa Gilbert's acknowledgment as one example of expanding the practice of acknowledging land and to demonstrate the difference that incorporating relational concepts of land can make with these statements. Most importantly, he reminds us of the possibilities that come from remembering the land.

CONCLUSION

The recent ubiquity of land acknowledgments has prompted the need to engage critically with the practice to avoid becoming a stagnant, performative formality used at the expense of Indigenous scholars, communities, and the land itself. Recentering our focus on the land in land acknowledgments allows us to understand the differences between Indigenous and Western conceptions of land. Analyzing how these differences shape conversations about land acknowledgments allows us to engage more critically with settler colonial ideologies and structures. Reframing understandings of acknowledgment from notions of ownership to notions of relationality and responsibility enables us to reaffirm the inseparable connection between people and land. We believe this crucial connection should be explicitly utilized in discussing and enacting land acknowledgments. The benefit to considering land in this way is the potential to engage the concerns and critiques of land acknowledgments, while also providing the possibility for them to continue to grow as a dynamic practice—one that cultivates ongoing, positive relationships.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the University of Arizona's American Indian Studies Department for their support for this project. It is important to us to ground our research in both the department and the Tucson area. We are fortunate to be able to draw on the vast scholarship of past and current scholars at the university including Edward Spicer, Tom Holm, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, Andrea McComb Sanchez, Reid Gómez, Aresta Tsosie-Paddock, Ofelia Zepeda, and Rebecca Tsosie. These scholars, as well as others in the department, have provided invaluable support and encouragement throughout the completion of this project.

NOTES

† The two epigraphs are excerpted from Refugio Savala (with Kathleen M. Sands), *The Autobiography of a Yaqui Poet* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 117, and Ofelia Zepeda, *Where the Clouds are Formed* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008), 43. Edward H. Spicer, a University of Arizona faculty member, wrote the introduction to Savala's autobiography. In the same year, the University of Arizona published a work by Spicer on Yaqui history: Edward H. Spicer, *The Yaquis: A Cultural History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980).

1. Julio Cammarota, letter to President Robert C. Robbins emailed to all faculty, April 22, 2020.

2. For the purposes of this article, we primarily use the term "Indigenous," as the conversation surrounding land acknowledgments involves broader international communities. We also may use additional terms to maintain consistency with other scholarship. For a fuller understanding of performativity, see Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Yale University Press, 1999).

3. Kyle Mittan, "UArizona Land Acknowledgment Illustrates Commitment to Indigenous Students, Communities." News, University of Arizona, July 6, 2021, <https://news.arizona.edu/story/uarizona-land-acknowledgement-illustrates-commitment-indigenous-students-communities>.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. For a critical look into various Canadian University land acknowledgment statements, see Rima Wilkes, Aaron Duong, Linc Kesler, and Howard Ramos, "Canadian University Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands, Treaties, and Peoples," *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de sociologie* 54, no. 1 (2017): 89–120, 90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12140>.

8. Ibid, 90.

9. Ibid, 92.

10. Lila Asher, Joe Curnow, and Amil Davis, "The Limits of Settlers' Territorial Acknowledgments," *Curriculum Inquiry* 48, no. 3 (2018): 316–34, 317, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2018.1468211>.

11. Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone, "Land-Grab Universities," *High Country News*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.hcn.org/issues/52.4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities>.

12. Kyle Mittan, "UArizona Land Acknowledgment Illustrates Commitment to Indigenous Students, Communities."

13. "Land Acknowledgment for Introducing Public Events," Cornell University Library, <https://www.library.cornell.edu/communications/assets/land-acknowledgement>.

14. Ibid.

15. Institute of Native American Studies, University of Georgia, <https://inas.uga.edu/>.

16. "Montana Campus Compact—Land Acknowledgment," Campus Compact Montana, February 2021, <https://mtcompact.org/wp-content/uploads/large/sites/70/2021/02/Full-Land-Acknowledgement.pdf>.

17. "Acknowledgment of America's First Peoples," Strategic Plan, Washington State University, <https://strategicplan.wsu.edu/acknowledgement-of-americas-first-peoples-4/>.

18. Theresa Stewart-Ambo and K. Wayne Yang, "Beyond Land Acknowledgment in Settler Institutions," *Social Text* 39, no. 1 (146) (March 2021): 21–46, 23, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-8750076>.

19. See "A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgment," Native Governance Center, https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/?fbclid=IwAR0CKuVdxDYLu3Ed_1WhB4ppFneoEHOWPDWTfuiSliB9_gWXjm2DDH9jxk. See also Jordan Mae Cook, "How To Do a Territorial Acknowledgment," University of Alberta, January 24, 2019, <https://www.ualberta.ca/>

folio/2019/01/how-to-do-a-territorial-acknowledgment.html; and Suzanne Keptwo, *We All Go Back To Land: The Who, Why, and How of Land Acknowledgments* (University of Toronto Press, 2021).

20. Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone, "Land-Grab Universities."

21. In their article, Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández discuss the role that curriculum plays in perpetuating settler colonial goals of replacing through the logic of elimination. Eve Tuck and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, "Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 29, no. 1 (2013). See also Asher, et al., who discuss the efficacy of land acknowledgments. Their study found that acknowledgments serve to combat everyday erasure, but fail to cultivate a sustained decolonial pedagogy. Asher, et al., "The Limits of Settlers' Territorial Acknowledgements."

22. Asher, et al., "The Limits of Settlers' Territorial Acknowledgements"; Leda Cooks and Jennifer A. Zenovich, "On Whose Land Do I/We Learn? Rethinking Ownership and Land Acknowledgement," *Communication Teacher* 35, no. 3, (2021): 222–28, 223, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2021.1922729>; C. Vowel, "Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements," *^âpihtawikosisân: Law. Language. Culture*, September 23, 2016, <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>.

23. Joe Wark, "Land Acknowledgements in the Academy: Refusing the Settler Myth," *Curriculum Inquiry* 51, no. 2 (2021): 191–209, 195, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2021.1889924>.

24. Asher, et al., "The Limits of Settlers' Territorial Acknowledgements," 325.

25. *Ibid.*, 331.

26. Wark, "Land Acknowledgements in the Academy," 195; Asher, et al., "The Limits of Settlers' Territorial Acknowledgements," 328.

27. Joanna Kidman, "Whither Decolonisation? Indigenous Scholars and the Problem of Inclusion in the Neoliberal University," *Journal of Sociology* 56, no. 2 (2020): 247–62, 250, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783319835958>.

28. Stewart-Ambo and Yang, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement in Settler Institutions," 22.

29. Wark, "Land Acknowledgements in the Academy," 195.

30. Asher, et al., "The Limits of Settlers' Territorial Acknowledgements," 325; Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández, "Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity," 86.

31. Wark, "Land Acknowledgements in the Academy," 195; Asher, et al., "The Limits of Settlers' Territorial Acknowledgements," 317.

32. Anne Bonds and Joshua Inwood, "Beyond White Privilege: Geographies of White Supremacy and Settler Colonialism," *Progress in Human Geography* 40, no. 6 (2016): 715–33, 728, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132515613166>.

33. Keptwo, *We All Go Back to the Land*, 65; Wark, "Land Acknowledgements in the Academy," 197.

34. As several scholars have noted, Indigenous women in particular have been significant drivers in the creation of these statements. Wark, "Land Acknowledgements in the Academy," 194; Asher, et al., "The Limits of Settlers' Territorial Acknowledgements," 325; Onkwehonwe Rising, "The Trials and Tribulations of Territorial Acknowledgment" (blog), October 18, 2016, <https://onkwehonwerising.wordpress.com/2016/10/18/whos-land-the-trials-and-tribulations-of-territorial-acknowledgment/>.

35. While there is room for this practice to grow, there are others who believe it would be better to suspend the practice altogether. For a good example of this viewpoint, see Wark, "Land Acknowledgements in the Academy," 204–5: "When our knowledges, which we know are beautiful and contain much wisdom, are perverted in ways that support our oppression, a refusal to continue offering these gifts to the academy is often necessary. . . . Refusal is an act of love for our culture and who we are as a people."

36. As Asher, et al. explain, land acknowledgments are an issue because they are universalized, taken out of their specific territorial and cultural context and coopted into broad discussions

of colonialism and social justice. We appreciate Asher, Curnow, and Davis for their scholarship and making this important point. Their work, and especially this point, has been an important part of our own thinking as we engage with land acknowledgments. We respectfully build from their work. Asher, et al., “The Limits of Settlers’ Territorial Acknowledgements,” 326.

37. Suzanne Keptwo reminds us of this when she writes: “The Land Acknowledgement is not just about the people or peoples who once resided and thrived in a specific location . . . It’s important to make the connection between Land and the People—and the People and the Land.” Keptwo, *We All Go Back to the Land*, 119–20.

38. For the purposes of our article, we speak broadly of the differences between western and Indigenous communities. We recognize that each tribe/nation has its own conceptions of land unique to its communities and, despite what this construction might suggest, the broad categories of “western” and “Indigenous” in actuality, should not be simplistically differentiated. Here we recognize the limitations of this broad differentiation and use it within this narrow context for the purpose of discussing overarching differences that affect the rhetoric and implementation of land acknowledgments.

39. Andrea McComb Sanchez, “Resistance through Secrecy and Integration: Pueblo Indians, Catholicism, and the Subversion of Colonial Authority,” *Religion* 50, no. 2 (2020): 196–214, 199, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2020.1713514>.

40. We would like to thank University of Arizona American Indian Studies professor emeritus Tom Holm and his colleagues for providing us with the Peoplehood Matrix. We are fortunate to be able to draw on University of Arizona scholars as we center our own thoughts and scholarship. Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis, “Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 1 (2003): 7–24, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.2003.0004>. In their work, Holm, Pearson, and Chavis use the term “place” rather than “land.” For the purposes of this article, we will use both terms interchangeably.

41. *Ibid.*, 12.

42. Ellen Cushman, “‘We’re Taking the Genius of Sequoyah into this Century’: The Cherokee Syllabary, Peoplehood, and Perseverance,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 26, no. 1 (2011): 70, <https://doi.org/10.5749/wicazosareview.26.1.0067>.

43. Rebecca Tsosie, “Land, Culture, and Community: Reflections on Native Sovereignty and Property in America,” *Indiana Law Review* vol. 34 (2001): 1302.

44. Holm, et al., “Peoplehood,” 13.

45. Farina King, *The Earth Memory Compass: Diné Landscapes and Education in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018) 14.

46. *Ibid.*, 17.

47. Peter M. Whiteley, “Hopi Place Value: Translating a Landscape,” in *Born in the Blood: On Native American Translation*, ed. Brian Swann (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 105.

48. Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 7.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Holm, et al., “Peoplehood,” 12.

51. Basso, *Wisdom*, 12.

52. Ofelia Zepeda, *When It Rains: Tohono O’odham and Pima Poetry* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019).

53. Holm, et al., “Peoplehood,” 14.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Suzanne Jones Crawford, *Native American Religious Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 61.

56. *Ibid.*, 60–61.

57. Ibid.
58. McComb Sanchez, "Resistance," 199.
59. See Basso, *Wisdom*.
60. Ibid., 10.
61. Ibid., 102.
62. As ceremonies can often be considered sacred, insider knowledge too powerful to be shared with outsiders, this article will not go into detail of the ceremonies themselves. Rather, following Tisa Wenger's example, we will only discuss the general significance of the connection to place within these traditional and contemporary ceremonies.
63. Holm, et al., "Peoplehood," 14.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Vine Deloria Jr., *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 244.
67. Ibid., 245.
68. Dennis Kelley, *Tradition, Performance, and Religion in Native America: Ancestral Ways, Modern Selves* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 13.
69. Ibid., 14.
70. Ibid.
71. 36 CFR § 2.6, "Gathering of plants or plant parts by federally recognized Indian tribes."
72. Clint Carroll, "Cherokee Relationships to Land: Reflections on a Historic Plant Gathering Agreement between Buffalo National River and the Cherokee Nation," *Parks Stewardship Forum* 36, no. 1 (2020): 154–58, 155.
73. Jeremy FiveCrows, "I Am of This land," in *Nez Perce Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), ix.
74. Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994), 62.
75. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Brantford, ON: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2019), 158.
76. Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, *Hopi Runners: Crossing the Terrain between Indian and American* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018), 5.
77. Ibid., 5–6.
78. Aresta Tsosie-Paddock, "Second-Generation Navajo Relocates: Coping with Land Loss, Cultural Dispossession, and Displacement," *Wicazo Sa Review* 33, no. 1 (2018): 87–116, 111, <https://doi.org/10.5749/wicazosareview.33.1.0087>.
79. Ibid.
80. Brandi Denison, *Ute Land Religion in the American West 1879–2009* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 217.
81. Ibid., 229.
82. Ibid., 242–43.
83. The subheading invokes Eve Tuck's use of *rematriation*. Similar to Tuck's use of *rematriation* to emphasize the recentering of land within the context of curriculum studies, our goal is to recenter land within conversations about land acknowledgements. See Eve Tuck, "Rematriating Curriculum Studies," *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 8, no. 1 (2011): 34–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15505170.2011.572521>.
84. McComb Sanchez, "Resistance through Secrecy and Integration," 199.
85. Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Winnipeg, CN: Fernwood Publishing Co., Ltd, 2008), 87.

86. Asher, et al., “The Limits of Settlers’ Territorial Acknowledgements,” 326.

87. In his announcement of the new land acknowledgement, President Robbins writes, “We also want to emphasize that this land acknowledgement is a milestone in our ongoing dialogue with the Tohono O’odham, the Pascua Yaqui, and the 20 other federally recognized tribes in the state. It is an indicator of our commitment to collaboration and to maintaining government-to-government relationships with the Native Nations and Indigenous communities with whom we share this region.” Robert C. Robbins and N. Levi Esquerria, email communication from Executive Office of the President, July 6, 2021, <https://view.comms.arizona.edu/?qs=32a0487132d6f71dcce7a30eb45675aabe3618b229fb0738da086350aed546398f94f269d5140bfcfe0a7b66b87e69c0f18fd40b7355c029754519786315105c2097624cb101ad768409c4ef5fc9438>.

88. This silence is all the more suspect given that in August of 2012, the University of Arizona dedicated a week in recognition of the University’s land-grant status. See La Monica Everett-Haynes, “The UA’s Land-Grant Mission: Its Contemporary Relevance,” *The University of Arizona UANews*, August 27, 2012, <https://uanews.arizona.edu/story/the-ua-s-land-grant-mission-its-contemporary-relevance>. As part of its recognition, the university presented a series of articles and short video clips with statements from faculty and students regarding the importance of the land-grant status and its meaning for the University. Both the articles and the video clips promoted the University’s numerous community outreach programs and solidified its land-grant identity as one where the fundamental goal is to serve the community. Within this series, there were no land acknowledgments nor any mention of the stolen Tohono O’odham lands used to build the university. Only two of the articles mentioned American Indians, but rather than discussing American Indian land theft, these articles listed American Indians as some of the communities that the university charitably serves. Additionally, in one of the articles, the dean of the College of Law described the early days of the university and the “rugged, relatively undeveloped” nature of the region at the time. He credited the effectiveness of the College of Law in helping to develop the region. See Alexis Blue, “Land-Grant UA Drives Economic, Community Development,” *University of Arizona UANews*, August 30, 2012, <https://uanews.arizona.edu/story/land-grant-ua-drives-economic-community-development>.

Most recently, President Robbins invoked the university’s identity as a land-grant institution in order to congratulate the university for its distribution of COVID vaccines. See president Robert C. Robbins and N. Levi Esquerria, “Updated Land Acknowledgment Statement,” email communication from the Executive Office of the President, July 6, 2021, <https://view.comms.arizona.edu/?qs=32a0487132d6f71dcce7a30eb45675aabe3618b229fb0738da086350aed546398f94f269d5140bfcfe0a7b66b87e69c0f18fd40b7355c029754519786315105c2097624cb101ad768409c4ef5fc9438>. Rather than recognizing the history of the University and the stolen lands on which it resides, the University of Arizona presents itself as a major influence in developing the region and as continuing its charitable work to the surrounding communities today. This is, to say the least, revisionist history and another example of the celebration of the Morrill Act and land-grant universities without the recognition of their sordid past.

89. Keptwo, *We All Go Back to the Land*, 230.

90. Suzanne Keptwo’s thorough discussion of land acknowledgements in *We All Go Back to the Land* is an excellent resource for considering how to engage in the practice. We are grateful to Keptwo for her work as it helped us throughout our own project of engaging with land acknowledgements. .

91. Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, “You Are on Indian Land: Acknowledging the Traditional Homelands of Indigenous People at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,” *Beyond the Mesas* (blog), October 31, 2019, <https://beyondthemas.com/2019/10/31/you-are-on-indian-land-acknowledging-the-traditional-homelands-of-indigenous-people-at-the-university-of-illinois-at-urbana-champaign/>.

92. *Ibid.*

