

SENATE BILL #2699

TITLE: Implementation of a Land Acknowledgement Statement for ASUW Senate Meetings

DATE INTRODUCED: April 14, 2020

AUTHOR: Senator Titus; Chief of Staff Talamantes; UMC Co-Chair Gonzales

SPONSORS: Senators Alrejjal, Mulhall, Pierson, and Welsh; President Wilkins; Vice President Houghton; Director Savage; First-Year Senator Swilling; SAL Bennett

1. WHEREAS, the purpose of the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming (ASUW)
2. Student Government is to serve our fellow students in the best manner possible; and,
3. WHEREAS, Goal 2 “Sense of Community” of the “ASUW Strategic Plan Moving Forward:
4. 2018-2022,” as shown in Addendum A, could be addressed by the inclusion of a land
5. acknowledgement statement at ASUW Senate meetings; and,
6. WHEREAS, inclusion of land acknowledgment statements is a way to promote community
7. through cultural understanding by affirming the autonomy and wellbeing of Indigenous
8. peoples while providing a meaningful opportunity for education and for students to reflect
9. on the University of Wyoming’s history; and,
10. WHEREAS, land grant universities have a history of dispossessing Indigenous peoples from
11. their land and as a result, historical traumas continue to impact these communities and
12. contribute to rampant disparities throughout Native populations across America as
13. referenced in Addendum B; and,
14. WHEREAS, many peer institutions including Colorado State University, Montana State
15. University, and the University of Colorado-Boulder have implemented institution-wide and
16. student government focused initiatives surrounding indigenous land acknowledgment; and,
17. WHEREAS, “A Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for ASUW” calls for
18. internal diversity through legislation in collaboration with campus partners and groups, as

19. shown in Addendum C; and,
20. WHEREAS, campus programs and partners such as the Shepard Symposium on Social
21. Justice, Martin Luther King Jr. Days of Dialogue, and Keepers of the Fire have implemented
22. a land acknowledgment statement into their events and programs like the one included in
23. Addendum D; and,
24. WHEREAS, the University of Wyoming occupies the land of the Cheyenne, Arapaho,
25. Shoshone, and Crow peoples along with other Native tribes that call the Great Basin and
26. Rocky Mountain region home; and,
27. WHEREAS, land acknowledgements should be a meaningful practice with appreciation and
28. gratitude to the original inhabitants and their sacrifices made for the land and are
29. “transformative acts that ... undo Indigenous erasure,” as referenced in Addendum B; and,
30. THEREFORE, be it enacted that the ASUW Rules and Procedures be amended to reflect the
31. changes in Addendum E; and,
32. THEREFORE, be it further enacted that, upon passage, this bill will take effect at the start of
33. Fiscal Year 2021.

Referred to: Advocacy, Diversity, and Policy; Student Outreach and Programming; Steering

Date of Passage: _____ **Signed:** _____

(ASUW Chairperson)

“Being enacted on _____, I do hereby sign my name hereto and approve this Senate action.” _____

ASUW President

Addendum A

GOAL 2

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- Provide accessible programs and events.
- Promote meaningful educational experiences and outcomes.
- Encourage cultural understanding and support for student organizations, programs, and events.
- Increase safety measures on campus.



OUR OBJECTIVE

Promote and join together as a community with the best possible understanding of one another through accessibility and inclusivity for every student.

Source: <http://www.uwyo.edu/asuw/files/working%20documents/asuw-moving-forward.pdf>

Addendum B

Why acknowledge territory?

Territory acknowledgement is a way that people insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. This is often done at the beginning of ceremonies, lectures, or any public event. It can be a subtle way to recognize the history of colonialism and a need for change in settler colonial societies.

However, these acknowledgements can easily be a token gesture rather than a meaningful practice. All settlers, including recent arrivants, have a responsibility to consider what it means to acknowledge the history and legacy of colonialism. What are some of the privileges settlers enjoy today because of colonialism? How can individuals develop relationships with peoples whose territory they are living on in the contemporary Canadian geopolitical landscape? What are you, or your organization, doing beyond acknowledging the territory where you live, work, or hold your events? What might you be doing that perpetuates settler colonial futurity rather than considering alternative ways forward for Canada? Do you have an understanding of the on-going violence and the trauma that is part of the structure of colonialism?

As Chelsea Vowel, a Métis woman from the Plains Cree speaking community of Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta, writes:

"If we think of territorial acknowledgments as sites of potential disruption, they can be transformative acts that to some extent undo Indigenous erasure. I believe this is true as long as these acknowledgments discomfit both those speaking and hearing the words. The fact of Indigenous presence should force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands." – Chelsea Vowel, Métis, *Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements*

What is Historical Trauma?

Historical trauma is multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural, racial or ethnic group. It is related to major events that oppressed a particular group of people because of their status as oppressed, such as slavery, the Holocaust, forced migration, and the violent colonization of Native Americans. While many in such a group will experience no effects of the historical trauma, others may experience poor overall physical and behavioral health, including low self-esteem, depression, self-destructive behavior, marked propensity for violent or aggressive behavior, substance misuse and addiction, and high rates of suicide and cardiovascular disease. Acute problems of domestic violence or alcohol misuse that are not directly linked to historical trauma may be exacerbated by living in a community with unaddressed grief and behavioral health needs. Parents' experience of trauma may disrupt typical parenting skills and contribute to behavior problems in children. Compounding this familial or intergenerational trauma, historical trauma often involves the additional challenge of a damaged cultural identity (Sotero, 2006).

Clinical social workers first described historical trauma among descendants of the Holocaust and the children of Japanese Americans interned during World War II (Barocas and Barocas, 1979, Nagata et al 1999). The children and grandchildren of survivors commonly experience attachment issues and isolation by their parents (Danieli, 1980). Considerable work has also been done with communities of Native Americans, who experienced repeated massacres and the forced removal of children to federal and mission boarding and day schools (Brave Heart, 2003). From her work with tribal communities, clinician and researcher Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart describes historical trauma as the "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experience." Similarly, African Americans experienced generations of slavery, segregation, and institutionalized racism that has contributed to physical, psychological, and spiritual trauma (DeGruy, 2005). For members of any of these communities, daily reminders of racial discrimination can exacerbate individual responses to trauma. An understudied group who has experienced historical trauma is the disability community. In the recent past, people with disabilities have been subjected to biases and misrepresentations about their capabilities and lived experiences (Miller and Levine, 2013). Attempts to eradicate people with disabilities have included eugenics campaigns, compulsory sterilization, forced psychiatric treatment, and the institutionalization of people with intellectual disabilities.

Sources: <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/>
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit/trauma-concept>

Addendum C

Internal Diversity

Diverse representation

-Baseline: Senate has some diversity, United Multicultural Council (UMC) is an ex-officio, International Students Association (ISA) is an ex-officio, certain multicultural groups do not feel represented by ASUW and/or do not understand the process of running for ASUW

-2023 Target: requirement for Senators to present about elections to RSOs and in classes, increased collaboration on legislation with departments such as Multicultural Affairs, work towards a new executive position for a non-financial focused Director of RSO Relations, more representation of ASUW at non-traditional and international orientations.



Source: http://www.uwyo.edu/asuw/_files/working%20documents/actual-plan.pdf

Addendum D

Statement of Land Acknowledgement

“We collectively acknowledge that the University of Wyoming occupies the ancestral and traditional lands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, and Shoshone Indigenous peoples along with other Native tribes who call the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain region home. We recognize, support, and advocate alongside Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and with those forcibly removed from their Homelands.”

Addendum E

Article 2. Order of Business

Section 2.01 Order of Business

1. The following shall be the order of business, unless amended on the floor of the Senate:

A. Call to Order

B. “We collectively acknowledge that the University of Wyoming occupies the ancestral and traditional lands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, and Shoshone Indigenous peoples along with other Native tribes who call the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain region home. We recognize, support, and advocate alongside Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and with those forcibly removed from their Homelands.”

C. Pledge of Allegiance (at individual member’s discretion)

D. Mission Statement: “The purpose of the Student Government of the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming is to serve our fellow students in the best manner possible through accurate representation, professional interaction with campus programs and organizations, and responsible, effective leadership.”

E. Roll Call- all voting and non-voting members of the Senate.