

IMPLEMENTING THE COUNTYWIDE LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION 1

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE 2

YOUR ROLE 3

GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE AND THEIR RESPONSES . . . 4

IN PRACTICE 5



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INTRODUCTION

[The Countywide Land Acknowledgment](#) recognizes that the land now known as the County of Los Angeles was originally and is still inhabited and cared for by the Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh, and Chumash Peoples. It is a way to honor and pay respect to the many generations that continue their stewardship of land and water within the region. The Countywide Land Acknowledgment also acknowledges the role that settler colonization played in the history of these communities, and demonstrates a collective responsibility and commitment to restorative work and values.

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PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

As you implement the Countywide Land Acknowledgment, you may experience resistance or engage in difficult conversations about land acknowledgments and their purpose.

Difficult conversations can be an opportunity to grow as individuals and together as a staff. The tips and practice scripts in this guide are intended to support these types of conversations.



Photo by Renae Wootson

DIFFICULT
CONVERSATIONS
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OPPORTUNITY
TO GROW

YOUR ROLE

Being prepared to have difficult conversations starts with growing your own understanding of why we acknowledge the land and the First Peoples.

Do your research. Be conscious of where you are. Explore what the Countywide Land Acknowledgment means to you.

Consider asking yourself:

- *Why am I delivering this land acknowledgment? What is my intention?*
- *Do I have any potential unconscious biases that may be operating?*
- *What impact do I hope this land acknowledgment will have on those listening?*

Additional discussion prompts and educational resources can be found on the [County's Land Acknowledgment website](#) and in the [Countywide Land Acknowledgment Implementation Guide](#).

IT TAKES PRACTICE. IMPLEMENTING, UNDERSTANDING, AND SHARING INFORMATION ON THE COUNTYWIDE LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT WILL GET EASIER OVER TIME AS MORE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES BECOME FAMILIAR WITH ITS ROLE, USE, AND IMPORTANCE AND AS YOU GROW YOUR OWN KNOWLEDGE.

GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE AND THEIR RESPONSES

When preparing for difficult conversations and/or negative reactions, take time to get to know the audience and understand the underlying concerns that may be driving their discomfort or negative response.



To do so, explore the following:

CONSIDER THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS

Consider the perspectives, histories, and interests of the individuals or communities in your audience. Are there ways to frame or introduce the Countywide Land Acknowledgment that addresses these interests, concerns, or needs?



SHARE INFORMATION IN RELEVANT WAYS

Identify ways to share information about the Countywide Land Acknowledgment that connects it to the issues, values, and ideals of the individuals or groups in the audience.



EMPHASIZE HUMAN DIGNITY

We know that many communities hold histories of land inhabitation and displacement. The Countywide Land Acknowledgment is an important step for human dignity. Advancing human dignity for First Peoples through a land acknowledgment does not result in a loss for other marginalized communities, but rather offers a path forward with dignity.

IN PRACTICE

Below is an example of how a conversation could go with a fellow staff member:

If your co-worker says, “I don’t want to include the Countywide Land Acknowledgment at our public meeting. I just don’t think it fits with our topic and I want to jump right into the matter at hand.”

SHARE

Share Your Understanding: “I find starting with the Countywide Land Acknowledgment is a good way to ground the meeting with our department’s values and the County’s equity goals. I think it can be a good way to positively impact outcomes by keeping local Tribes and Native Peoples at the forefront during our County decision-making processes.”

[Add in any personal connections from your own experiences, reflections, and prep work.]

UNDERSTAND

Gain a Better Understanding of Their Why: “Is there any part of the Countywide Land Acknowledgment you feel doesn’t fit with the topic of our meeting?” OR “Have you had an experience delivering the Land Acknowledgment previously that is driving this concern?”

[Listen and empathize.]

Example Answer from Co-Worker: *During our last public meeting, I felt uncomfortable reading it out loud and I was worried people were tuning out.*

REFRAME

Use this Understanding to Reframe and Invite Next Steps: “I was really nervous the first time I delivered the Countywide Land Acknowledgment. It helped me to practice by using the Pronunciation Guide, to make sure I could pronounce the names correctly and feel more confident. I would be happy to practice with you.”

[AND/OR]

“If we define our intent and our ask of the audience with the Countywide Land Acknowledgment, I think that helps the audience stay engaged. What if you spoke to the connection directly? Something like, ‘As we read the Countywide Land Acknowledgment, we hope you can think about your own connection to the land and our collective responsibility to care for it.’ We can work together to come up with something.”



Here are a few of examples of how conversations could go with community members:

A community member negatively remarks on the land acknowledgment.

SHARE

Share Your Understanding: “The Countywide Land Acknowledgment was developed over several months of collaboration with appointed representatives of local Tribes. It is a way to honor and pay respect to the land and the First Peoples, and we hope it is a first step toward correcting the misinformation and harmful practices that erase the history and culture of the First Peoples.”

[Add in any personal connections from your own reflections and prep work.]

UNDERSTAND

Gain a Better Understanding of Their Why: “What about the Countywide Land Acknowledgment stands out to you?”

[NOTE: Avoid framing this question in a way that might “other” the person feeling discomfort with the land acknowledgment. That could shut them down or push them to feel defensive rather than staying open to learning and discussing.]

Example Answer: “I think land acknowledgments are performative.”

REFRAME

Use this Understanding to Reframe and Invite Next Steps: “We consider the Countywide Land Acknowledgment to be a first step and we’re committed to ensuring that it is followed up by action. We know that a land acknowledgment on its own is not enough. A few of the ways my department has taken action include [INSERT SPECIFIC RELEVANT EXAMPLES. This can also be broadened to include actions taken across the County.]

Is there anything specific you think we should be doing beyond the Countywide Land Acknowledgment?”

Example Answer: “I think land acknowledgments are woke nonsense.”

REFRAME

Use this Understanding to Reframe and Invite Next Steps: “The First Peoples of LA County are still here—we are guests on their ancestral lands. The County, through the leadership of the Board of Supervisors, recognizes the history of mistreatment and displacement, and is committed to building relationships with local Tribes. It’s important for the County to recognize the history of mistreatment and displacement, as well as commit to building relationships with local Tribes.

[NOTE: Adding in a personal story or connection about what the Countywide Land Acknowledgment means to you can be useful in this type of scenario.]

We’ve heard from Tribes who were involved in the development of the acknowledgment about the positive impact this process and statement have already made, as well as their hope that the visibility from the Countywide Land Acknowledgment could keep local Tribes and the American Indian and Alaska Native community at the forefront during County decision-making processes. I’d like to invite you to learn more about the Countywide Land Acknowledgment on our website and I can be available to help answer any specific questions you may have or to point you to the right contact.”

REFRAME

Example Answer: “Why do we have a land acknowledgment for Native Americans and no acknowledgment for other marginalized groups?”

Use this Understanding to Reframe and Invite Next Steps: “It can further marginalize people if we group them together without being specific. In the case of the Countywide Land Acknowledgment, it is a way to honor and pay respect to the land and the First Peoples of what is now known as the County of Los Angeles. It is a first step toward correcting the misinformation and harmful practices that erase the history and culture of the First Peoples and is intended to be an opening to greater public consciousness of Native American sovereignty and a move toward creating equitable relationships and beginning reconciliation with the First Peoples.

Advancing human dignity for First Peoples through the Countywide Land Acknowledgment is not a loss for other marginalized communities, but rather offers a path forward with dignity for all. Are there other ways you would like to see people be acknowledged or specific harms the County should be looking to address?”



We hope this guide helps you feel more prepared and confident to address difficult conversations or reactions to the Countywide Land Acknowledgment. We recognize that specific situations or questions may arise that are not addressed here.

Questions may be directed to:
acknowledge-land@lanaic.lacounty.gov.