



All Pueblo Council of Governors

Officers:
Mark Mitchell, Chairman
Jerome Lucero, Vice-Chairman
Governor Arden Kucate, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 6, 2023

All Pueblo Council of Governors Condemns Violence at Prayerful Celebration

(Albuquerque, New Mexico) - On September 28, 2023, during a peaceful, prayerful event an individual agitator shot an Indigenous man in front of the Rio Arriba County Commissioner's office in Española, New Mexico. Indigenous demonstrators and allies from surrounding communities were opposing the reinstallation of a bronze statue depicting Spanish conquistador Juan De Oñate. Since the incident, Commissioners had decided to delay the reinstallation. The act of violence immediately led to questions and criticism about the Commission's decision to pull the statue out of storage and have it placed in full display in front of its Española offices. The decision was made without public input or tribal consultation.

All Pueblo Council of Governors' (APCG) Vice Chairman Jerome Lucero former Governor of Zia Pueblo stated "It's unfortunate that during a prayer filled ceremony that an individual was seriously harmed over this issue. This shows that the historical trauma and pain inflicted on our Pueblo people by Oñate is still here. As tribal leaders, we are very concerned about the possibility of continued violence against Native people who vehemently disagree with the Commission's decision."

Oñate is remembered by the Pueblos for his inhumane acts of cruelty against Indigenous People and Spanish settlers. One of the most painful historic accounts is the attack on Acoma in January 1599, when Spanish soldiers under the command of Oñate decimated the Pueblo and killed 800 Acoma men, women, and children. The attack was in retribution for the killing of his nephew and a dozen Spanish soldiers, who had demanded food and supplies, assaulted an Acoma woman, and forced allegiance to the Spanish crown. Later, Oñate ordered the right foot of surviving Acoma men to be cut off. The men had fought to protect the Pueblo families from the European invaders. Unfortunately, 60 Acoma children were removed from their families and taken to Mexico, never to return. After being accused of violating Spanish law, Oñate was tried, exiled, and banned from the region because of his inhumane acts and atrocities committed against Indigenous People.

Acoma Governor Randall Vicente offered this perspective. "Acoma people are resilient. We survived some of the most violent acts committed at the hands of a historic figure who should not be idolized. I am afraid the decision to put up the Oñate statue will only polarize our communities. We have come a long way since the battle at Acoma. Today, we need to stop seeing each other as enemies. We need to talk and listen to one another and work together for the safety and common good of all."

Acoma

Cochiti

Isleta

Jemez

Laguna

Nambe

Ohkay Owingeh

Picuris

Pojoaque

Sandia

San Felipe

San Ildefonso

Santa Ana

Santa Clara

Santo Domingo

Taos

Tesuque

Ysleta del Sur

Zia

Zuni



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Acoma

APCG Chairman Mark Mitchell, former governor of Tesuque remarked, “Pueblo Governors uphold the core values of love and respect. Violence threatens the core values of peace and our collective well-being. We condemn all actions promoting increased violence.” Chairman Mitchell added, “Unequivocally, the health and safety of Native people is on the hearts and minds of Pueblo Governors as we seek justice and reconciliation. Pueblos should always have a seat at the table to be consulted about these decisions.”

Cochiti

Isleta

Jemez

Laguna

Nambe

Ohkay Owingeh

Picuris

Pojoaque

The question remains - should the Rio Arriba County Commission use a public space to reinstall the Oñate statue? For this question, APCG recommends that the Commission reflect on efforts during a similar controversy surrounding the Santa Fe Entrada. APCG led a series of diplomatic sessions among the stakeholder – sessions that were grounded in shared core value as well as drawing attention to the state’s complex history and engaging in meaningful discourse, addressing the legacy of colonialism in New Mexico. The outcome was a negotiated agreement to cease reenactment of the Entrada and instead work toward reconciliation and an acceptance of our diverse histories, culture, languages, as well as reaffirming those familiar bonds of friendship, respect and understanding.

APCG calls for a similar engagement and stands ready to work with the Rio Arriba County Commission to arrive at meaningful outcomes and resolve this issue.

Sandia

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For additional questions, please contact Teran Villa, tvilla@indianpueblo.org

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