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## UNM celebrates Indigenous Peoples' Day

By Alyssa Bitsie (<https://www.dailylobo.com/staff/alyssa-bitsie>) Published 10/10/18 4:10am

Students and faculty gathered in the University of New Mexico Student Union Building atrium to celebrate Indigenous People's Day Monday Oct. 8. The event featured a read-in of Indigenous texts hosted by the Project for New Mexico Graduates of Color (PNMGC).

The PNMGC is a student-led program that works to retain students of color through ongoing peer mentoring. According to the group's UNM website, (<http://pnmgc.unm.edu/>) this mentoring provides academic, social, cultural and emotional support.

The read-in featured speakers from PNMGC, UNM Kiva Club and various faculty members at UNM.

The Kiva Club encourages student and community involvement in Native American issues on campus, according to the group's Facebook page.

Vice President of the Kiva Club and UNM senior Hope Alvarado said she helped push the conversation about colonialism, conquests and the way society celebrates it.

"We wrote a resolution at UNM to get Indigenous People's Day passed instead of Columbus Day and it took three years," Alvarado said.

Alvarado has been with the Kiva Club for four years she said Indigenous people and all people from different backgrounds share this day to show their resilience

"Indigenous people exist everywhere across the globe," Alvarado said. "It's not just North America centric and Indigenous people are also undocumented, Indigenous people are also black or African, and to really talk about the struggles not only in the United States, but outside of the U.S. too."

To begin the celebration, a blessing was performed by Dr. Thomas Chavez, an assistant professor for the College of Education, to honor and respect people for who they are and where they come from.

"This is an important day for all people. We all come from Indigenous backgrounds whether we honor it or not," Chavez said.

As the understanding of different people grows so does resiliency. Despite the tragedies and conflicts throughout history indigenous people are resilient, Chavez said.

Lloyd Lee, a UNM assistant professor in the Native American Studies department, said he wants attendees to have an educational experience here.

"I think one of the things that I'd like for them to get is just a little bit of education on Indigenous peoples,'" Lee said.

As a continuation of Indigenous People's Day, The Red Nation invited attendees to a march and rally in Downtown Albuquerque.

According to The Red Nation website (<https://therednation.org/>), the Red Nation is a coalition of volunteer Native and non-Native activists, educators, students and community organizers for Native Liberation.

Members of the Kiva Club and The Red Nation lead the march and rally to Civic Plaza. "What do we do? Rise up, fight back!" could be heard from First Street and Central Avenue on Monday evening.

Among the people that participated in the march and rally was Nick Estes.

"The importance of today is to exert our sovereign right to exist as Indigenous peoples and to let the world know, let each other know, that we're not going to stand for the continued destruction of our lands, our water and our air," Estes said.

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