

The PAN Inc. Acknowledgement of Country

“We are meeting here today on the Land of [Aboriginal group/clan] people of the [Aboriginal nation] Nation.

It is important that when we practice magick we remember the spirit of the land on which we practice and the peoples whom walked the land long before us.

We acknowledge the pain felt by the <insert name> people having suffered separation from their land and the loss of family and culture.

We pay our respect to the spirit of the Land which is still alive today, and to Elders, both past and present.

This was and always will be Aboriginal Land.”

What if I don't know the correct name of the local Aboriginal People?

A map of the Traditional Custodians on the website of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies will help you find the name of the local people [2]. Or check council websites. They often have information about the local peoples, which can enrich an acknowledgement of country by giving information about the culture and practices sacred to that area.

Otherwise, use a simple, generic acknowledgement.

“I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to the Elders past and present, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation.”

The important thing is to make the acknowledgement, to the best of your ability. It doesn't have to be word perfect.

How to Support PAN Inc.

Why not consider becoming a member of PAN?

An annual membership, concession membership, or family membership, brings many benefits, including discounts at participating Pagan Friendly Businesses, our quarterly member magazine ‘The Small Tapestry’, support and advertising for Pagan events and gatherings across Australia, and reports on any legal and media work happening within the Pagan community.

Your membership dollar also helps PAN sponsor local groups & events and further its educational aims.

For more information, please contact PAN Inc.



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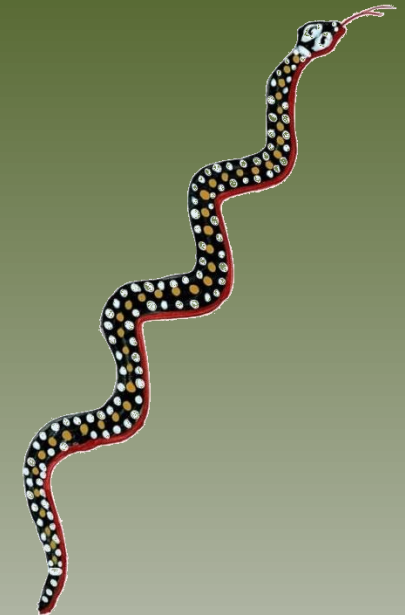
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PAN Inc.

Sacred Ground & Acknowledgement of Country

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As practitioners of magick on an already sacred land with a rich spiritual history, it is polite and appropriate to perform an Acknowledgement of Country before performing any ritual or magical work. We do this out of respect to both the Aboriginal people and the spirits of the land.

What is Acknowledgement of Country?

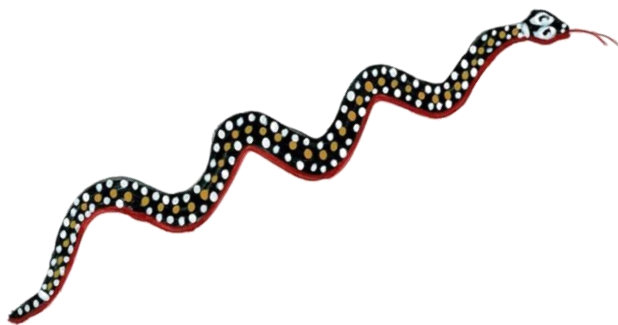
An 'Acknowledgement of Country' is a way that we can show awareness and respect for Aboriginal culture and heritage and to recognise the ongoing relationship the traditional custodians have with the land. It is recognition, either spoken or written, of the traditional people of this great southern land.

Who can do an Acknowledgement of Country?

Anyone, both indigenous and non-indigenous, can perform an acknowledgement of country. It is a gesture of respect.

When should I do an Acknowledgement of Country?

An acknowledgement is appropriate any time you meet as an official group, or before an event or ritual. It promotes an awareness of the past and ongoing connection to place and land of Aboriginal Australians. It is particularly important to acknowledge the spirits of the land before you engage in magical practice. We invite deity, elementals and spirits into our ritual circles. We should always respect the local spirits in this practice.



What else can I do to be respectful?

We encourage modern pagans to 'walk softly', ensuring that they offer respect to local indigenous communities, stories and sacred sites. To do this, we suggest:

- Respect the land you are on and acknowledge the traditional custodians, the elders and the living spirit in the land. Each Aboriginal country (tribal living space within Australia) was never ceded and was paid for in blood. Each tribe had ceremonial or sacred site some specific to men, some specific to women, some for the tribe as a whole.
- When practicing magic in a new location/ aboriginal country, introduce yourself to the space, the spirit of the land.
- Do not practice indigenous magical rites without being initiated. This is akin to running a sweat lodge without being taught by an elder how to do it or practicing catholic exorcism with being an initiated priest. It can be dangerous to you and to others.
- Do not perform non-indigenous magical rites on known Aboriginal ceremonial sites. Many first nation communities have areas that are, culturally, not appropriate for access or magickal practice. If you believe that you will be using an area of significance, contact your local Land Council/ Land and Sea Council to see if there are any taboo locations in your area you should be aware of whilst you are "hiking".
- Do not enter land known to be a sacred site without permission from the Elders.
- Men should not enter sacred women's sites and women should not enter sacred men's sites.
- If invited to a sacred site by an elder of that land, do not take anything from it.
- Be respectful of culture and cultural narrative. Cultural stories of the Dreaming are often only passed down verbally and are not written down. Many stories have been lost as have the languages. While some elders have started to write down the Dreaming and cultural narratives others do not. Some stories are highly protected. When told a story, ask permission if you wish to record it and always seek permission to re-tell the story to others. If given permission to re-tell the story, pass it on in its original and unchanged format.

What if I get the words wrong?

There is no hard and fast rule for the Acknowledgement. As long as you get the basic intent right, the words can vary. Here are the basic components to include:

- Use "traditional custodians", not "traditional owners". Aboriginal people identify not as owners, but as caretakers for the land.
- Include both groups - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders - to respect the distinct indigenous groups.
- Offer respect to the Elders.
- Include a reference to Aboriginal land.

Is this different to a Welcome to Country?

'Welcome to Country' is a formal welcome onto Aboriginal Land, given by an elder or person of that land. If an elder or person of the local clan is present at your event or ritual, they could be invited to perform this function, if they are willing. The welcome is a gift from the local people, and can be invited but not forced.

If no elder or person of the local clan is present, then an Acknowledgement of Country is performed.

A Ngarinyin tribal elder explained a traditional welcome to country, saying, "They believed that once the spirit of the land was in their hearts, then those people would never damage the land - they would love it and care for it like those whose home country it was..." [3]

References

1. www.CreativeSpirits.info - Aboriginal culture - Spirituality - Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country, retrieved 17 December 2016
2. <http://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia>. Retrieved 17 December 2016
3. 'Entering country: with consent', A night of reconciliation, extract from an Address by Susan Bradley (pastoralist, Kimberley WA), Sydney, Feb 1998