

# John Evans Study Committee Recommendations

Authored by the members of the DU John Evans Study Committee

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# Recommendations of the University of Denver John Evans Committee

With the completion of this report the University of Denver is presented with an opportunity to reflect on our institutional origins, history, and legacy. We have an opportunity to provide a model of transparency, accountability, and transformation for institutions that have directly profited or indirectly benefited from the displacement of the indigenous communities whose lands and histories they occupy. This moment invites us to bend the arc of history away from the clamor of old apologetics that have caused deep wounds for those whose voices have been silenced and toward justice, healing, and peace. This likewise holds for those whose privilege and power has been upheld by historical noise, silence, and intentional omission. This is truly a new horizon and DU should be a change leader illuminating a new path forward: a path of unity, collaboration, and healing for all communities.

Though we can trace the specific atrocity of the Sand Creek Massacre to our own foundation as an institution, it is not an isolated historical event. It is but one example of many tragic events that have been written out of our books and memory. It is within this truth that we find an opening to name these tragedies of U.S. history so we can collectively reshape the future. When any people fails to grapple directly with the dark sides of its collective past it falls prey to mythology. In the United States, one persistent strain of historical mythology has been to shroud complex and sometimes troubling realities in the language of triumph, divinely ordained missions, and a progress that overrides the violence in its wake. It takes courage to face both the illuminated and the more shadowed aspects of history, but here we are invited to walk toward a fuller understanding, with humility. This report is an invitation to consider

how Sand Creek and other tragedies impact not only the tribes and tribal descendants affected by acts of genocide, but all of us in the here and now. It is time for us to begin to mend the broken relationships we have with ourselves, each other, and the land.

The last 150 years have been complex and tumultuous for Cheyenne and Arapaho people as they have sought to heal and keep alive the memory of Sand Creek. The contradictory narratives surrounding Sand Creek allow historical memory to remain embedded in the conflict, thus prohibiting growth and transformation. Professional scholars have illuminated the complexities of the Sand Creek event. But for the sake of honoring this particular moment in our institution's history we should also straightforwardly confront it. The Sand Creek Massacre and many other historic and contemporary indigenous massacres and land thefts exemplify an egregious injustice that sacrificed hundreds of lives for the sake of western expansion, consumption, and greed.

It is from these destructive forces that we all must heal. Healing is not just for indigenous people and the descendants of genocide but for all people. It is for:

- The descendants of those who carried out brutalities and injustice.
- Those who are just now learning and awakening to the mythologies of US History.
- Those still captivated by the popular mythologies of the American West.
- Those who have been removed from their original land and culture for so long that it seems no longer a memory.



1864 elk hide painting by Eagle Robe, Eugene J. Ridgely, Senior (N. Arapaho), Descendant of Little Raven, Great-Grandson of Lame Man, Survivor of Sand Creek

We all need to heal and we need each other to do so. In this spirit of healing we make the following recommendations:

## Truth Telling and Public Dialogue

- Publish (print and online) and widely disseminate the Committee Report among students, staff, alumni, faculty, trustees, and the general public.
- Create an official Memorandum of Agreement implementing a formal, mutually-understood relationship between the University of Denver and the Sovereign Nations of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe of Montana, the Northern Arapaho Tribe of Wyoming, and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma.
- Sponsor open, facilitated public forums, on campus and off, to allow interested parties to respond to, critique, and discuss the report.
- Update official DU histories to accommodate the key findings of the report.

## Memorialization

- Encourage all-campus participation in, and support for, the Sesquicentennial Sand Creek Healing Run and regularize institutional support for future years.
- Create another “Day of Remembrance” on the academic calendar, to be observed while school is in session.
- Consult with Cheyenne and Arapaho descendants on the nature and form of a permanent campus memorial that commemorates the conjoined histories of Sand Creek and DU and acknowledges DU’s existence on native land. The memorial could have permanence in space (a dedicated physical location) or time (the Day of Remembrance).
- Establish an annual lecture or exhibition associated with the Day of Remembrance by a prominent Native American scholar, writer, or artist.
- Provide a one-line statement on all official DU letterhead for all academic units, at the bottom of the page where all other locational information is provided, acknowledging DU’s presence on native land.
- Incorporate the narrative of DU’s presence on native land in all official events (Pioneer Passage and other new student orientations, convocations, FSEM dinners, etc.)
- Create forums for discussing the renaming of campus buildings, positions, and awards, where appropriate and without historical erasure.

## Educational Opportunities for Native American Students and Scholars

- Increase financial aid for all Native American students.
- Establish a robust scholarship and support program (e.g., 15 scholarships) for recruiting and retaining Native American undergraduate and graduate students, including dedicated scholarships for Cheyenne and Arapaho students.
- Create clinics through Law, Business, and other professional schools that support Native American students.
- Establish endowed professorships and post-doctoral research opportunities for Native American scholars, through the university’s Interdisciplinary Research Incubator for the Study of (In)Equality (IRISE) and/or some other DU entity.
- Target the recruiting of Native American faculty and staff in all academic units and plan to add at least six new faculty positions for indigenous scholars within the next five years.
- Develop partnerships, consortia, and faculty/student exchange relationships with tribal colleges.
- Create professional development opportunities for Native American educators through our Morgridge College of Education and other units, including the opportunity for Native educators to enroll in a certain number of DU courses (including University College and CWC courses) free of charge.

## Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Educational Outreach

- Create a Native American Studies Center and establish a Native American Studies major/minor.
- Expand internship and service learning opportunities for all students to connect with agencies serving Native American interests in the Denver community.
- Produce study materials, workshops, and a support system for DU faculty and staff who want to teach about Sand Creek and/or incorporate this history into their courses.
- Create and regularly sponsor an on-campus Summer Teacher Institute for Colorado middle and high school teachers, run by DU and tribal scholars and representatives, to develop curriculum materials for teaching about Sand Creek and other topics related to Native American history.