ABSTRACT

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AUTHOR(S):	Getabecha, Heyaw
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ABSTRACT: Rights of land ownership including land claim acts that do not involve people's sense of place have, and continue to be, the cause of conflict and even war among peoples. Identifying and quantifying the procedures involved in categorizing a place as sacred is important to examine if there is to be an understanding of why land ownership rights give rise to so many conflicts. Data for this topic are pulled from a series of structured interviews conducted with both Native and non-Native peoples which will cover: (1) how people feel about land rights; (2) similarities and differences on what should constitute a place as sacred; (3) what should be done about federal intervention on sacred sites; and (4) what people can do to help preserve places in their local area. Along with the interviews, research will be pulled from ethnographies and other studies done by anthropologists. By asking community members how the La Plata area is part of their heritage and what constitutes a sacred place, similarities and differences can be seen, proving that there are aspects of land claims that need to be addressed. Many indigenous societies may not only have claim to land because of legally written documents, but also because they may feel a connection to a place with years of tradition and meaning. Further understanding of cultural practices will help make clear that gaining a better understanding of unwritten records are just as, or even more important than what is usually documented.