



SACNAS Native Initiatives Program

Developing a Land Acknowledgement

Land acknowledgements are becoming increasingly common at large gatherings and events involving education, research, and diversity.

The purpose of the land acknowledgement is to recognize and pay homage to the Indigenous people who were the original inhabitants of the land in a formal statement often read by a dignitary or official.

To prepare the statement your institution/organization should engage, support, and communicate with the Indigenous community they are honoring and take time to learn more about the tribal nation's history and connection to the land.

At SACNAS, we encourage the building of relationships with Indigenous people and communities. Before your organization or group begins to draft a statement here are several items to consider:

- **Why do we want to do this land acknowledgment?** To make a statement such as a land acknowledgment is a kind gesture. However, there must be more work done to ensure this is a sincere recognition. You should make sure your organization learns about the tribal nation(s) and visits with the local Indigenous community to learn about the tribal customs and traditions. There may be certain words or actions that should never be included in a statement and the Indigenous people/community you are working with should be consulted, provided a draft to review, and give their approval.
- **Do more than just read a statement.** An organization/group who wishes to recognize Indigenous people can make contributions to the local Indigenous community, make a donation to a Native American/Indigenous organization in honor of a tribe, or provide registrations waivers or scholarships to Native American/Indigenous students, postdocs and professionals to attend your event or conference/symposium. Action shows solidarity.
- **This should not be a one-time thing.** Once you begin including a land acknowledgment in your gathering/event, consider ways to make it a formal part of your organization/institution. There are many ways this can be accomplished. For example, maybe revise a vision or mission statement to include an acknowledgement or recognition that ties into your organization's purpose. Visit with your board of directors, advisory board, and/or administration to discuss where change could be created and implemented.

Example of Land Acknowledgement, given by SACNAS President Sonia Zárata at the 2020 SACNAS Virtual Conference:

As we begin, we acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of our various regions. SACNAS is based in California, which is currently home to nearly 200 tribal nations.

Land acknowledgements serve as a first step towards reconciliation because they acknowledge that we live and work on unceded Indigenous land. At the same time, land acknowledgements honor the rich culture of the indigenous people and remind us that the land is sacred.

Let's take a moment to honor the ancestral grounds that we are collectively gathered upon and support the resilience and strength that all Indigenous people have shown worldwide.

For this year's conference, we recognize Long Beach as our intended host city, which is on the traditional unceded territory of the Tongva people that inhabited California before the founding of the state and that continue to live on these lands. *{pause}*

Thank you.

Finally, there are many online resources to help you develop your formal statement and you can get more ideas on taking action as well. If you need information, feel free to contact SACNAS Native Initiatives Manager Darryl Monteau, EdD at darryl@sacnas.org or a [member of our Native American/Indigenous Affairs Committee](#).

About SACNAS

For over 47 years, SACNAS has served as an inclusive organization dedicated to fostering the success of Chicano/Hispanics & Native Americans, from college students to professionals, in attaining advanced degrees, careers, and positions of leadership within STEM.

Today, the organization serves a growing community of over 28,000 supporters, including 8,200+ members, and 118+ student and professional chapters throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. SACNAS influences the STEM diversity movement through STEM outreach & advocacy, promotion of STEM leaders, and [The SACNAS National Diversity in STEM Conference](#). Learn more about SACNAS at sacnas.org, [Facebook](#), or [Twitter](#).