

# CSULB LAND AND TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By Faculty, American Indian Studies, Summer 2020

## WHAT ARE LAND AND TERRITORIAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS?

Simply stated, a land and territorial acknowledgment is a statement that recognizes the ongoing presence and relationship of the First Peoples whose land an institution occupies. For First Peoples, this recognition is protocol for visitors and guests travelling, working, or living in a community that is not their original homeland. The statement expresses an awareness about the dispossession of the indigenous peoples of the land to make visible ongoing forms of settler-colonial privilege and dominance. While land and territorial acknowledgments are more frequently performed these days as part of institutional gatherings, such as at convocations, graduations, and conferences, the purpose and intent of these statements should also move beyond a mere repetition of words and, instead, should inaugurate actions that build or maintain relationships with First Peoples.

There are 573 federally-recognized tribal nations in the US. California is home to 109 federally-recognized California Indian nations; but there are zero (0) federally-recognized tribes in Los Angeles County, although Los Angeles County has the largest American Indian and Alaska Native population in the US<sup>1</sup>. Thus, it is imperative that CSU Long Beach faculty, staff, students, and visitors learn the significance and meaning of a land or territorial acknowledgement. The Tongva/Gabrieleno/Acjachemen people are the First Peoples of the region, their lands were unceded, they did not negotiate a treaty with Mexico or the US government. Today, the five Tongva/Gabrieleno tribes struggle every day for their sovereignty.

CSULB was built upon the Tongva village of *Puvungna*. *Puvungna* means the “gathering place.” *Puvungna* is a sacred site to the Tongva/Gabrieleno/Acjachemen people because it is featured in several creation stories and stories of emergence. Most notably, *Puvungna* was home to the creator *Ouiot* (Wiyot) and it was also the place of his death, where all the people, animal ancestors who predate humans, journeyed to witness his funeral. The creation story of *Ouiot* (Wiyot), although Tongva/Gabrieleno/Acjachemen in origin, has narrative variations that many Southern

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<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles American Indian Children's Council, UCLA Ralph & Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, 2004; <http://lewis.spsr.ucla.edu/publications/policybriefs/AIANAdultReportI.pdf> (Page 1)

California Indian people share in San Diego and Riverside Counties.<sup>2</sup> After the death of *Ouiot*, the People grieved and struggled for a time. The world became out of balance and a new leader was born in *Puvungna*. His name was *Chinigchinich*; and he taught the people new ways to cope and live in the world. All that he knew, he passed on to specialists who became leaders of plant-knowledge, animal-knowledge, star knowledge, and water knowledge. He taught the People about reciprocity, stewardship, and how to be/have in the world. His knowledge and medicine were so powerful that many people do not dare to speak his name at night.

## PLACE BASED RELATIONSHIP BUILDING



Today, Tongva/Gabrieleno/Acjachemen and many other Native people visit *Puvungna* regularly for spiritual sustenance, to hold ceremonies, and to gather and maintain community relations. Their stewardship and activism to protect and maintain the integrity of *Puvungna* is well documented and it is a serious source of contention in the community. The Committee on Native American Burial Remains and Cultural Patrimony (CNABRCP) remains the active faculty and community nexus to mediate any issues related to *Puvungna*.<sup>3</sup> The CNABRCP meets monthly during the academic year to share information, resolve issues, and coordinate the stewardship of *Puvungna*'s remaining, undeveloped 22-acre site on campus. Through a process of facilitation, the CNABRCP members worked with representatives from the Tongva/Acjachemen tribes to develop a collective form of representation to work on a government to government level with the university. As a result of this work, the tribes formed the United Descendants of *Puvungna* Council to speak as one body and one voice about *Puvungna*. Central to the formation of the Council was the

principle identification as descendants from *Puvungna*, with ancestral and ancestral and continuous cultural ties to the village. It is the goal of the CNABRCP and UDPC to strengthen its relationship with the University and campus community by institutionalizing practices, such as the land and territorial acknowledgement, as well as taking further actions to increase the visibility and representation of Tongva/Gabrieleno/Acjachemen Nations. Future actions may entail, for example, hiring a Tribal Liaison who is a California Indian person with community experience to bridge University and community needs; other actions might include utilizing and applying Tongva words and place names to areas on campus; or, creating a mural of the Tongva creation story or other significant cultural lesson. The point is to activate a place-based relationship that is informed by the First Peoples of the land in collaboration with the university.

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<sup>2</sup> See, Boscana, Geronimo. Tr. By Alfred Robinson, (1846) *Chinigchinich*; Laylander, Don (2004) *Listening To The Raven: The Southern California Ethnography Of Constance Goddard Dubois*.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.csulb.edu/academic-senate/policy-statement-96-04-native-american-burial-remains-associated-and-unassociated>

## LAND AND TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SAMPLES FOR CSULB

**Sample 1:** We recognize and acknowledge that the land California State University Long Beach is located on is part of the traditional homelands occupied by the Gabrieleño/Tongva (pronounced: GABRIEL-EN-YO/TONG – VAH) people, the Toongvetam (Pronounced: TOONG – VEH-TAM), and the shared origins of cultural knowledge and sacred teachings to the Acjachamen/Juaneño (pronounced: AH-HACH-AH-MEN/JUAN-EN-YO) and many other Southern California Indian people.

We also acknowledge the Gabrieleño/Tongva (pronounced: GABRIEL-EN-YO/TONG – VAH) and Acjachamen/Juaneño (pronounced: AH-HACH-AH-MEN/JUAN-EN-YO) as the traditional custodians of the Los Angeles region along with the Chumash (pronounced: CHOO-MOSH) to the north and west, and the Tataviam (pronounced: TAH-TAH-VEE-YUM) and Cahuilla (pronounced: KAH-WEE-YAH) Nations to the east.

We actively maintain and protect the remaining undeveloped land-base known as Puvungna (pronounced: POOH-VOONG-NAH), “the gathering place,” and recognize it as an active Tongva/Acjachemen (pronounced: TONG-VAH/AH-HACH-AH-MEN) ceremonial site, a sacred space, a reburial site, the birthplace of a spiritual philosophy, and the place of emergence in their origin narratives.

We respect and value the many ways the Tongva/Acjachemen (pronounced: TONG-VAH/AH-HACH-AH-MEN) cultural heritage and beliefs continue to have significance to the living people and remind us about the sacred and spiritual relationship that has always existed here at what we now call California State University Long Beach.

**Sample 2:** We acknowledge the Tongva (Pronounced: Tong-Vah) peoples as the traditional land caretakers of the Los Angeles basin and Southern Channel Islands and are grateful to have the opportunity to work at the sacred site of *Puvungna*,

<https://soundcloud.com/pammunro/puvuunga>. We pay our respects to the Ancestors, Elders, and our relatives/relations past, present and emerging.

**Sample 3:** We acknowledge the Tongva (Pronounced: Tong-Vah) peoples as the traditional land caretakers of **Tovaangar** (Los Angeles basin, So. Channel Islands) and are grateful to have the opportunity to work at the sacred site of *Puvungna* (Pronounced: Poo-Vun-gah), <https://soundcloud.com/pammunro/puvuunga>. We pay our respects to the **Honuukvetam** (Ancestors), **'Ahihirom (Elders)**, and **'eyoohiinkem** (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging.

Links to Terms:

- *Puvungna* (Long Beach area on and near CSULB) <https://soundcloud.com/pammunro/puvuunga>
- **Tovaangar** (Los Angeles basin, So. Channel Islands): <https://soundcloud.com/user-604190014-65178502/tovaangar>
- **Honuukvetam** (Ancestors), <https://soundcloud.com/user-604190014-65178502/ancestors>
- **'Ahihirom (Elders)**: <https://soundcloud.com/user-604190014-65178502/elders>
- **'eyoohiinkem** (our relatives/relations): <https://soundcloud.com/user-604190014-65178502/our-relatives>

**Sample 4:** CSULB is located on the sacred site of *Puvungna*. We acknowledge that we are on the land of the Tongva/Gabrieño and the Acjachemen/Juaneño Nations who have lived and continue to live here. We recognize the Tongva/Acjachemen Nations and their spiritual connection as the first stewards and the traditional caretakers of this land. We thank them for their strength, perseverance and resistance.

## MORE RESOURCES

- Native Governance Center: Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement: <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/bcgeu/pages/8498/attachments/original/1539118086/FNguide-GEU-oct2018.pdf?1539118086>
- Honor the Land, Acknowledgement FAQs: <https://usdac.us/news-long/2018/4/26/honor-native-land-are-you-hesitating-acknowledgment-faqs>
- Native Arts and Cultures Foundation: <https://www.nativeartsandcultures.org/honornativeland-guide-respectfully-acknowledge-ancestral-lands>
- Laurier Students' Public Interest Research Group (LSPiRG)—Know the Land Campaign and Resources, <http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>
- “How can we meaningfully recognize cities as Indigenous places?” *The Conversation* (4 Oct 2016): <https://theconversation.com/how-can-we-meaningfully-recognise-cities-as-indigenous-places-65561>
- City of Toronto Land Acknowledgement: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accessibility-human-rights/indigenous-affairs-office/land-acknowledgement/>
- BC Government and Service Employees Union Guide to First Nations acknowledgement, protocol, and terminology: <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/bcgeu/pages/8498/attachments/original/1539118086/FNguide-GEU-oct2018.pdf?1539118086>
- Common Ground's, “Acknowledgment of Country”: <https://www.commonground.org.au/learn/acknowledgement-of-country>
- US Dept. of Arts and Culture: Guide to Land Acknowledgement: <http://landacknowledgements.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Acknowledgement-Guide-finalfinal.pdf>
- Colorado College Land Acknowledgement, unneeded territory of Utes: <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/indigenous-community/land-acknowledgement.html>
- Cal State University San Marcos Land Acknowledgement Tool Kit: <https://www.csusm.edu/cicsc/land.pdf>
- UCLA Land Acknowledgement: <https://chancellor.ucla.edu/messages/acknowledging-native-peoples-ucla-events/> and <https://www.aisc.ucla.edu/>