

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 1968

**Introduced by Assembly Member Ramos
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Carrillo and Eduardo Garcia)**

January 21, 2020

An act to add Chapter 1.72 (commencing with Section 5097.8) to Division 5 of the Public Resources Code, relating to tribal land acknowledgment.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1968, as introduced, Ramos. Tribal Land Acknowledgment Act of 2021.

Existing law, the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 2001, requires all agencies and museums that receive state funding and have possession or control over collections of California Native American human remains and associated funerary objects to inventory those remains and objects for repatriation to the appropriate tribes, as specified.

This bill would authorize the owner or operator of any public school or state or local park, library, or museum in this state to adopt a process by which Native American tribes are properly recognized as traditional stewards of the land on which the school, park, library, or museum is located, as specified.

DIGEST KEY

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

BILL TEXT

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1.

The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Tribal land acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Native American peoples as traditional stewards of this land, and the enduring relationship that exists between Native American peoples and their traditional lands.

(b) To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose homelands we reside on, and is a recognition of the original people and nations who have been living and working on the land since time immemorial.

(c) The teachings of United States history in schools, museums, and the media have left out the voices of the original nations and peoples. California native people have endured colonial efforts to erase their existence, cultures, religions, languages, and connections to ancestral territories. Despite the importation of the mission system and genocidal action during California's statehood, native people have maintained their presence in, and stewardship of, their homelands. California is home to nearly 200 tribes. Had the 18 original treaties with California Indian tribes been honored by the state and federal government, California Indian tribes would possess over 7,500,000 acres of land. Today, California tribes collectively possess about 7 percent of their unratified treaty territory. Despite federal and state efforts to erode ownership, control, and visibility, California Native American people remain actively engaged in cultural revitalization, resource protection, and self-determination within every region of California. Systematic denial of Native American knowledge, cultural authority, and historical experiences perpetuates the colonial structure of oppression.

(d) Land acknowledgment statements encourage individuals to think about what it means to occupy space on Native American lands. These statements recognize the traditional land of the Native American people in this state who called, and still call, the land home before and after the arrival of settlers.

(e) Tribal land acknowledgment provides a learning opportunity for individuals who may have never heard the names of the tribes that continue to live and learn from the land. Land acknowledgment is Native American tribal protocol, and the practice establishes a respectful routine and habit of offering reconciliation. Land acknowledgment is a transformative act that works to undo the intentional erasure of indigenous peoples from the nationalist colonial narrative, and is the first step in decolonizing land relations.

SEC. 2.

Chapter 1.72 (commencing with Section 5097.8) is added to Division 5 of the Public Resources Code, to read:

CHAPTER 1.72. Tribal Land Acknowledgment Act of 2020 5097.8.

(a) For purposes of this chapter, "land acknowledgment process" means a process by which Native American tribes are properly recognized as traditional stewards of the land on which a public school or state or local park, library, or museum is located.

(b) The owner or operator of any public school or state or local park, library, or museum in this state, in consultation with Native American tribes, the Native American Heritage Commission, the

California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center, or the California Indian Museum and Cultural Center, may adopt a land acknowledgment process. The process may include a means to issue a formal statement that recognizes the original Native American tribe or tribes that have stewarded the land on which the school, park, library, or museum is located, and to incorporate that statement into printed and verbal materials provided at the beginning of a program or event held on that land by the owner or operator of the school, park, library, or museum. Land acknowledgment statements may be provided through text, plaque, or on the operator's printed or social media materials. The following is an example of a land acknowledgment statement that could be used within a museum setting:

"We are gathered on the unceded land of the (insert Native American tribe(s)) peoples. I ask you to join me in acknowledging the (insert Native American tribe(s)) community, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations. (Name of owner or operator of the museum) also acknowledges that the land was founded upon exclusions and erasures of many indigenous peoples, including those on whose land this museum is located. This acknowledgment demonstrates a commitment to beginning the process of working to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism."