



July 17, 2020

Senator Henry I. Stern, Chair  
 Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee  
 State Capitol Room 5046  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 1968 (Ramos) The Land Acknowledgement Act of 2021 – SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Stern:

The undersigned organizations strongly support AB 1968, the Tribal Land Acknowledgement Act of 2020, which recognizes the land as 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 on and stewarding the land since time immemorial. AB 1968 provides a learning opportunity for individuals who may have never heard the names of the tribes that continue to live on, learn from and care for the land.

The teaching of U.S. history, in schools, museums, and the media, has 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 influx of the mission system and a “war of extermination” during California statehood, native people have maintained their presence in and stewardship of their homelands. California is home to nearly two hundred tribes, both federally recognized and federally unrecognized.

Had the 18 original treaties with California Indian tribes been honored by the state and federal government, California Indian tribes would possess over 7.5 million acres of land. Instead, 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 Indian people remain actively engaged in cultural revitalization, resource protection and self-determination within every region of California. Systematic denial of indigenous knowledge, cultural authority, and historical experiences perpetuates the colonial structure of oppression.

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 the state who called, and still call, the land home before and after the arrival of settlers. Land acknowledgements do not exist in past tense or outside historical context: colonialism is an ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is important to realize the longstanding history that has brought settlers to reside on the lands, and to seek to appreciate settler responsibility and place within that history. Cultural institutions have an obligation to support ongoing education as well as accurate and responsible representation. We have applauded the state’s agencies, such as

the Coastal Commission, State Lands Commission and Ocean Protection Council, for including land acknowledgments when opening their meetings as a matter of course.

Acknowledging the land is Indigenous/tribal protocol and the practice establishes a respectful routine and habit of offering reconciliation.

AB 1968 encourages public schools, parks, libraries, and museums to adopt land acknowledgement processes which properly recognize Native American tribes as traditional stewards of the land on which an entity is located. Land Acknowledgements can come in the form of printed statements, plaques, or through websites and social media.

For the reasons outlined, we respectfully urge your support of AB 1968 (Ramos).

Sincerely,

Jennifer Savage  
California Policy Manager  
Surfrider Foundation

Emily Parker  
Coastal and Marine Scientist  
Heal the Bay

Julie Andersen  
Global Executive Director  
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