



# CSUN<sup>®</sup>

Bio and Geosciences URGE Pod, College of Science and Math

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## URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for University/Organization

This is what was found by Bio and Geosciences URGE Pod at California State University Northridge on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**

In the Geology Department, we have a history of working on Native Lands (see below). For background, Los Angeles County is home to three Native American Indian tribes that predate the establishment of California Missions: the Ventureño, Gabrieleño, and Fernandeno. A summary of tribes in Greater Los Angeles can be found here:

<https://lanaic.lacounty.gov/resources/tribal-governments/#:~:text=Los%20Angeles%20County%20is%20home,Venture%C3%B1o%2C%20Gabriele%C3%B1o%2C%20and%20Fernande%C3%B1o.>

CSUN is located on the traditional lands of the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. There was no settlement in Northridge due to the lack of water; however, a settlement called 'Sesevenga' (the place of the sycamore-woods) was located near Porter Ranch (<https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/>).

In 2020, CSUN President Diane Harrison made the first land acknowledgement in University history (<https://csunshinetoday.csun.edu/arts-and-culture/were-still-here-land-acknowledgement-strengthens-bond-between-csun-and-fernandeno-tataviam-band/>):

“CSUN recognizes and acknowledges the Sesevitam, the first people of this ancestral and unceded territory of Sesevenga – which is now occupied by our institution,” Harrison said. “It honors their elders, past and present, and the Sesevitam descendants, who are citizens of the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. We recognize that the Sesevitam are still here, and we are committed to lifting up their stories, culture and community.”

Our history in the Geology Department of working on Native Lands has not always gone well. In 2008, a CSUN MS graduate student working on Paiute Land in Owens

Valley drilled holes for a paleomagnetism project next to petroglyphs effectively defacing them. The student claimed that she didn't see the petroglyphs. The act was discovered and reported as a violation of the American Antiquities Act leading to a Federal investigation. The defacement resulted in the CSUN Geology Department paying \$20-30k to resolve the case.

More recently, Dr. Heermance and Dr. Yule have worked on paleoseismicity projects on Morongo Band of Mission Indians land with permission. Dr. Yule attended a tribal council meeting at one point to ask for permission. While some members of the tribal council were opposed to CSUN geologists working on their land, the council did grant permission. In dissent, some council members questioned why geoscientists needed more time to work on their land after many prior years of work and occupation on their land. The council required CSUN geoscientists to check in at tribal headquarters before work and instructed them to work with tribal scientists on staff.

In a more recent situation, Dr. Ganguli has a current project working on land of the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians collecting sediment in Castaic Lake Recreational Area. Her graduate student contacted the Mission Indians through a message board and received permission from a tribal coordinator to sample in the Lake. Castaic Lake occupies flooded native land, and so artifacts related to tribal activities may be buried and accidentally sampled during work. Dr. Ganguli and student met with the tribal coordinator after sampling, and are requested to acknowledge sampling and working on their land in presentations and publications.

- **What worked well in these interactions?**
  - Working directly with Native groups to obtain permission worked well.
- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
  - Defacing rocks without permission or knowledge of the tribe did not work out well. In other cases with Yule and Heermance, getting permission was contentious. At times they were not given access because permission was denied by local tribal members.
- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
  - Work \$\$ into grants proposals to support Native participants who coordinate and participate in research projects.
  - Make land acknowledgements in presentations and publications.
  - Invite a representative from the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (CSUN is on their native lands) to give a talk both about the history of their tribe and guidelines for conducting local field work and provide honorarium to encourage participation.
  - It is important to recognize that an acceptable outcome is that researchers may be denied to Native lands.

- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**
  - No, but we should come up with guidelines for all CSUN departments that conduct field work.