



AMERICAN INDIAN PROGRAMS

SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS
Indiana University
Indianapolis

Native Acknowledgment: A Best Practice for Using Spaces at IUPUI

In keeping with its commitment to advance social justice and equity, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis endorses Native acknowledgment as a best practice for event organizers using space within the school.

What Is Native Acknowledgment?

A growing number of cultural and educational institutions in North America recognize that they are inadvertent beneficiaries of the forcible expulsion of Native peoples from traditional homelands. Many address this history and its lasting effects by opening public events with a Native acknowledgment. These brief statements commonly honor the land's Indigenous inhabitants, recall their losses, and call attention to the contemporary issues still faced by tribal people today.

Why Native Acknowledgment?

IUPUI's endorsement of Native acknowledgement reflects our mission to advance social justice, our deep ties within Native communities, and the tribally responsible programs we continue to develop throughout the IU system.

Our work is rooted in recognizing historical injustices and pursuing effective remedies. The consequences of historical Indian removal events persist in well-documented health and socioeconomic outcomes, as well as in the benefits that have accrued to those who resettled the region after the expulsion of Native inhabitants. IUPUI has flourished on land taken from the Native peoples who called this region home. We bear an obligation to acknowledge this history, create a public awareness, and repair relationships with American Indian communities and the land.

The endorsement of acknowledgment is also motivated by the work of Native leadership within the school and by our deep ties within Native communities. Our Native faculty, staff, and students have worked to develop positive and mutually responsible and respectful relationships with Native tribes here in Indiana and across the nation, have shaped Liberal Arts' innovative curriculum, and were instrumental in bringing Native design principles into our current shared spaces; our Native students draw upon unique backgrounds and the IUPUI's training to cultivate social change. IUPUI American Indian Programs is a hub for the recruitment and preparation of Native professionals as well as for several of IUPUI's collaborations with Native, community and governmental partners.

The tribes noted in this acknowledgement are those families and people whose cosmogony, origin stories)

begin in this land we now call “Indiana”. We utilize the treaties with these sovereign nations as indications of their historic presence on this land and whose families still call this contested land home. Additional information is available from the IUPUI American Indian Programs office, 425 University Boulevard, Cavanaugh Hall CA325, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA 46202.

How to Offer a Native Acknowledgment

Native acknowledgments are typically offered at the start of public events and need not come from Native speakers. Usually no longer than a sentence or two, the statement should reflect an understanding of the historical events that motivated it. The statement should not be rushed, but given with authenticity.

Several sample statements are provided below and may be adapted as needed:

Founded in 1969, IUPUI stands on the historic homelands of the Miami people, but also displaced a vibrant Black community.

1. I would like to take this moment to recognize the sacrifice of the tribes that once lived and thrived here: the Miami people, the Potawatomi people, the Shawnee people and many other tribes who were forced through these lands. We, the present stewards of the land they surrendered, honor them as we live, work, and study here at IUPUI.
2. We begin by acknowledging that we gather today on the ancestral lands of Native peoples who were removed unjustly, and that we in this community are the beneficiaries of that removal. We honor the heritage of Native peoples, what they teach us about stewardship of the earth and their continuing efforts today to protect the planet.
3. We would like to acknowledge that [organization name] is located on the traditional and ancestral territory of the Miami, Potawatomi and Shawnee people. We thank them for their hospitality and hope we honor their historic and contemporary work.
4. We begin by acknowledging that we are on the traditional homelands of Native people: the Miami, the Potawatomi, the Shawnee and all others. We pay respect to elders both past and present, and we thank them for their hospitality.
5. We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the occupied and contested territory of Native peoples.

If you have questions about offering a Native acknowledgment or seek assistance in identifying someone who can offer one at an event, please contact the director of IUPUI American Indian Programs, Charmayne ‘Charli’ Champion-Shaw (cchampion@iupui.edu).