

Land Acknowledgment

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Faculty Senate recognizes the enduring relationship between Indigenous peoples and their ancestral lands and waters. The university occupies the sacred lands of the Karankawa (Copanes), Lipan Apache/Nde, Comanche, Tonkawa, Coahuiltecan (Pamoque), and other tribal and detribalized peoples who have lived along the Nueces River from before recorded history to the present day. TAMU-CC must respect the rights of these peoples by engaging in ethical practices and sustaining collaborative relationships with their communities. We encourage all to engage honestly with our shared past as we work toward justice and collective healing amid the ongoing traumas and erasures caused by colonialism. This land acknowledgement serves as a promise of our commitment to these communities and the resources they steward.

Why Acknowledge the Land?

Land acknowledgments assert the past, present, and future relationships between individuals, institutions, and Indigenous communities in North and South America. Recognizing the Indigenous peoples who have traditionally stewarded the land and waters Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi now occupies is a first step toward acknowledging our relationships with those peoples. For Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to truly serve our local Coastal Bend community, we first need to acknowledge our historical and contemporary relationships to the community. This land acknowledgment is furthermore not simply about recognizing the past—it is about framing how we move forward into the future.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has unique and enduring connections to Native peoples and their lands, and it is imperative that we acknowledge these connections. We are situated at the mouth of Oso Creek, one of the most densely occupied Indigenous places on the central Texas coast. Our university sits atop the Cayo del Oso burial ground, one of the largest and most significant Indigenous cemeteries in the state. We continue to benefit from the expropriation of these lands. As an educational institution, specifically, it is TAMU-CC's mission to educate, inform, and correct misperceptions. For too long, members of our local community learned our Indigenous neighbors were extinct when they live alongside us today. For too long, textbooks, newspapers, and historical markers described our Indigenous communities and their ancestors in dehumanizing ways. Further, as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, it is our explicit mission to serve and advocate for the historically underrepresented and underrecognized people in our community. Indeed, it is possible that many of our students are from these very same peoples that this land acknowledgment recognizes, and, due to this cultural forgetting, may not even be aware of it. With this acknowledgment, we are taking the first of many steps in order to truly build our community.

A Commitment to Action

This land acknowledgment must be accompanied by material action on the part of the university, which is bound by both an obligation to disseminate knowledge about the Indigenous histories and cultures of the Coastal Bend and a responsibility to address historical injustice. To that end, Faculty Senate calls for the university to cultivate relationships with its Indigenous neighbors through a variety of initiatives, which may include academic programs/curricula, on-site memorials, designated space for use by Indigenous peoples, historical preservation initiatives, cultural events, environmental conservation, and designating the future Cayo del Oso pedestrian bridge as an Indigenous historical landmark. Most importantly, the university must make every effort to protect the Cayo del Oso burial ground from further development while supporting the return of ancestral remains to their rightful home.

Statement about Authorship

This statement is the product of a two-year collaboration between faculty, students, administrators, and Indigenous people. During this period, more than two dozen people have contributed their voices, ideas, and time to this project. A special committee appointed by Faculty Senate convened the following people to create this acknowledgment: local Indigenous leaders Tom Bear Claw and Sandra Love Sanchez, and university faculty Alexa Hight, Scott Johnson, Peter Moore, Thomas Oldham, Dale Pattison, and Lori Podolsky.