



BLACKSTONE  
RANCH INSTITUTE

**BLACKSTONE RANCH INSTITUTE AT TEN YEARS  
2006-2016**

Seeding Collaboration and Innovation  
in Environmental Sustainability



Other lands in the West are also prime candidates for ecosystem work. In the summer of 2013, we were approached by Ernie Atencio of Land and Culture Consulting in Arroyo Hondo, New Mexico. Ernie was working with the Center for Whole Communities in Vermont on an initiative to convene a historic gathering that would bring together Native land trust leaders with the leadership of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), the largest confederation of land trusts in the United States. The idea had come out of a study Ernie had done with Peter Forbes, the founder of the Center for Whole Communities. The study suggested that land trusts needed to be better partners to address local land and community issues, including working with Native tribes. Native Americans control a huge amount of land in the greater United States, an estimated 2 billion acres. Few of those lands had ever been part of the larger land trust effort in the United States.

The convening was intended to start repairing decades of misunderstanding and mistrust between Native and largely Anglo land trusts, and to lay the groundwork for future collaboration. BRI provided a grant to bring Native American land trust leaders to that historic first gathering in California in early 2014, an event that was made

possible with an initial grant from the Kalliopeia Foundation. The summit was a first step, and it resulted in greater recognition of Native land trusts and their importance in the greater national equation. The process yielded a few initial collaborations that strengthened the fledgling relationship.

A year and a half later, this little-known dimension of the land trust community was featured as the cover article in LTA's *Saving Land Magazine*, along with a commentary from one Native conservationist about recovering from the historical trauma stemming from the loss of land and cultural identity. At the 2015 LTA national conference in Sacramento, local-tribe representatives gave a formal welcome and blessing at the opening, and several Native lands workshops and activities were featured, including a new film about collaboration with tribes.

Ernie, Peter, and members of the Native land trusts are planning additional work to develop consistent standards and practices for conventional land trusts to engage effectively with tribal communities and Native values.

## THE INTEGRATION OF THE NATIONAL LAND TRUSTS

LAND AND CULTURE  
CONSULTING, AND CENTER  
FOR WHOLE COMMUNITIES



Participants at the Summit for Native and Anglo Land Trusts in Pescadero, California, in May 2014. Courtesy of Ernie Atencio