

Deborah Sanchez

Deborah Sanchez is Chumash, O'odham and Raramuri American Indian. She worked to maintain the annual ceremony of the Chumash crossing the ocean channel in their traditional canoe for more than a decade. She studies and teaches the Šmuwič language (Chumash) and has composed several contemporary Šmuwič songs. The songs honor Chumash traditional beliefs and way of life, including songs of wonder and mourning. She has been teaching the Šmuwič language to community members since 2010.

During her career as an attorney, Deborah was a volunteer for the Southern California Indian Center, handling issues ranging from Landlord-Tenant cases to the Indian Child Welfare Act. She was an attorney for nearly 20 years prosecuting child exploitation cases, hate crimes and employer negligence cases resulting in death of the worker. She is now a Superior Court Judge in Los Angeles.

In addition to receiving awards and being acknowledged throughout her career as a lawyer, Deborah has received community service awards from the American Indian Scholarship Fund (2007) and Project Amiga (2007); a Distinguished Alumni award from California State University, Long Beach (2008); was honored as one of the distinguished Native Americans by Southern California AIM and the California Indian Education Association (2012); the public service award from the Latino City Attorney's Association (2013); received the Educational Service Award from Pukuu, an American Indian nonprofit (2015); the Heritage Award from the Aquarium of the Pacific for service to the Native American communities (2016); and was selected as one of the ground-breaking stories for the Los Angeles County Law Library's documentary (2016).

Deborah is a poet and has been published in the *San Diego Poetry Annual* and in *News from Native California* under the name D. Lorraine Sanchez. She was recently nominated (2020) for a Pushcart Award for her poem *Standing Rock*.

Deborah also serves on the boards of various nonprofit organizations involving Indigenous Peoples and has been part of a delegation for several years at the United Nations, Permanent Forum on the Rights of Indigenous People and the Commission on the Status of Women.