

Compilation of 20 Land Acknowledgments

Wabanaki Allies
First Congregational Church, South Portland

September 2024

INTRODUCTION:

From the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian: Honoring Original Indigenous Inhabitants:

Land acknowledgment is a traditional custom that dates back centuries in many Native nations and communities. Today, land acknowledgments are used by Native Peoples and non-Natives to recognize Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the lands on which we now live. Before public events and other important gatherings hosted by the National Museum of the American Indian, a speaker offers this acknowledgment displayed in the quote container on behalf of everyone present.

After millennia of Native history, and centuries of displacement and dispossession, acknowledging original Indigenous inhabitants is complex. Many places in the Americas have been home to different Native Nations over time, and many Indigenous people no longer live on lands to which they have ancestral ties. Even so, Native Nations, communities, families, and individuals today sustain their sense of belonging to ancestral homelands and protect these connections through Indigenous languages, oral traditions, ceremonies, and other forms of cultural expression. The museum's acknowledgment is intended to recognize the Indigenous peoples who have lived where we now work over the long span of human history and the large contemporary Native population that lives in the Washington area and New York City today.

When people ask for guidance in making land acknowledgments, we suggest reaching out directly to local Indigenous communities and to Native Nations forcibly removed from the area in the past to ask how they want to be recognized. Land acknowledgments can be spoken at the beginning of public and private gatherings, from school programs and sporting events to town halls.

Making a land acknowledgment should be motivated by genuine respect and support for Native Peoples. Speaking and hearing words of recognition is an important step in creating collaborative, accountable, continuous, and respectful relationships with Indigenous nations and communities.

From Native-Land.ca | Our Home on Native Land
<https://native-land.ca/resources/territory-acknowledgement/>

Why acknowledge territory?

Territory acknowledgement is a way that people insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. It can be a subtle way to recognize the history of colonialism and a need for change in settler colonial societies.

However, these acknowledgements can easily be a token gesture rather than a meaningful practice.

As Chelsea Vowel, a Métis woman from the Plains Cree speaking community of Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta, writes:

“If we think of territorial acknowledgments as sites of potential disruption, they can be transformative acts that to some extent undo Indigenous erasure. I believe this is true as long as these acknowledgments discomfit both those speaking and hearing the words. The fact of Indigenous presence should force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands.” (Chelsea Vowel, Métis, [Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements](#))

SAMPLE STATEMENTS:

Bertha Crosley Ball Center for Compassion, University of Southern Maine

<https://usm.maine.edu/bertha-crosley-ball-center-compassion/land-acknowledgement>

The BCB Center for Compassion occupies land in what is now called "Portland, Maine", which was settled on the traditional, unceded territory of the Wabanaki Confederacy.

We recognize and honor the current Tribes who comprise the Wabanaki Confederacy—the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac peoples—who have stewarded this land throughout the generations. We respect the traditional values of these Tribes and affirm their inherent sovereignty in this territory. We support their efforts for land and water protection and restoration, and for cultural healing and recovery.

We pause in remembrance of the Tribes of the Wabanaki Confederacy whose lives and land were taken through genocidal strategies of colonial settlement of this land.

We pay respect to elders both past and present, and we commit to the ongoing work of decolonization in Maine and beyond.

Yet it is not enough to simply say these words: we must take direct action as well.

The BCB Center for Compassion teaches contemplative practices designed to deepen compassion; these practices are a powerful tool in undoing systemic oppression and racism. We invite you to join us in this work. The resources below are a great starting point as you contemplate your position relative to the land you occupy, but we encourage

you to dig deeper, as well--to seek out additional information and to build authentic connections within your own communities.

Bowdoin College, Office of Diversity and Inclusion

<https://www.bowdoin.edu/diversity-inclusion/land-acknowledgement/index.html>

Bowdoin College is located on the ancestral homelands of the Wabanaki. Today the Wabanaki include the Abenaki, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot nations, who have deep and enduring relationships with Maine's lands and waterways. We acknowledge the painful legacy of the region's colonial history and commit to better understanding it, while also celebrating the vibrancy of Native American cultures and working to build a more inclusive community.

Cape Elizabeth Land Trust

<https://www.capelandtrust.org/who-we-are/values/>

We acknowledge that our unceded conserved lands are the traditional lands of the first people of the Wabanaki Confederacy of tribes who collectively stewarded these lands for centuries before us. We acknowledge indigenous ancestors – past, present and future. We honor with gratitude the land itself, and we commit to learning to be more conscious and respectful stewards of the land we inhabit and care for, and to invite all people to share in the work.

Church of Universal Fellowship (Orono, ME)

The Church of Universal Fellowship recognizes that it is located on the unceded lands of the Penobscot Nation. This homeland is connected to the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations – Abenaki, Micmac, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy – through kinship, alliances, and diplomacy. We commit to ongoing advocacy for the sovereignty and preservation of these nations' rights and freedom and to align ourselves with ongoing concerns, opportunities and legislative priorities.

Congregation Bet Ha'am, South Portland

On this eve of Kol Nidre, as we confess our sins, mistakes, and errors as a congregation and as a people, we also acknowledge that Congregation Bet Ha'am is located in South Portland, Maine, which was settled on the traditional territory of the Wabanaki Confederacy.

We recognize and honor the current Tribes who comprise the Wabanaki Confederacy—the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac peoples—who have stewarded this land throughout the generations. We respect the traditional values of these Tribes and affirm their inherent sovereignty in this territory. We support their efforts for land and water protection and restoration, and for cultural healing and recovery.

We pause in remembrance of the Tribes of the Wabanaki Confederacy whose lives and land were taken through genocidal strategies of colonial settlement of this land.

We pay respects to elders both past and present, and we commit to the ongoing work of decolonization in Maine and beyond.

Drummond Woodsum Attorneys at Law

<https://dwmlaw.com/indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>

Drummond Woodsum's headquarters are located in Portland, Maine, which was settled on the original and ancestral homelands of the Wabanaki (the Abenaki, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot people). Our New Hampshire offices in Portsmouth, Lebanon, and Manchester reside on the ancestral lands of the Abenaki and Pennacook.

We recognize that these lands, like so many others, were not given up freely but taken by colonizers through the forced displacement and cultural and physical genocide of these Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge this history, and we also respect that it is not merely history but the current reality of all those who were and continue to be separated from their ancestral homes, traditions, and languages and denied their Indigenous – and simply human – rights.

Tribal Nations face ongoing legal battles to regain and maintain their Indigenous culture, including the protection of hunting and fishing rights that are central to a deep connection to the land and water. History cannot be erased and should not be forgotten.

As a firm we work to honor and support Tribal Nations in reclaiming and preserving their inherent sovereignty, rights, and land; to celebrate the cultures indigenous to the areas where we all work and live; and to promote the economic and governmental empowerment of these members of our diverse community.

We encourage you to learn more about the following organizations that are doing important work in this area:

Native-Land.ca is a website run by the nonprofit organization Native Land Digital <https://native-land.ca>
 Indian Land Tenure Foundation <https://iltf.org/>

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Houlton

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Houlton, Maine respectfully acknowledges that our buildings are located on the homeland of the Wolastoqey (Maliseet) Nation. The

Wolastoqey Nation is connected to the other Wabanaki Nations — the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Mi'kmaq — through kinship, alliances and diplomacy. We reside today near the Wolastoqey village of Meduxnekewiyik, alongside the bank of the Meduxnekeag River, a tributary of the Wolastoq (the St. John) which is the cultural heart of the Wolastoqey people. We acknowledge the unresolved issues of water and territorial rights, rights to adequate sustenance and food sovereignty, control and care for the ecosystem, and the encroachment upon sacred sites that occur on these lands. We further recognize that these nations are distinct, sovereign, legal and political entities with their own powers of self-governance and self-determination living on unsundered and unceded traditional lands.

Episcopal Church of St. Alban, Cape Elizabeth

Our baptismal vows call us to respect the inherent dignity of Wabanaki people and culture and to lament the historic sins committed by governments and institutions against them. The Holy Spirit compels us to mourn alongside all victims of oppression, to honor their painful truths, and to pursue new ways of working together as partners in the stewardship of healing, justice, and peace in God's land.

Episcopal Church of St. Paul, Brunswick

We acknowledge that we stand on territory that was taken from the Abenaki people of the Wabanaki Confederacy, the people of the Dawnland. May we always remember that the Earth does not belong to us, that we belong to the Earth, and that we are all companions in life. May we learn from our past sins and be instruments of justice and peace for all people in today's world. We ask for inspiration that we might be compelled to take action and support our native neighbors as they continue to seek their sovereignty here in Maine.

First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church, Scituate, MA

<https://www.firstparishscituate.org/land-acknowledgement>

We meet today on the traditional and ancestral land of the Massachusetts and the Wampanoag peoples, the original inhabitants of what is now known as Scituate. We are mindful that for the Wampanoag and Massachusetts people – past, present, and future – this land is sacred.

As we read, hear, or recite these words, let us:

- Acknowledge with respect and admiration the Massachusetts and the Wampanoag peoples, the traditional custodians of the land where our church is located.
- Recognize that they lived here and cared for this land over countless generations.
- Remember that this land was stolen from them by European colonizers.

- Honor the resilience of the Indigenous Peoples who continue to live in this region despite the legacy of colonialism that still impacts them and this land.
- Strive to increase our understanding of Indigenous Peoples to the life of this region and to support them and the causes that are important to them.
- Celebrate the continuing contributions of Indigenous Peoples to the life of this region.
- Understand that we borrow the earth from our children and work to become better stewards. Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine recognizes that its work and the work of our partner network cannot achieve just and equitable outcomes without acknowledging that we stand on the unceded territory of the Wabanaki people, which includes the tribes of the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, Abenaki, and Mi'kmaq people, and the impact that colonization, genocide, and displacement has had and continues to have on Maine's tribal populations.
- In acknowledging this, we recognize that Maine's tribal populations are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. According to a report issued by the Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030 initiative, 29.5% of tribal populations in Maine experience food insecurity, which is above the national average of 27%.
- We recognize, too, the history of the water, air, fish, wildlife, plants, and soils that have been hunted, gathered, fished, foraged, harvested, and stewarded sustainably by the tribes of the Wabanaki confederacy for millennia. For thousands of years predating the arrival of European colonists, the people of the Dawnland relied on the soil, forests, rivers, lakes, and mountains of what we now call Maine for subsistence* and food, spiritual, medicinal, economic, and recreational resources. All that we see and stand on, for the Wabanaki people, nourished the whole person and, in turn, nourished the richness and depth of tribal communities, culture, and society.
- To this day, the Wabanaki people look to the land and waters, both inland and coastal, for physical, mental, and spiritual sustenance as they have done for countless generations.
- Understand that we borrow the earth from our children and work to become better stewards of it.

First United Church of Christ, Northfield MN

Beyond Land Acknowledgement

Through a process of research, education, and conversation, First UCC adopted a Land Acknowledgement Statement on January 30, 2022, to recognize the colonial history of our church and of the 19th-century settlement of the Northfield area.

Recognizing that a statement is just a starting point, the Land Acknowledgement Task Force continues to provide opportunities for learning and awareness about the people on whose home we reside:

As a community of faith, we at First UCC Northfield acknowledge that our church was formed on the ancestral homelands of the Wahpekute Band and other bands of the Dakota Nation. Our church began here in 1856 when the Dakota were being forcibly removed

from their homelands. With God’s help, we strive to repair ongoing injustices and grow toward right relationships with Indigenous people.

We lament the broken treaties and genocide that happened in the Dakota homeland Mni Sota Maçoke and the unjust legacy that persists. We faithfully commit ourselves to interrupt this legacy as part of our pledge to work toward racial justice.

We will continue with acts of healing through our commitment to hear stories of this place and those who have lived here for generations, to learn about Indigenous history, current stories, and public policies that impact Indigenous people, and to take appropriate action to begin repairing the injustices done to Indigenous people.

Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine

Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine recognizes that its work and the work of our partner network cannot achieve just and equitable outcomes without acknowledging that we stand on the unceded territory of the Wabanaki people, which includes the tribes of the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, Abenaki, and Mi’kmaq people, and the impact that colonization, genocide, and displacement has had and continues to have on Maine’s tribal populations.

In acknowledging this, we recognize that Maine’s tribal populations are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. According to a report issued by the Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030 initiative, 29.5% of tribal populations in Maine experience food insecurity, which is above the national average of 27%.

We recognize, too, the history of the water, air, fish, wildlife, plants, and soils that have been hunted, gathered, fished, foraged, harvested, and stewarded sustainably by the tribes of the Wabanaki confederacy for millennia. For thousands of years predating the arrival of European colonists, the people of the Dawnland relied on the soil, forests, rivers, lakes, and mountains of what we now call Maine for subsistence* and food, spiritual, medicinal, economic, and recreational resources. All that we see and stand on, for the Wabanaki people, nourished the whole person and, in turn, nourished the richness and depth of tribal communities, culture, and society.

To this day, the Wabanaki people look to the land and waters, both inland and coastal, for physical, mental, and spiritual sustenance as they have done for countless generations.

Oklahoma University

<https://www.ou.edu/cas/nas/land-acknowledgement-statement>

“Long before the University of Oklahoma was established, the land on which the University now resides was the traditional home of the “Hasinai” Caddo Nation and “Kirikir?i:s” Wichita & Affiliated Tribes.

We acknowledge this territory once also served as a hunting ground, trade exchange point, and migration route for the Apache, Comanche, Kiowa and Osage nations.

Today, 39 tribal nations dwell in the state of Oklahoma as a result of settler and colonial policies that were designed to assimilate Native people.

The University of Oklahoma recognizes the historical connection our university has with its Indigenous community. We acknowledge, honor and respect the diverse Indigenous peoples connected to this land. We fully recognize, support and advocate for the sovereign rights of all of Oklahoma's 39 tribal nations. This acknowledgement is aligned with our university's core value of creating a diverse and inclusive community. It is an institutional responsibility to recognize and acknowledge the people, culture and history that make up our entire OU Community."

The above land acknowledgement statement was created by the OU Land Acknowledgement Working Group in August of 2020. This statement may be borrowed. For resources on creating your own LAS, see the guide below provided by the Native Governance Center.

Portland Public Library

<https://www.portlandlibrary.com/land-acknowledgment/>

[Acknowledgment](#) is a way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people's history and culture, and toward inviting and honoring the truth.

[We] would like to acknowledge that the land on which our congregations reside is the occupied and unceded territory of the Wabanaki, the People of the place where the sun first looks our way, who have stewarded this land throughout the generations.

We extend our respect and gratitude to the many Indigenous people and their ancestors whose rich histories and vibrant communities include the *Abenaki, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Nations* and all the Native communities who have lived in *Chuwabunkeag* for over three thousand generations in what is now called New England and the Canadian Maritimes.

We thank them for their strength and resilience in protecting this land and aspire to uphold our responsibilities according to their example.

Portland Stage Company

<https://www.portlandstage.org/advocating-for-our-community/>

We are gathered on the unceded land of the Aucocisco and Abenaki peoples of the Wabanaki Confederacy. Portland Stage asks you to join us in acknowledging the Wabanaki community, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations. Portland Stage also acknowledges that it was founded upon exclusions and erasures of

many Indigenous peoples, including those on whose land this institution is located. This acknowledgment demonstrates a commitment to beginning the process of working to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism through our work at Portland Stage.

We encourage you to learn more about the peoples who stewarded the land that you now reside on whether you're from here in Portland or are visiting from away. For more information click on the links below.

[Wabanaki Reach Whose Land Are You On?](#)
[Abyssinian Meeting House](#)
[Portland's Eastern Cemetery](#)

Maine's Connection to the Slave Trade

We also want to acknowledge that the history of Maine is deeply connected to the institution of slavery in the United States, and that residents of Maine participated in both slavery and the transatlantic slave trade even after slavery was outlawed in the District of Maine. While it may be easy to think of Maine and more specifically Portland as a very White place, we recognize that this is simply not the case and we are working to dismantle these harmful ideas. We encourage our audiences to visit the Abyssinian Meeting House or the Eastern Cemetery here in Portland, and to explore scholarship on the subject, like *Lives of Consequence* by Patricia Q. Wall, to learn more about this oft-neglected part of Maine's history.

American Theater's Problematic History With Race

We recognize that the American Theater has also exploited, misrepresented, and excluded communities of Latine, Asian, Indigenous, and Middle Eastern descent for centuries. Portland Stage is recommitting to telling authentic stories from diverse backgrounds that all of our audiences can experience and enjoy.

Saint Ansgar Lutheran Church, Portland (ELCA)

Let us pray. Holy one, We remember:

The land under us is the unceded land of the Aucociso and the Abenaki. This is land that was taken, not given.

For these tribes, the land is not a place --- it is part and parcel of who they are -- a dynamic and significant aspect of their identity.

We lament the ways in which this identity was stolen from these tribes, one aspect of the erasure of Indigenous culture in North America. We acknowledge and repent of the sins of colonialism and racism that this erasure represents.

Holy One, help us to honor these people now and give reverence and thanks for our ability to worship and learn on their traditional territories. Amen.

Scarborough Land Trust

The Scarborough Land Trust recognizes that these lands are in the homeland of the Wabanaki Tribal Nations, where issues of water and territorial rights, and encroachment upon sacred sites, are ongoing. We recognize that the Wabanaki Tribal Nations are distinct, sovereign, legal and political entities with their own powers of self-governance and self-determination.

Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (Washington, DC)

We gratefully acknowledge the Native Peoples on whose ancestral homelands we gather, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today.

University of Maine

<https://umaine.edu/about/university-of-maine-land-acknowledgment/>

The University of Maine recognizes that it is located on Marsh Island in the homeland of the Penobscot Nation, where issues of water and territorial rights, and encroachment upon sacred sites, are ongoing. Penobscot homeland is connected to the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations — the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Mi'kmaq — through kinship, alliances and diplomacy. The university also recognizes that the Penobscot Nation and the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations are distinct, sovereign, legal and political entities with their own powers of self-governance and self-determination.

[Memorandum of Understanding Between the Penobscot Nation and the University of Maine System, University of Maine \(Orono\) \(PDF\)](#)

University of Southern Maine, Office of the President

<https://usm.maine.edu/president/land-acknowledgment>

We acknowledge the land and water that the University of Southern Maine campuses occupy, as well as the ancestral and contemporary peoples indigenous to these places in the Dawnland. Campus lands were the ancestral fishing, hunting, and agricultural grounds inhabited by the Abenaki and Wabanaki people for thousands of years.

We recognize that we are on indigenous land. In addition to the Abenaki, the broader place we now call Maine is home to the sovereign people of the Wabanaki Confederacy: the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Mi'kmaq peoples. We exist on their unceded homelands.

We also acknowledge the uncomfortable truths of settler colonialism, among them that the peoples indigenous to this place were often forcibly removed from this place. Harm from the physical and cultural genocide of Native people here and throughout the land we now call Maine continues and is felt by members of the Wabanaki Confederacy who live here today, including our own Wabanaki students, staff, and faculty.

To participate in the healing process, please visit the organization Wabanaki REACH at mainewabanakireach.org. We all have work to do.