



BEFORE YOU READ: What does it mean to acknowledge something? What are some examples of acknowledgments you make in your life?

The Land is Our Mother

Native people believe that the land is our Mother. The land is a gift. At our spiritual events and meetings, we give thanks for the land, air, and water. We are part of the land. We protect it.

Acknowledging the Loss of Our Land

Sometimes, non-Native people start their meetings by acknowledging the land. They

The land was stolen from Native people.

years, Native people took care of this land. But European settlers stole the land from

acknowledge that they are on stolen land. For thousands of

Native people. War and disease killed most Native people. Others were forced to move. European settlers developed the land. They changed the land, the air, and the water. They controlled the land.

When we lost our land, we also lost our culture and our people. If you want to acknowledge the land, make sure to include all the things we lost. Make sure to acknowledge all of the suffering that we have felt since colonizers came.

Honorable and Maybe Also Hurtful

If you are non-Native, it is good that you are honoring Native people. You are seeing the struggles we have been through. But remember you are talking about the loss of our land. We don't have a way to get our land back. You are talking about something that we are still struggling with. Be careful

when you talk about our losses.

If there are Native people at your meeting, you should ask them if you can do the land acknowledgment. Also, you should let Native members of the community know that you are doing this.

Awareness Is Not Enough

It is good to learn more about Native issues. But learning more is not enough. You can *do* more. Take responsibility. Think about how you can support Native people today. Acknowledgments should be more than words. We are one people with one Mother Earth.

Native people have a saying, “Our existence is our resistance.” When you acknowledge the land, you take a small step. You remind everyone of our existence. This is important.

Michelle Hughes is a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Explain in your own words what it means to acknowledge the land.
2. If you are not Native American, what should you be aware of and what should you do before you Acknowledge the Land?
3. Visit <native-land.ca> to find out what Native land you are on. Do some research to learn more. Then write your own Land Acknowledgment.
4. Consider starting your class or opening an event at your program by reading your Land Acknowledgment.

Land Acknowledgment

by Michelle Hughes

As a Mashpee Wampanoag woman, I acknowledge that we are on a great land, the land of our ancestors. Our ancestors taught us to show gratitude for the land. However, we have lost so much



of it. The Wampanoag people used to have 69 tribes in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Now there are only three surviving Wampanoag tribes, and we have less than 1% of our original territory. In addition to losing our land, we have been hurt as a people. The trauma from so much damage travels through the generations.

Colonizing now happens in the form of State and Federal agencies that still control our land. Indigenous people still have to fight for our existence on Mother Earth. Recently our tribe, the Mashpee Wampanoag, have had to fight back as the U.S. government tries to take away our right to sovereignty on our reservation. We seek land for clean water, food, wood, and economic development.

We are a protector of the lands. We feel a great obligation to give back. When we are stewards of the land, we take care of it, and it takes care of our people and our families. As a Mashpee Wampanoag, I thank you for acknowledging the land with me. Please continue to do so as you walk sacredly in life.