

GUIDE TO DEVELOPING LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENTS



What is a Land Acknowledgement Statement?

A land acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes the indigenous peoples on whose homeland or territories your organization is operating. Often read out loud at the beginning of a ceremony or public event, it is common protocol among indigenous communities and an important expression of respect, as well as a recognition that many indigenous peoples were dispossessed of their ancestral lands and territories.

Why are Land Acknowledgement Statements Important?

Land acknowledgement statements honor indigenous peoples as stewards of the land from time immemorial and raise awareness of the historical context that has brought your organization to this time and place.

As expressed by Northwestern University, “It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in [the] past tense ... colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation.”

How are Land Acknowledgement Statements Composed?

Land acknowledgements can be concise, along the lines of: “I want to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of [nation name(s)].” Some organizations may also wish to speak a few words of the indigenous peoples’ language.

Other organizations may need or want a more detailed, thoughtful statement. In this case, it is helpful to spend time researching and reflecting on such questions as:

- ▶ Why is this acknowledgement happening?
- ▶ How does this acknowledgement relate to the event or work you are doing?
- ▶ What is the history of these peoples and this land, including any relevant treaties?
- ▶ What is your relationship to this land, and how did you come to be here?

Land Acknowledgement Statements for Wintun Tribes

Three federally recognized tribes reside in and consider their homelands to be Yolo, Solano, Colusa, Lake and Napa counties: Cachil Dehe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Indians and the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

It is important to pronounce the names of our nations correctly. Information on pronunciation can be obtained by reviewing the “About” page on the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation website (www.yochadehe.gov), emailing the Tribe at info@yochadehe.gov or calling the Tribe at **530.796.3400**.

Tips for Creating a Land Acknowledgement Statement

- ▶ What is my end goal? (What do you hope listeners will think or do after hearing the acknowledgment?)
- ▶ When will I have the largest impact? (Think about your timing and audience, specifically.)
- ▶ Land acknowledgments should not be grim. They should function as living celebrations of indigenous communities. Ask yourself, “How am I leaving indigenous people in a stronger, more empowered place because of this land acknowledgment?”
- ▶ Use past, present and future tenses. Indigenous people are still here and are thriving.

Additional Factors to Consider

- ▶ It is not appropriate to ask an indigenous person who does not work for your organization to deliver the statement.
- ▶ It is appropriate and important to understand how and why dispossession and displacement occurred and how this plays into land acknowledgment. The United States government displaced many indigenous peoples from their land and territories using violence before treaties were signed.



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Please email the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation at info@yochadehe.gov
or call **530.796.3400**.

