

# Recommendations and Resources on Land Acknowledgement

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*“Wherever we are, we are on Indigenous land. Any time settlers come together for a formal gathering, we have the opportunity to open with respect by acknowledging the land and Indigenous Peoples who have tended that land for many generations.”<sup>1</sup>*

Many congregations across our diocese have begun the practice of making land acknowledgement statements regarding the Indigenous people who used to live on the land they currently occupy, and in some cases still do. In order to fully implement the spirit of the resolution adopted by our Diocesan Convention, we encourage our siblings in Christ to understand land acknowledgement as a process, not simply a statement.

General Convention resolutions Co72 and Do19 (adopted in July 2022 and echoing some of the calls of our own Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts [2022 Convention](#)) call for the implementation of “land acknowledgement liturgies and prayers to begin any public meetings or worship held in North America” and the promotion of Indigenous land acknowledgements “at all gatherings within the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society and its affiliate organizations.” In response to these resolutions, The Episcopal Church released [The Episcopal Church and Indigenous Land Acknowledgements](#).

Acknowledging the heritage of the land upon which we stand is holy and powerful work. However, many Indigenous voices urge that acknowledging the heritage of the land takes much more than simply writing a statement. Land acknowledgements, as one Native advocate put it, “Shouldn't just make you feel good without actually contributing anything to [Indigenous] communities.”<sup>2</sup> Instead, developing a land acknowledgement statement is just one piece of the process of **fully acknowledging the heritage of the land**.

[The Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery](#) suggests that acknowledgement is a three-step process:

1. **Learn** (“about the land where you live, and reflect on settler complicity in the Doctrine of Discovery”);
2. **Write** a statement;
3. **Commit** to a practice of action on behalf of Native people and communities.

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<sup>1</sup> *Land Acknowledgement Guide for Congregations*, p. 2. (Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery: <https://dismantlediscovery.org/about/>)

<sup>2</sup> Jessica Glidden, “Untying Knots: Beyond Land Acknowledgements--Accountable Action in Partnership with Native Nations,” (podcast), Institutional Antiracism and Accountability Project in collaboration with the Harvard Kennedy School’s Ash Center, January 10, 2023, E10.

A statement without this commitment to action can appear to Indigenous people as, in the words of one speaker, like “writing a thank you note for something that was stolen.”<sup>3</sup>

## Engaging Native People in Your Process

The Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery’s guide also offers some important guidelines for engaging native people in your process of acknowledging the land and its heritage<sup>4</sup>:

- Do ask for feedback; do not presume you will receive feedback.
- Provide an honorarium if an Indigenous person offers feedback on your land acknowledgment or contributes artwork or other work to your process.
- Consider meeting in person (not just on the phone); be willing to be the one who travels in order to meet with people.
- Understand that different cultures see time differently, both in terms of meeting times and how long a process is taking. Try not to make assumptions.

*“Acknowledgement by itself is a small gesture. It becomes meaningful when coupled with authentic relationships and informed action. But this beginning can be an opening to greater public consciousness of Native sovereignty and cultural rights, a step toward equitable relationship and reconciliation.”*

— Laurier Students’ Public Interest Research Group, Ontario, Canada  
<http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>

### Resources:

In this 2023 [Beyond Land Acknowledgement episode](#), Michaela Madrid and Jessica Gliden, Program Managers in Tribal Governance and Leadership Development at the [Native Governance Center](#), explore the impact and efficacy of land acknowledgements.

[Untying Knots](#) is a podcast that explores how people or organizations are untying the knots of systemic oppression and working towards a more equitable future. The podcast is published by the Institutional Antiracism and Accountability Project at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard’s Kennedy School.

The Native Governance Center is a Native-led nonprofit dedicated to assisting Native nations in strengthening their governing systems and capacity to exercise sovereignty. Their resource center contains a wealth of information on Native sovereignty from a Native perspective. Believing any land acknowledgement incomplete without an accompanying action plan, they

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<sup>3</sup> Michaela Madrid, “Untying Knots: Beyond Land Acknowledgements...”

<sup>4</sup> *Land Acknowledgement Guide for Congregations*, p. 2.

provide a [guide to land acknowledgments](#), an [action planning worksheet](#) to accompany the land acknowledgment, and an [explainer video for the guide](#).

Laurier Students' Public Interest Research Group (Waterloo, Ontario) is a nonprofit that helps develop advocacy tools and avenues for action. Their [Know the Land Territories Campaign](#) is an excellent example of a land acknowledgement. They provide a basic description of a land acknowledgment and why they are important, followed by a very complete acknowledgement, and some ways of using and developing both a land acknowledgment and actions beyond the acknowledgement.

[The Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery](#) emerged from the Mennonite Church and provides theologically-grounded, practical actions to “undo what has been done in the name of Christ.” Among many other resources, they provide a [guide to creating a land acknowledgement](#). Please note the donation button. Paying for others' labor is a component of justice work.

[The Episcopal Church and Indigenous Land Acknowledgements](#), developed by The Episcopal Church's Office of Indigenous Ministries.