



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

What is Land Acknowledgement?

Land Acknowledgment includes, but is not limited to, a formal, public statement recognizing the Indigenous people who occupied this land prior to European colonization. It recognizes the Indigenous people who were stewards of this land, were driven from this land, and continue to have a relationship with this land as sacred homeland.

Our Land Acknowledgment would be an expression of appreciation to the tribe whose territory we worship on. When making a Land Acknowledgment, it is essential to understand the role our early church played in the colonization of this community and subsequent displacement of what is now called The Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Tribe. It is, also, essential to understand that this is a community living in Wisconsin and maintaining deep ties to the Stockbridge area.

Land Acknowledgment is an ongoing process and so requires a commitment to education, equity and inclusion, and the development of an action plan to address these topics. As an example, the following is excerpted from the Stockbridge-Munsee tribal website, www.Mohican.com.

“Publicly acknowledging us as the original stewards of the land you are on is a way of showing respect, resisting the erasure of our history, and a starting point for further action.

Here is our Tribal Council-approved land acknowledgement that you can adapt for your particular context:

“It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are learning, speaking and gathering on the ancestral homelands of the [Insert as appropriate: Muhheaconneok or Mohican people or Munsee Lenape people], who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.”

Some important components are to specifically name our Tribe (not just say “the Native Americans”) and ensure that you include not only historical reference to our people but to make it contemporary and state that our Tribe continues to exist today. Including action steps in your land acknowledgement is also crucial. Without action, the land acknowledgement doesn't mean anything, and you end up with empty words on paper. Action is imperative.”