



Creating an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement

Resources: This guide was adapted from [A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#), [Bringing Awareness to Your Land Acknowledgement](#), [the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture](#), and [an informal conversation on Land Acknowledgement](#) between Justice Mary Yu and Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis.

Introduction to Land Acknowledgements

Our organizations and systems are built on the history of the places we come from. All of the people who have lived and current live in those spaces contributed to that history. In Washington, we all live on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of native people. Indigenous People have been historically and current continue to be culturally ignored and devalued by colonial systems, and A land acknowledgement is a small way to state that you and your organization hope to actively change this and to appreciate the practice of honoring the earth and the gifts it brings that many native tribes have observed since time immemorial.

Objective: For you and your team to write and decide when and how to use a land acknowledgement that is meaningful and relevant to your community.

Timing: One hour team meeting

Start with reflection (5 min):

Say: Everyone please read the prompts and individually write your thoughts on these topics for 3-5 minutes.

Do: Make the following prompts available on a printed handout or on a PowerPoint slide.

- Consider why you are doing this land acknowledgement. What is your end goal? What impact do you hope to have? When will you be using this statement?
- Push yourself to think deeply about any bias, guilt, or negative emotions you bring into this practice and how you might work to change them.



- Is there anything specific about your organization, the power dynamics present, or the work that you have done that specifically should be acknowledged or requires extra consideration?

Large Group Activity (10 min)

Identify a note taker or white board writer

Say: *If you are comfortable, share the one two most important values or thoughts you would like to guide this land acknowledgement creation.*

Do: After your list is complete, ask each member of the team to star one item that speaks to them most on your list (skip this step if your list is short, if long, this will help order the list).

- Be sure to address when you plan to use this statement. In groups of ___ or more? In court?

Use the blank space below to record your list in order.



Research and present your local history (15 minutes)

Consider researching out to your local tribe for books, writings, podcasts or speakers that would consider giving a historical presentation to your group. If a speaker is not available identify an individual willing to do this background work and bring a 10-15 minute presentation to your meeting.

- Identify Tribal Lands [using this map](#). If your team is virtual, ask each of your team members to find their current local and use chat or annotate to identify the tribe or tribes that occupy (or occupied) those lands
- Research the history of the land and any applicable history. Some areas to consider: forced occupation, forced labor, enslavement, tribal schools, genocide. These are tough topics to discuss, but important to acknowledge in your reflection regardless of the statement you choose to make.
- Some organizations also choose to acknowledge forced and underpaid labor in their acknowledgements – more information on this [is available here](#)
- **Highlight** and **reflect** on any work done in your field by tribal members or communities, can this work be incorporated into your teams' practices?
- Research correct pronunciation for tribal names and languages

Small groups, start writing (10 minutes in groups)

After your local history has been presented to the group, jointly write a statement. If virtual, a [google document](#) will allow multiple writers at the same time. Groups of no more than 4-5 are ideal. If in person, consider writing each sentence on a separate large post it or piece of paper so they can be easily interchanged.

Group presentation and discussion (10 minutes or more)

Each group should present their full statement, or a bulleted list of important elements. As each group presents, ask participants to write down (if virtual – consider using reactions, or star using annotate on zoom) the most meaningful phrases they hear. After every group has been heard, have a group discussion about similarities, differences, and ideas to



add/change/remove. As the meeting leader, take authority to mix together these statements by sharing a document on screen and rearranging, editing, or remixing statements as people talk.

- A useful group agreement here is “everyone speaks once before anyone speaks twice” to encourage even participation. If virtual, allow both chat and voice comments in order to allow people to speak in the way that is most comfortable for them.
- If folks are quiet, ask them to spend a quiet minute to write down the idea that they found most meaningful and why, then ask everyone to share with the group. Do your best to honor the inclusion of each of these ideas (if not the exact words) into your statement.
- The sources listed above include places to access historical information, example statements, and the voices and work of many tribal members on land acknowledgements. Having familiarity with some of these resources will be helpful.
- Here are a few sample land acknowledgements:
 - [California Law Review](#)
 - [Statement and Video by the Puyallup Tribe with suggested phrases](#)
 - A short statement used by some [Canadian Colleges and Courts](#): “Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting today on the traditional territories of the _____ people (or Nation). We thank them for allowing us to meet and learn together on their territory.”

Conclusion discussion

Say: *I appreciate your active participation in this activity today, this is only meaningful if we all consider it to be important to our daily work. If you have any last thoughts or concerns please bring them to the group for discussion now, so that we can all address them here. Next steps, I will write this up more formally and send it out to the group by ____date.*