

Labor and Indigenous Land Acknowledgment Guide

The NWQMC Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Workgroup strongly encourages all speakers at the NMC to acknowledge the Indigenous land on which research took place and / or where the speaker is from. We also cannot ignore that the 2023 conference location has significant and traumatic connections to slavery, both in the past and the present. This is an updated guide to provide information, examples, and links to additional resources about Indigenous land acknowledgments, as well as labor acknowledgments.

Why acknowledge labor? A labor acknowledgement recognizes that much of the economic progress and development in a geographic area or industry resulted from the unpaid labor and forced servitude of People of Color - specifically enslaved African labor. The impacts of that violent history are still felt and witnessed today in the United States and elsewhere. Additional information:

Point Comfort, where slavery in America began 400 years ago

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/13/us-slavery-400-years-virginia-point-comfort>

Why acknowledge Indigenous land and peoples? Acknowledging Indigenous lands recognizes the long history of the land upon which you reside and places you in the context of that history. It is an opportunity to start a reconciliation process for the forced removal and genocide of Indigenous peoples and acknowledge the ongoing acts of colonialism. Additional information:

Nansemond Indian Nation <https://nansemond.gov/>

Werowocomoco, a Powhatan Place of Power

<https://www.nps.gov/cajo/planyourvisit/werowocomoco.htm>

How can I acknowledge Indigenous land and peoples? There are a variety of ways to acknowledge Indigenous lands and peoples, and we recommend at the very least stating the Indigenous land on which you reside. You can find the geographic location of Indigenous lands at native-land.ca. We also recommend doing your homework as there can be complicated history of treaties. Other appropriate statements include acknowledging the native names of water bodies you research, prominent Indigenous people from the communities where you are from or work, or Indigenous people who work in your field. When you spend time learning about Indigenous peoples, you are actively participating in reconciliation and gaining the tools you need to someday take actions that go beyond words of acknowledgment or help you collaborate more effectively with Indigenous communities.

What if the history is very complicated and there are multiple Indigenous lands and peoples to acknowledge? Complex histories and unclear territorial claims are results of ongoing colonization. Rather than using a script, we encourage you to search, learn, and spend time on self-reflection. It is okay to say you do not fully understand the history or how best to word your acknowledgment. Many of us feel the same and make mistakes too. A land acknowledgment is really only the beginning of your commitment to reconciliation and healing between the majority of our existence and the continual displacement of Indigenous peoples, genocide, and environmental devastation.

When should I acknowledge Indigenous land and peoples? We recommend acknowledging Indigenous land and peoples when introducing yourself during your presentation and / or describing a geographic location or study site.

Acknowledgment examples:

“Our study site was located on Ojibwe lands”

“Good afternoon. I’m Rita, a graduate student at University of Florida located on Seminole and Timucua lands”

“I acknowledge I am in the process of learning about the complex history and many Indigenous peoples of the past and currently residing in what is called the Washington, DC region.”

[Land Acknowledgment - Univ. of Maryland Center for Environmental Science](#)

Further reading:

[Beyond Land Acknowledgment: A Guide - Native Governance Center](#)

[Territory Acknowledgement - Native-Land.ca](#)

[Understanding Land and Labor Acknowledgements - Research Help at Fitchburg State University](#)

[Land and Slavery Acknowledgements – Impossible Pastimes](#)

[Symposium on Native Land Acknowledgement to Feature Indigenous Stakeholders - Old Dominion University](#)