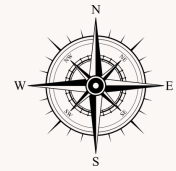


NWSWI LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROCESS

2024

TO OUR BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY...



Resolved:

that each congregation take the small step to include a land acknowledgement in their bulletin and newsletter, and speak the words or a variation of these words: “we gather today on the ancestral land of the (appropriate tribe or nation) and honor their elders past, present, and emerging” before every public gathering, including but not limited to, worship.

This resolution was passed at the Synod Assembly of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin in April 2023.



This is your map

If your congregation is curious about what this means, or how to get started, or even why bother, this is a place for you to begin. We will address how to host, where to begin, what it means, how to facilitate, and the various steps in the process.



NWSWI LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROCESS

QUESTIONS	A Beginning	ANSWERS
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Why Bother?

NWSWI has a video available to address the question of “Why bother?”

This is a good first step – it can be the start of a conversation, or a decision not to have it yet.

You can invite your Synod Advocate for Right Relationship to come give this presentation in person as part of a preach-and-teach, sermon and presentation style start to the conversation.

Options

The NWSWI Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs) had a session online which we were able to record, if you prefer to start this journey without a guide (all who wander are not lost!) and see if it is for you or your congregation. Click the YouTube icon copy or link below.



[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=G_PAT0QT BMC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_PAT0QT BMC)

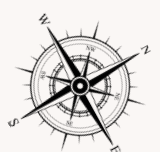
WHY



THIS QUESTION OF LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS NOT ABOUT GUILT, REPARATIONS, RE-WRITING THE PAST, OR ‘FIXING’ SOMETHING, *IT IS ABOUT BEING IN RELATIONSHIP NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.*

Roadblocks

- Unspoken feelings of discomfort will need to be addressed, don't expect everyone to be articulate about them. We will address how to proceed through those feelings in Dialogue Guidelines.
- Yes, there are other maps and nations that could be listed. We are beginning with when the majority of treaties in Wisconsin were broken.
- Yes, there are indigenous individuals and groups who find Land Acknowledgments to be facile or performative. We hope that by going through the entire process, you will be able to have authentic relationships with your indigenous neighbors, regardless of whether you choose to do an acknowledgment or not.



NWSWI LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROCESS

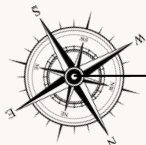
An Overview

The process over broadly take a year, if you follow these steps. The longest step is “*Learn*”, which is designed to take most of the year.

Gather
Build a team
*Learn
Teach
Discuss
Design
Decide

We’ll go over each step separately. “*Learn*”, is designed to take almost a year and works like a bookclub. MOVIES or speakers could be substituted, but would take careful curation and planning.

WHAT



*Learn

You’ll notice that we’ve designed the process as a sort of HARD and EASY approach; a hard truth telling book, followed by one that is aimed at hospitality, reconciliation, mission, or relationship. These hard books are not intended to GUILT people into action, but inform them about why action is a compassionate response. The ‘easy’ books aren’t easy actually; they’re hard to live too, but they’re based in right relationship and offer a healthy way forward in any marginalized circumstance, not just indigenous relationships.

Your Synod Advocate is happy to come at the end of each book and help process and discuss.



- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Month 1: | <i>Why bother?</i> Presentation or video |
| Month 2: | Book study: LAW <u>Indigenous History of the United States</u> by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz |
| Month 3: | Book study : GOSPEL <u>Door Set to Open</u> by Peter Steinke |
| Month 4: | Book study: LAW <u>Unsettling Truths</u> by Mark Charles |
| Month 5: | Book study: GOSPEL <u>Art of the Gathering</u> by Priya Parker |
| Month 6: | Book study: LAW <u>The Rediscovery of America</u> by Ned Blackhawk |
| Month 7: | Book study: GOSPEL <u>Speaking the Truth in Love</u> by Ruth Koch & Kenneth Haugk |
| Month 8: | Book Study Law: <u>Indian Nations of Wisconsin</u> by Patty Loew |
| Month 9: | Book Study GOSPEL: <u>Becoming Kin</u> by Patty Krawec |
| Month 10: | Book Study LAW: <u>Rediscovering Turtle Island</u> by Taylor Keen |
| Month 11: | Book Study GOSPEL: <u>Braiding Sweetgrass</u> by Robin Wall Kimmerer |
| Month 12: | Create statement, present and vote |

NWSWI LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROCESS

BACKGROUND

TRUTH

Truth telling is rarely comfortable, but the purpose here is to “move beyond a historical understanding into a recognition of the impacts on survivors which results in present-day intergenerational trauma, including to understand how the Indian Act resulted in systems of oppression and inequity for Indigenous peoples. What is the impact on their lived experience and how colonization shifted the landscape of traditional territories, and where Indigenous communities are thriving today. We also hope to uncover the often overlooked aspects of Indigenous history and contemporary issues. Understand the lasting impact of colonial policies and the ongoing resilience and activism of Indigenous communities.

<https://www.cultureally.com.truth&reconciliation-training>

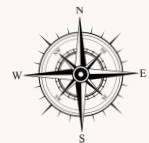


RECONCILIATION

To reconcile is to bring into harmony or agreement or to restore. We can settle an issue and still not be in a place of relational harmony or restoration. The reconciliation journey is building a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect and partnership.

“... Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.”

<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-reconciliation-is-and-what-it-is-not>



RELATIONSHIP

We're not going to FIX anything through this process. We can, however, learn better, know better, and do better based on what we learn. The majority of this process is learning about OURSELVES, where we fall on the various spectrums of reactions, emotions, responses to this issue.

When we acknowledge injustices, we can have honest relationships, with ourselves, with our neighbors, and with God.

The goal is to create a NEW space, in which all can live, thrive, and be welcomed.

NWSWI LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROCESS

HOW

Gather and discuss whether or not this is something you're willing to **dedicate a year to study and learn**

Build a team, five people or more, preferably NOT led by your pastor, but of course, their participation is welcomed. This team will meet monthly for discussion.

Learn. **Read the books.** Discuss them, one per month, you can meet weekly or once a month or however works in your context.

Tell people what you have learned. Invite speakers. Have movie nights. Make an indigenous ingredient meal and share it with your community. Consider the Service for the People worship to get the **start the conversation.**

Discuss. What does this mean to our church, to our community, to our children? How does living the Gospel rise up in this issue? What can we do better? Differently? Do we want to make a public statement of our faith in action and create a land acknowledgement? Discuss this often, not just once.

Have one-on-one conversations with people about whether or not the congregation would consider a Land Acknowledgement and how: in the bulletin, out loud at the Confession part of service, on the website only? You're listening for values and mission, not buy-in.

Design a land acknowledgement. By now you should have an idea of what is important to your community: caring for creation, the wisdom of elders, the Indian Schools, loss of land, or suppression of rights, etc.

Everyone's land acknowledgment is different and reflects your community's values and mission. One sentence is enough, it does not have to be a manifesto, a history, or an apology, but it might.

Decide on the final in your core group and go through the appropriate process as outlined in your congregational constitution to bring it to a congregational vote.

Be compassionate, empathetic, and kind to those who are uncomfortable or disturbed by the process. Choosing NOT to have a Land Acknowledgement or vote on it, after all this work, is authentic and valuable work.

NWSWI LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROCESS

For the Group

Leader

As the leader of a group meeting like this, you're in a position to set the tone. We recommend curiosity, openness, and gratitude.

Give yourself space and time to prepare before hand, keep it casual, and if tones get tense, **pause**. This guide is set up around a talking circle format, which means one person at a time. our job is to keep the ones not talking at that time patient, feeling heard, and not silenced.

Place and Time

Meeting in a comfortable environment is important. If we can find a space that will comfortably fit 8-12 in a circle, or around a table, that is ideal. While people may need to leave for food, drink, or for the restroom, the space should be solely for the discussion and free of distraction if possible.

Participants

Inviting those who have expressed interest or curiosity is a good place to start. Ask that all participants come with a willingness to communicate, listen, and be able to consider diverse or opposing views.

Everyone being in agreement is not the goal.

If it is appropriate and safe, invite a diverse group, different ages or cultural & professional backgrounds. Keep the environment safe and look to people's well beings, not just your own thoughts, feelings, or opinions.

Facilitation

If appropriate, begin with a prayer
Look for opportunities to break into smaller groups and look to pair or gather with those who are not your usual group.

Listen, encourage, and facilitate the conversation.

Avoid judgement, either of content or participants.

Assume best intentions, even if worded poorly or clumsily.

Ask for clarification

Be kind, supportive, respectful, and compassionate in your words and actions.





DIALOGUE GUIDELINES For All Participants

Closer
to the
end

With
each
book

Book Discussions

- Avoid summarizing the book or chapter (some groups meet each week and discuss a chapter or section, rather than once a month to discuss the book).
- Refrain from sharing personal anecdotes.
- Try to compare the book to other books on the list, look for similarities and differences.
- Try to respond to what others have said, connect to your thoughts rather than rebutt or react.

Sharing Circles

- Speak on behalf of yourself only
- If you are not speaking, your job is to listen wholeheartedly
- Every participant is invited to take care of their own needs
- Being in a circle allows us to co-create space for ourselves and one another
- The focus is to increase greater understanding of history, the present and the need for reconciliation



Impactful Dialogue

- Listen openly to ideas, be curious and listen to understand
- Ask clarifying questions if you don't understand, write it down so you can ask later rather than interrupting
- Speak honestly, even if it is clumsy; not being able to exactly articulate is a sign of learning
- Remember that everyone has a responsibility to make space for all voices
- Remember that there is no right and wrong; this is not about taking sides or convincing each other

Expanding the Circle

- Go around the first time and ask one thing each person learned
- Go around a second time and ask what one thing they wish they had not learned
- Go around the third time and ask what brings them hope or joy
- Leave time for silence

All the
time

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The Land Acknowledgment Statement

A land acknowledgement is a statement, often at the outset of a meeting or other gathering, that recognizes the Indigenous people who stake claim to the land and are the original caretakers and inhabitants of the land upon which the event is taking place.

Identify

Identify the land that you are on. This map overlays the indigenous map with the map of Wisconsin (you can see faintly the cities on the map)*. You might be on land that is historically cared for by more than one tribe or nation.

According to archaeological and genetic evidence, indigenous peoples have lived in North America for at least 23,000 years, and possibly as long as 30,000 years. Wisconsin was created as a state in 1848. We have to pick a point in time; we're using this map because these were the nations that treaties were broken with in 1832, 1827 and 1842. You can read more at:

https://canoe.csumc.wisc.edu/LdFCanoe_subpage_East_History_2.html#:~:text=Government%20representative%20forced%20eastern%20tribes,to%20forced%20removal%20into%20Iowa.



Map obtained from: www.wisconsinfirstnations.org/map/

* <https://nswwi.org/justice-ministries/indigenous-relationships> for a better, bigger look at the map

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Crafting the Land Acknowledgment Statement

Crafting your statement should come from what is important to your context. It can be a very simple statement, but it will reflect your values and mission in that simplicity. Here are a few, but certainly not all, examples of land acknowledgment statements:

- Honoring the land

"Today, we join you in [INSERT YOUR CITY] to acknowledge and honor the land on which we stand, that previously was known by its original inhabitants as [INSERT NAME OF ANCESTRAL TRIBAL LAND]".

- Respecting the people

"I come with respect for this land that I am on today, and for the people who have and do reside here".

- Acknowledging the history

"We are gathered today on the ancestral and seized land of the _____ People".

- Honoring elders

"I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the _____ People, and pay my respect to elders, past, present, and emerging".

- Thanking the people

"We thank them for their strength and resilience in protecting this land, and aspire to uphold our responsibilities according to their example".

Land acknowledgment statements can also acknowledge the need for meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities or name colonialism and its harms. A lot of people are stumped at this point – I recommend looking at other churches, charitable organizations, universities, or other organizations to see what their land acknowledgment looks like and begin building from there.

NWSWI LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROCESS

How to use the Land Acknowledgment Statement

You're doing so well!



At this point a lot of places plop it on their website or in their bulletin and think no more about it. But the Land Acknowledgment is not a thing, but a **process**, and if you've made it this far, through the books, through the discussions, you have done the hard part.

It is very counter-intuitive to realize that this process is not about our indigenous neighbors – they probably could not care less whether you do a land acknowledgement or not, it makes zero difference in their world and is all too often taken as a free pass for having 'done it'. This process is about you, learning who you and your ancestors are and how they interact or interacted with the local native populations. This process is about you. It takes humility, compassion, and love. It is a response to the Gospel to love your neighbor.

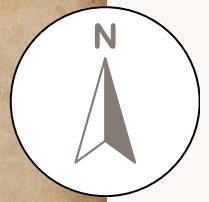


Some people will see that you have done the year long PROCESS, the HARD WORK, and EFFORT that it takes to do this properly says more to our neighbors about how we live our lives of faith OUT LOUD. That is what brings our neighbors into relationship with us – not the statement, flag, or sign – but the fact that we were willing to walk humbly, learn, love and then act justly and try to go forward with right relationships.



NWSWI LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROCESS

Action



**A Land Acknowledgement is an empty, performative statement
if it is not followed by action**

Consider what you can do as a community to ANNUALLY make some sort of contribution to relationships with our indigenous neighbors. It doesn't have to be the same thing every year, but without an on-going effort, contribution, or event, it is easy to become ungenuine about the work of relationship.

Some ideas (certainly not all) are:

- Service for the People worship on or around Indigenous People's Day (Oct), with offering going to a specific organization upholding native rights
- Care of Creation activities to care for Mother Earth and Father Sky
- Sponsor students, university or otherwise, on campus or in the community
- Organizing with the school district to fund indigenous language programs
- Host a pow-wow with a local tribe or nation
- Donate to an indigenous owned and operated charity
- Offer an indigenous ingredient/recipe meal on around the Indigenous National Day of Mourning (end of November)
- If your community spaces have good wifi, consider working with the school district or local tribe or nation for homework club, or a language learning venue
- Make contact with and develop a relationship with the tribe or nation in your area.





My beloved siblings, friends, and family in Christ,

Thank you for considering this process; thank you for attempting this process; thank you for even knowing it exists and is God's work in a small way towards loving our neighbors.

I am with you any step of the way. If you have questions, comments, improvements, resources, ideas or concerns, please let me know and I will incorporate that into my learning and try to make this better. I hope this map helps.

I have found that I am most useful to come to the last wrap-up or last chapter of each book discussion because I am an outside source, I don't take offense easily, and I genuinely want you to succeed in processing this information well. I am happy to do so, and I can come do a preach-and-teach to launch your conversation or process if you wish, or at any point.

Again, thank you,

Blessed be,

Sara



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

REACH OUT
FOR A CHAT

We're here!

REACH OUT
FOR SUPPORT



Rev. Sara S.V. Bishop

(she/her)

Synod Advocate for Right Relationship

synodadvocate@nswswi.org 715-681-0694

Snap to support
Justice Ministries
within NWSWI



On the lands of the Ho-Chunk, Menomonie, & Ojibwe

