



AMC's Commitment to Acknowledging and Uplifting Indigenous Lands and Peoples

Written by AMC's Land and Water Culture
Access Working Group

Appalachian Mountain Club

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Photo: View of [ktàtan](#) (Katahdin) from Millinocket, Maine

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Introduction

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit founded in 1876 to foster the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the outdoors for all. Working across the breadth of the Appalachian region from the Mid-Atlantic to New England, AMC has made fostering access to the outdoors one of the strategic priorities of its All Out five-year action plan. AMC works with a variety of landowners and management structures, ranging from state and federal ownership to public and private conservation easement lands, to lands that AMC directly owns and manages. In each circumstance, it is important that AMC understands the barriers to land access that may directly or inadvertently exclude various user groups. Central to AMC's ability to support open access and stewardship of outdoors spaces for all is a commitment to honor and support the Indigenous experience and sovereignty of the original inhabitants of the regions where we work

Intended Audience of this Document

This document is intended to provide AMC staff with a basic level of understanding to acknowledge and adapt practices within their work to support the traditional stewards of the lands of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic (what is now Pennsylvania to Maine). This document should be used to guide our work, relationships, and support of Indigenous stewardship and sovereignty and should be amended based on ongoing relationship building with Indigenous peoples and their experience on lands AMC stewards and owns. Building and maintaining ongoing relationships with Indigenous people means this is a living document, part of a greater journey to reconnect the relationship between lands, Indigenous peoples, and the broader outdoor community. This subject is one with a great deal of nuance and different perspectives. Decolonization requires action and participation to create change.

The Impact of Conservation on Tribes in AMC's Region

After 400 years of violence and systematic erasure under Western European colonial systems, Tribal Nations in what is now considered to be the northeastern United States exist locked in a complex web of political and familial structures. Indigenous peoples are not simply partners or outdoor constituents. In most cases, they are citizens of sovereign Nations recognized through treaties with the U.S. government. There are, however, many federally unrecognized Tribes whose communities may feel further marginalized by focusing on recognized Nations.

New western-centric Nations, such as the United States and Canada, have created international borders that split Indigenous homelands and peoples. In some cases, these Indigenous peoples have treaty rights and sovereignty on both sides of the U.S./Canada border, although the federal policies differ and often create disparities for Tribes with citizens on either side. The international status of Tribal Nations must be considered when approaching relationships and the work of decolonization.

The actions of the conservation movement have done harm to Indigenous people and their way of life. Some instances of harm include the creation of the National Park and National Forest system which often removed Tribal communities to create “public” land, therefore ignoring Indigenous relationship to that land. This pattern continues as subsequent conservation easements sometimes left little room for cultural use and resource gathering by Indigenous people. Actions as seemingly benign as placing Indigenous history within the context of natural history, which has been done for more than a century, diminishes Indigenous sovereignty, approaches to management, and implies that those communities are unequal to western societies. Bonnie Newsom, Penobscot (panawáhpskewi) citizen and archaeologist states, *“The conservation movement removed people from the landscape, Indigenous values include people in that relationship.”*

The AMC archives are largely silent on Indigenous issues, which speaks to how little involvement traditional environmental NGOs sought or even paid attention to Indigenous interests for much of our history. Over the course of the conservation movement while Tribal sovereignty remained, Tribes continued to be stripped of their resources, and several Indigenous-led initiatives to return Tribal land and rekindle relationships to place went unsupported by most of the conservation community for much of the 20th century. For example, in Maine, Wabanaki people were punished through policymaking for trying to engage with the land, further creating divides between those who benefit from the goals of conservation and those who do not.

As AMC works to foster access in the outdoors and to protect critical landscapes for the well-being of people and the outdoors, we recognize the connection between Indigenous people and the land as the foundation of the environmental consciousness we aspire to today. From our ongoing learning and relationships with Tribes, we have outlined the following principles to be a better partner with these communities.

Our Guiding Principles

Central to AMC's ability to support access and stewardship of outdoors spaces for all is a commitment to honor and support the Indigenous experience and sovereignty of the original inhabitants of the regions where we work. This can only happen through trust-based relationships, and below are the principles we rely on to guide our work:

- We will prioritize uplifting and sharing Indigenous voices, while minimizing our “asks,” so as not to be a burden.
- We support Indigenous sovereignty and the right for self-determination.
- We believe stewardship of the land is best achieved when Indigenous relationship to the land is restored.
- We understand our full commitment is fluid and will change and grow with our deepening work and relationships.
- Enduring relationships are built on trust and are not tied to one person. We understand they will take time.

Action

While there has largely been no concerted effort to seek Indigenous input into AMC's conservation and policy work for much of its history, there are recent examples of working in coalition with Tribes to advance our shared environmental goals. Across our region issues like clean water, renewable energy, dam removal and relicensing, and funding for the acquisition of conserved lands have been issues where the environmental NGO community and Tribes have forged alliances. While we celebrate the outcomes of those partnerships, we also want to deepen our relationship to understand topics that may be more prevalent to Indigenous communities and their experiences in outdoor spaces. Currently, this work has originated in three regions: Maine, Connecticut, and the mid-Atlantic.

Since 2018, Maine Woods Initiative (MWI) staff have been founding members of the [First Light Learning Journey](#), the Conservation Community Delegation, and the Wabanaki Commission on Land and Stewardship - *Psiw ut skitkamiq kignumin* (the whole earth is our home). Both working groups seek to educate the environmental community about Wabanaki culture, resources, and social issues, mostly centered on the relationship to land and expressions of sovereignty to the Tribes within what is now Maine. AMC policy and lands staff have worked to return resources to Tribal citizens through free cultural collection and harvest permits on MWI lands, supporting Tribal sovereignty bills in the legislature, negotiating for Tribal land

acquisition, and supporting the creation of a Wabanaki land return fund to aid with land acquisition costs. AMC's MWI project has developed a strong base of support within the Tribal communities and has benefited from open sharing of knowledge between Tribal natural resources departments and AMC lands staff. In early 2026, during the acquisition of the Barnard Forest, AMC returned 1,700 acres, as well as deeded road access to the Penobscot Nation at not cost to the Tribe.

In the Connecticut River watershed, as part of our work on hydropower dams, as well as with the [Friends of Conte](#), AMC has developed strong working relationships with the [Nolembeka Project](#) and other representatives of the Wabanaki Nations in Maine. In Connecticut and Massachusetts, the AMC, Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA), and the National Park Service (NPS) have initiated an Indigenous Site Survey of the New England National Scenic Trail in partnership with the [Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center](#) and the Mohegan Tribal Historic Preservation Office. The project was led by Tribal consultant Jay Levy and documented culturally significant sites along the trail corridor in both Connecticut and Massachusetts. This work combines traditional knowledge, oral histories, and field-based cultural resource surveys to uplift Indigenous presence and place-based stories. The first phase of the project included a detailed survey report and interactive maps, which were followed by interpretive hikes, educational events, and a Tribal youth gear library in phase two of the project.



Seventh-generation Passamaquoddy basket maker Gabriel Frey shows foresters on a field tour in Maine how to remove birch bark for cultural use.

Further south in the mid-Atlantic region, AMC works closely with the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, supporting their [Rising Nation River Journey](#), a canoe expedition that commemorates the Treaty of Renewed Friendship and honors the Lenape's enduring connection to the Delaware River. AMC also incorporates the Lenape Nation into other conservation programs, including the Delaware River Sojourn, where Tribal members regularly lead ceremonies and educational sessions that highlight Lenape history and the cultural significance of the river. Through these partnerships, AMC helps elevate Indigenous voices in regional conservation efforts and foster a deeper public understanding of the Lenape's role as original stewards of the land and its waterways.



In November 2024, AMC hosted a joint Veteran's Day and Indigenous Heritage Month Celebration on the New England Trail. The celebration included a presentation by Annawon Weeden (Mashpee Wampanoag/Pequot/Narragansett), Jay Levy, and Rebecca Perry-Levy (Pequot/Narragansett).

Additional examples of AMC's commitment to advancing Indigenous sovereignty, access, and land return include:

- Committing AMC staff time to supporting a coalition effort aimed at increasing land return to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine;
- Advocating for full Tribal sovereignty in Maine and for Tribal representation on natural resource boards and agencies within state government;
- Returning cultural resources through free cultural use and access permits available to Tribal citizens on AMC owned lands. Exploring options for additional land return as part of any future land acquisitions pending Tribal interest;
- Financially supporting Indigenous land acquisition, and support funds used to provide legal support to land return efforts including the *Wolankeyutomone Kisi Apaciyewik* fund;
- Negotiating with landowners for the return of land and cultural resources within Maine at the request of the Wabanaki Commission on Land and Stewardship;
- Partnering with the Penobscot Nation and Nipmuc Nation on hydropower relicensing to achieve a variety of cultural and environmental benefits;
- Developing alliances (in the mid-Atlantic region) with the Lenape Nation and including them in conservation programs and coalitions;
- Supporting Indigenous-led forestry research at the University of Maine on Emerald Ash Borer through data and resource sharing;
- Advocating for legislative changes that would grant Tribes the same status as Federal agencies in writing permitting conditions for hydropower dams;

- Approaching our river conservation work and participation in specific hydropower project relicensing in close coordination with Tribes to ensure alignment on outcomes and to amplify their voices, which are often limited due to Tribal capacity constraints;
- Partnering with the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and the Mohegan Tribal Historic Preservation Office to lead the Indigenous Site Survey along the New England National Scenic Trail (NET), identifying and protecting culturally significant sites;
- Facilitating Indigenous-led interpretive hikes and community engagement events along the NET to uplift Indigenous stories and presence on ancestral lands; and
- Including culturally appropriate teaching and history in our educational and naturalist programming across the region.

How else can we be good partners and uplift Indigenous voices? Please see our Indigenous Commitment Action Plan for ideas about how to get to work! Remember, when working with an Indigenous consultant, an honorarium is considered a sign of reciprocity and respect (see the Considerations for Funding/Funders section).

Land Acknowledgements

What is a land acknowledgement (LA) and why give one?

When we created our process for land acknowledgements, we understood that statements without actions to back them up are meaningless and do not improve Indigenous-land relations. A land acknowledgement is a starting point. Many AMC staff have used information from Wabanaki Reach, Selena Mills, a Cree scholar and writer, and others to inform our LA process. This has led to an understanding about Indigenous presence and the relationship to lands that AMC stewards, how we channel this understanding into principles guiding AMC's work, and how that has led to tangible, actionable steps towards equitable access to land.



Selena Mills, a Cree scholar and writer, explains what a land acknowledgement is and why to give one <https://www.unitedwaygt.org/issues/what-are-land-acknowledgements-and-why-do-they-matter/>:

- Land acknowledgements are an honest and historically accurate way to recognize the traditional Native American First Nations.

- They can be presented verbally or visually and have one goal, regardless of format: They commemorate Indigenous peoples' principal kinship to the land—and the fact that we have not and cannot be erased from her, our collective first mother—the earth.
- They're a starting place to a change in how the land is seen and talked about. They help redefine how people place themselves in relation to the First Peoples of a land.
- Land acknowledgements are a necessary and first step toward honoring the original occupants of a place. They also help people recognize and respect Indigenous peoples' inherent kinship beliefs when it comes to the land, especially since those beliefs were restricted for so long (American Indian Freedom of Religion Act of 1978).
- When we're being honest about why land acknowledgements are important—it is recognition of the attempted genocide of Native Americans, which spans centuries.
- They help provide a solid framework for reconciliation for the injustices that have been carried out against Indigenous communities: broken treaties, residential schools, extermination policies and continued attempts by government (federal, state and territorial) and religious groups to control resources.

Things to Consider Before Using a Land Acknowledgement and When to Use One

AMC recognizes that there are many different contexts in which a land acknowledgement may be used across the organization, and there is not a universal approach. An effective land acknowledgement considers not only the land, people, and history, but also the specific audience and context, and most importantly, it considers what **action** looks like in that situation. A land acknowledgement for guests at a lodge may need to be structured differently than one given on a five-day Outdoor Leadership Training. And yet, to reflect our institutional values and commitment to action, we understand the importance of having some structured language that staff can use for land acknowledgments in different situations.

Visual LAs can be very powerful when placed in a building or other public space and can serve to add depth and meaning for visitors to better understand Indigenous connections to the land. When used in this way, they can be referenced by presenters working in those spaces to guide visitors to more information. Visual LAs should be refreshed periodically to reflect current actionable opportunities for the public to support Indigenous people. The specific Nation the visual LA references should be consulted on the language and design if possible.

A LA should never be used to check a box, promote AMC as an organization, or in any situation where its improper use would diminish the respect intended for Indigenous communities. Try to use LAs when they can be most impactful and certainly whenever referencing the human history and experience of outdoor spaces.

The goal of a LA is to build awareness, open a dialogue, and affirm support for Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous-led initiatives. Not all gatherings or spaces are appropriate for the use of LAs. Here are a few examples of the types of gatherings or spaces where written or verbal LAs may be appropriate. If the potential impact of giving an LA is questionable, it might be best to avoid giving one. Remember, to be an effective part of efforts to decolonize outdoor spaces, LAs must carry weight and be directed to support Indigenous experiences and sovereignty.

Situations When Land Acknowledgements May Be Appropriate

- Educational programming and guided adventures: To model good conservation ethics and accurately represent Indigenous relationships to place, a LA at the start of a program with a school group or other guided adventure can help participants better understand the complexity of the human experience where they are learning and recreating. LAs can be a powerful tool to open discussions about Indigenous experiences and how to support their sovereignty.
- Written LAs displayed in public spaces at lodges and huts: Visual LAs, especially ones paired with maps of Indigenous place names and homelands, can serve as an important tool for acknowledging the Indigenous presence and history of a place.
- Communications involving the human experience of the environment and people's past and present experiences in outdoor spaces: Indigenous use of and relationship to outdoor spaces are unique and must be respected and supported. A LA given to ask participants or readers to support Indigenous access, sovereignty, and ownership of land is a powerful tool to aid in environmental decolonization.

Examples of each to use as a template will be listed in the appendix of this document

Do Your Research

Because LAs are grounded in the work of decolonization, it is important that they include an actionable request. Actionable requests can and should be individualized and personal, depending on both the speaker and the audience's background and resources.



As an example, The Nature Conservancy office in Brunswick Maine did research about what colonization means within its territory to guide their collaboration with Wabanaki people. This example illustrates how research can inform organizations about the Indigenous presence in their area and to guide how they can best support Tribal sovereignty. **Scan the QR code to learn more!**

The effort to understand the history of a place and its impact on people is part of the work required to deliver a meaningful LA. LAs are as much about educating and empowering the speaker as they are for the audience.

You may find it helpful to first reflect on and research questions such as:

- Why is this land acknowledgement happening? Consider your purpose in giving the land acknowledgement; ensure that it is not sound like something to “get through” or “check off.” Will this land acknowledgement be inappropriate or cause harm?
- How does this acknowledgement relate to the event or work you are doing? Do your own reading to gain a fuller understanding of the history of a place. Ensure you are reading content by Indigenous authors! The website <https://native-land.ca/> is a great starting point.
- What is the correct pronunciation of all names of people and places you are mentioning?
- What intentions do you have to disrupt and dismantle colonialism beyond this land acknowledgement? Find out if there are any current events impacting Indigenous peoples in the area that would be relevant to include in your discussion. Be sure to point to an actionable item that people can participate in to advance Indigenous causes.
- Personally reflect on your own relationship with the land and prepare yourself to give the land acknowledgement in an authentic way. This may mean grappling with your own discomfort; that is okay. Take time to do this before delivering the land acknowledgement.

Pairing Land Acknowledgements with Action

Now that you’ve researched the Indigenous presence of a place and worked to ensure that the delivery of a land acknowledgment will be impactful, it’s time to give your audience a call to action. Without an action a LA runs the risk of being not only routine, but also offensive to Indigenous peoples and their sovereignty. Actions should be focused on directly improving the local Tribe’s access to and stewardship of land and resources, both cultural and environmental. Often it can be hard for an audience member to know how to engage in the work of decolonization. Here are some examples of actions to offer up for consideration when drafting a LA:

- Donate time and money to supporting Indigenous led organizations,
- Amplify voices of Indigenous people leading grassroots or Tribal social change efforts,
- Support land return and the sharing of cultural resources,
- Attend events or lectures hosted by Indigenous people in your area,
- Visit cultural centers or Indigenous museums in your area.

These examples are somewhat universal in their impact and applicability across

AMC's geographic reach. If you can name individual efforts and contact information for each category specific to your region as part of a LA, please do so. The intent is to drive support to those efforts. As AMC begins to deepen its relationships with Tribal Nations, be in touch with other departments to learn about current examples of AMC's impact to support Indigenous sovereignty and land return.

Considerations for Fundraising/Funders

The Appalachian Mountain Club realizes that as a large, multi-state organization, and also a large landowner in Maine, we have the opportunity to use our voice to encourage access for all. We can do this by addressing past injustices and centering appropriate voices moving forward.

AMC commits to a) ensuring that the projects that we propose for funding are, when appropriate, formulated with Indigenous consultation; b) educating funders about the importance of the Indigenous connection to the project; and c) partnering with Tribes,

when invited, to support their fundraising efforts through technical support, letters of support, shared project work, etc.

As we encourage funders to include Indigenous communities in their funding choices, we realize the learning and understanding may take time. AMC is committed to helping educate funders in a meaningful way, through dialogue, conversation, and leading by example. We recognize that we can accomplish more when we work together and will strive to work collectively. When planning their work for the coming year, budget managers should plan for speaker or presenter honorariums within annual budget and capital expenses to appropriately compensate Indigenous speakers. See infographic for recommendations on Indigenous honorariums.

HONORARIUMS FOR INDIGENOUS SPEAKERS: WHY THEY MATTER	
 <p>PURPOSE OF AN HONORARIUM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'It's not a payment—it's a gesture of respect.' • Honorariums recognize time, wisdom, and community leadership. 	<p>CULTURAL IMPORTANCE</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tied to traditions of gifting and reciprocity. • They reflect respect, relationship, and protocol—not transaction.
 <p>WHAT COUNTS AS AN HONORARIUM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash (flat rate) • Gift cards • Tobacco, blanket, or beadwork • Travel support/hotel • Traditional gifts 	<p>WHEN & WHO SHOULD RECEIVE</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders • Knowledge • Cultural advisors • Survivors sharing lived experience • Youth leaders
<p>BEST PRACTICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about protocol in advance • Budget it in early • Offer respectfully & promptly • Don't make people chase it • Allow room for refusal 	<p>SAMPLE SCRIPT</p> <p>"We offer this honorarium as a token of our respect and gratitude for your time and teachings. We honour what you've shared."</p>

Conclusion

The Appalachian Mountain Club is committed to forming lasting relationships with the Indigenous people in the region that we serve. We understand the land we operate on was taken from its first inhabitants and will strive to restore access and relationship to that land, while also honoring the sovereignty of the Tribes we work with. These relationships will take time and can only be built on trust through our actions, while collaborating with and uplifting Indigenous voices. We understand this is long work and will take time to build trust. We are guided by our principles in this work and will use this document as a written commitment that will evolve over time along with our learning and growing.

Appendix

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- I. Example Land Acknowledgements
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I. Example Land Acknowledgments – please note that these are NOT COMPLETE as they lack action recommendations.

Example 1: Land Acknowledgement for Mt. Cardigan Outdoor Leadership Training.

This training takes place at Mt. Cardigan, where you will be hiking and camping for the next few days. The land right around the lodge is owned by the Appalachian Mountain Club, and the surrounding land is state forest land owned by the state of New Hampshire. Ownership, even collective ownership, implies a right to the land and can erase the long and violent history that led to that idea of ownership. When we see the trees and forests around us, there is a natural inclination to think of these lands as “untouched” or “pristine,” which is not the case.

Long before this land was colonized, it was home to Indigenous people. This program takes place on the traditional land of the Abenaki People, part of the Wabanaki

Confederacy, who governed, maintained, and respected this land for generations. We acknowledge the violence perpetrated against the Abenaki people by colonizers, and the systems of colonization that continue today. We pay respects to the members of Abenaki Nation past, present, and future.

Despite historical and continued violence against the Abenaki, their culture and history endure, and they still consider this land home. While Abenaki Nations were spread across Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, the core communities now reside in Odanak and Wôlinak, Quebec.

We challenge you to think about, and discuss, the following questions:

1. Why are we acknowledging this history?
2. As youth leaders conducting outdoor trips, what would it look like for you to lead trips from the mindset of understanding and discussing land history and colonization?
3. What steps can you take to dismantle systems of colonization and racism that continue to keep Indigenous people and people of color from accessing this land?

I invite you to take a moment to think about these questions, or to offer gratitude to the generations of Indigenous people who have stewarded this land.

Example 2: Land Acknowledgement for Camp Ponkapoag Outdoor Leadership Training

This program takes place at Ponkapoag Pond in the Blue Hills. The Blue Hills is state land, run by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The Appalachian Mountain Club manages the land at this campsite and the adjacent cabins. While reservations must be made for camping, there are public parking areas, and the trails and pond are open to the public.

Ownership, even collective ownership, implies a right to the land and can erase the long, and often violent, history that led to that declaration of ownership. This program takes place on ancestral and unceded land of the Massadchu-es-et (Massachusetts) people. We acknowledge the violence perpetrated against the Massachusett people by colonizers of this country. It should also be noted that the naming of specific Tribes can diminish the complexities and nuances of the different peoples that lived on the land and their relationships to each other, and that defined borders are an inherently colonial idea. Neighbors of the Massachusett people included the Nipmuc, Pawtucket, and Wampanoag people and Nations. We pay respects to the members of these Nations, past, present, and future.

The word Massachusett is an Algonquin word that roughly translates to “the great hill,” referring to the Great Blue Hill behind us, known today as the Blue Hills. The people living in this area referred to themselves by the name of the land on which they dwelled, not vice versa, and that name was later appropriated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Despite the violence committed against them, the Massachusett survived as a people. In the 2010 census, 85 people claimed Ponkapoag ancestry, and continue to live in the Neponset River area of Greater Boston. We understand that land acknowledgements are a small step towards telling a more complete history of this land, but it is important to work against the erasing and trivializing of Indigenous history.

We invite you to think about and discuss the following questions:

1. Why are we acknowledging this history?
2. As youth leaders conducting outdoor trips, what would it look like for you to lead trips from the mindset of understanding and discussing land history and colonization?
3. What steps can you take to dismantle systems of colonization and racism that continue to keep Indigenous people and people of color from accessing this land?

I encourage you to take a moment to think about these questions, or to offer gratitude to the generations of Indigenous people who have stewarded this land.

Example 3: Informational talking points for Maine Lodges

The Maine Lodges are located on the traditional lands of the Penobscot people. They are an Algonquian-speaking people and part of the Wabanaki Confederacy made up of the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Abenaki. English colonial settlement in New England and frequent conflicts, such as the Norridgewock Massacre, led many Abenaki to migrate to Quebec and integrate into other Tribes nearby.

Example 4: Informational talking points for Noble View Outdoor Center

Noble View Outdoor Center is located on the traditional lands of the Mohicans. They are an Algonquin-speaking people originally based around the upper Hudson River Valley, who relocated to western Massachusetts with the Munsee Lenape after warring with the Mohawk in the late 1600s. Pressure from European invasion drove the Mohican and the Lenape to the American West in the 1800s.

Example 5: Informational talking points for Pinkham Notch Visitor Center and Joe Dodge Lodge

The Pinkham Notch Visitors Center and Joe Dodge Lodge are located on the traditional lands of the Western Abenaki, an Algonquin-speaking people and part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. English colonial settlement in New England and frequent violence forced many Abenaki to migrate to Quebec, where their core communities remain today in Odanak and Wôlinak.

Example 6: Informational talking points for the Highland Center

The Highland Center at Crawford Notch is located on the traditional lands of the Western Abenaki, an Algonquin-speaking people and part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. English colonial settlement in New England and frequent violence forced many Abenaki to migrate to Quebec, where their core communities remain today in Odanak and Wôlinak.

Example 7: Informational talking points for the AMC High Huts

The AMC High Mountain Huts are located on the traditional lands of the Western Abenaki, an Algonquin-speaking people and part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. English colonial settlement in New England and frequent violence forced many Abenaki to migrate to Quebec, where their core communities remain today in Odanak and Wôlinak.

Example 8: Informational talking points for Corman Harriman Outdoor Center

The Stephen & Betsy Corman AMC Harriman Outdoor Center is located on the traditional lands of the Mohicans, an Algonquin-speaking people. They combined with the Munsee Lenape people and moved west away from European settlers in the early 1800s. A combination of pressure to sell their land and the federal Indian Removal Act resulted in a relocation of the Mohican to reservations in Wisconsin.

Example 9: Informational talking points for Mohican Outdoor Center

AMC's Mohican Outdoor Center is located on the traditional lands of the Mohicans, an Algonquin-speaking people. They combined with the Munsee Lenape people and moved west away from European settlers in the early 1800s. A combination of pressure to sell their land and the federal Indian Removal Act resulted in a relocation of the Mohican to reservations in Wisconsin.

II. Guidance for Writing About Indigenous Engagement

- Capitalize Tribe when you're referring to a specific Tribe. Capitalize Nation when referring to a specific Tribal Nation. Prioritize using Nation over Tribe, which underscores sovereignty. Don't use Tribal as a general adjective;

- Capitalize Tribe when you're referring to a specific Tribe. Capitalize Nation when referring to a specific Tribal Nation. Prioritize using Nation over Tribe, which underscores sovereignty. Don't use Tribal as a general adjective;
- AMC adheres to the Chicago Manual of Style, which recommends: We would capitalize “Indigenous” in both contexts: that of Indigenous people and groups, on the one hand, and Indigenous culture and society, on the other. Lowercase “indigenous” would be reserved for contexts in which the term does not apply to Indigenous people in any sense—for example, indigenous plant and animal species;
- Use “Indigenous” instead of “native” when referring to the history, practices, and ongoing actions of First Nations and Native American Nations;
- Use correct Indigenous words/spelling when appropriate and link to sources or Nation-specific websites;
- [Wabanaki Style & Media Guide](#)

III. An example of the complexity of state-recognition: The Abenaki in Vermont

The idea of “who is Indigenous and who is not” can be complex to non-Indigenous people and even among Indigenous communities. The concepts of blood quantum, state versus federal recognition, and sovereignty are hotly debated at times. Many Tribes in North America prefer federal over state recognition as it is a highly regulated process between two sovereign Nations. Many Indigenous leaders have expressed that one can be considered Indigenous if they are on a Tribal census, AND connected to the Tribe, while others focus only on the long-standing connection to a Tribal community. This is an important distinction as increasingly people are seeking their ancestry through DNA results and subsequently claiming Indigenous heritage. This is extremely harmful to legitimate Tribes and people who are often not taken seriously or respected as sovereign Nations, and who continue to fight for their rights. Cultural appropriation of Indigenous culture is prevalent as people perpetuate stereotypes they resonate with. This type of complexity is demonstrated below in the debate over the legitimacy of the state-recognized Abenaki in Vermont (and individuals in New Hampshire).

Through years of partnership, AMC has forged trusting relationships with the Wabanaki Commission on Land and Stewardship who works with federally recognized Tribes. Through that trust, we are guided by Wabanaki understandings of Indigeneity which specifically recognizes the Quebec communities of Abenaki at Odanak and Wôlinak as the present core of the Abenaki Nation. AMC will honor the guidance of our Tribal partners when considering issues of Indigeneity, while also recognizing that the ancestral lands of the Abenaki extend far beyond current state

and federal boundaries. As hard and complicated issues arise during our work with Indigenous communities, AMC staff and volunteers should refer back to this document for guidance. We understand that we will need to continuously review and add to this document as we learn and grow.

Excerpt of an Open Letter to Vermont Conservation Groups from the Abenaki in the Province of Quebec:

“We represent the Abenaki People, now officially confined to two small reserves in the Province of Quebec. We have never ceded our ancestral territory in New England, nor have we ceased to utilize the larger territory since our displacement from the United States after the American Revolution. We have also long denounced Vermont's state-recognized 'tribes' as self-identified Abenaki, including in [April of 2022](#) at the University of Vermont.

We take note that Vermont's conservation organizations, including Audubon Vermont, Vermont Conservation Voters, the Vermont Land Trust, the Vermont Natural Resources Council, the Trust for Public Lands, the Vermont Nature Conservancy, and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board are collaborating with Euro-American settlers claiming to be Indigenous. As Vermont's own [Attorney General's report](#) made clear twenty years ago, as did the [Bureau of Indian Affairs in 2005](#), these Vermont groups lack Abenaki ancestry as well as [any historic link to a North American Indian tribe](#). They are [not Indigenous](#).

They are instead part of a growing movement of what anthropologist [Circe Sturm](#) calls 'race-shifters': White people who seek to claim Indigenous ancestry [with little or no basis for doing so](#). As Professor [Kim TallBear](#) made clear in a recent [presentation at the University of Vermont](#), race-shifters carry out a final and genocidal act of colonization by erasing and replacing actual Native People with the voices and the bodies of the invader.

We ask you to pause and think about the consequence of your actions, and we ask you to put a stop to such collaboration. If it is your intent to work with those who have preserved the culture and language of the Abenaki across 400 years of colonization, we are those people. We have survived waves of pandemic disease, multiple colonial wars, the vast reduction of homeland, and forcible assimilation, and we are the sole guardians of [that heritage](#).

We are also the sole guardians of [Abenaki citizenship](#). Yet the State of Vermont, despite its own knowledge of false claims to Indigenous ancestry, and in collaboration with the leadership of Vermont's 'tribes', [excluded us from participation in the state](#)

in the state recognition process of 2010-12. This was in violation of both the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the U.S. Constitution's Commerce Clause which grants authority in Indian affairs to the federal government. Vermont's process also made genealogy optional and permitted the 'tribes' to sit on the recommending Commission. This was a political process that essentially allowed the 'tribes' to recognize themselves. It was not an evaluation of ancestry and kinship."

Except from an Open Letter Response from the Abenaki Alliance in Vermont:

"It has come to our attention that Daniel Nolett, Executive Director at the Odanak Band Council, has reached out to your organization, on behalf of Chief Rick O'Bomsawin, Abenaki of Odanak and Chief Michel R. Bernard, Abenaki of Wôlinak, to slander our Abenaki communities.

As your neighbors, colleagues, and fellow citizens in the State of Vermont, we cannot allow their unilateral accusations and claims to stand without response, in our own voices. We are the four Vermont State recognized Tribes – Missisquoi, Koasek, Nulhegan, and Elnu. We have joined together as the Abenaki Alliance and we are asking for your help and support. We did not get to this point in restoration of relationships within these homelands – over many decades, after hundreds of years – by ourselves, but by being in community with you and many others. We are not here to divide and profit, but to join in the very necessary work of finding a way back toward lasting, resilient co-existence with All of Our Relations and the Land. Our partnership with your organization is an essential part of that and while we have come a long way, there is still important work ahead.

Currently, Abenaki in Vermont find ourselves in a position to have to, once again, advocate for recognition and acceptance – but today we find the challenges coming from other Abenaki across the international border. Canadian First Nations at Odanak and Wôlinak are seeking to destroy what Abenaki in Vermont have worked hard to cultivate with our community partners, state legislators, arts and history organizations, and environmental supporters, in order to position their own tribes for benefits in the United States, including Federal enfranchisement, land claims, and political influence. They have stated so themselves.

In the process, Native people and their communities in Vermont are being harmed once again. That is not how we choose to live and it is not what makes Vermont such a special place. Together, we are among the multiple "guardians" of Abenaki citizenship and heritage. We have been taught that traditional Indigenous values do not seek a singular spotlight or title of "sole guardian," but rather honor a variety of perspectives and aim to coexist, collaborate, and work toward common goals.

We choose to not give power to the array of accusations from Odanak and Wolinak by going tit for tat; however, we do take exception to being labeled “self-identified” and their claim that we are “not Indigenous.” These epithets are just that, simply labels and claims. Vermont Abenaki have worked hard to gain political recognition by the State. Just last month we celebrated Abenaki Recognition Week with the full support of our legislators; witness statements made by the Governor, both the House and Senate chambers, and our full Congressional delegation. We are Abenaki.

In contrast to unsubstantiated statements intended to publicly disavow us, we have tried to find a path forward with Odanak and Wôlinak that acknowledges our differences while seeking commonality. We have proposed dialogue and amity, but it seems the pull of potential benefit from governments and related special interests is more important to our Canadian counterparts. So the aggressions continue.

Our 2010 state-level recognition specifically prohibits Vermont Abenaki from land claims and entitlements such as gaming, so a quest for personal gain has never been our motivation. Unfortunately, the ongoing defamation from Odanak and Wolinak has forced us to consult legal counsel and seek out communications support, taking away time, resources, and energy from the important work of building a better future for all of the next generations and restoring relationships within these homelands.”

IV. External Resources

(Resources by State)

Maine:

Penobscot Nation: www.penobscotnation.org

Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayak: www.wabanaki.com

Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk: www.passamaquoddy.com

Mi'kmaq Nation: <https://micmac-nsn.gov/>

Houlton Band of Maliseets: <https://maliseets.net/>

Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission: <https://www.mitsc.org/>

Wabanaki Alliance: www.wabanakialliance.com

Wabanaki Commission on Land and Stewardship/First Light: www.dawnlandreturn.org

Wabanaki Curriculum Resources:

<https://www.penobscotnation.org/departments/cultural-historic-preservation/download-penobscot-nation-curriculum/>

Maine Department of Education Wabanaki Studies:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/innovation/wabanakistudies>

New Hampshire:

Abenaki of Odanak, History: [History - Conseil des Abénakis d'Odanak](#)

Abenaki Foodways Project: [Abenaki Foodways Project](#)

Abenaki Heritage: [Abenaki Heritage](#)

Abenaki Foodways: <https://www.abenakifoodways.com/>

[Vermont Abenaki Identity Radio Series](#)

[UVM Abenaki Identity Presentation](#)

Rhode Island:

Narragansett Tribe: <https://narragansettindiannation.org/>

Tomaquag Museum: <https://www.tomaquagmuseum.org/>

Massachusetts:

Native Land Conservancy: <https://www.nativelandconservancy.org/> The

Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/indian-affairs>

North American Indian Center of Boston: <http://www.naicob.org/>

Ohketeau Cultural Center: www.ohketeau.org

Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness: <https://www.mcnaa.org/>

Native American Lifelines: <https://nativeamericanlifelines.org/>

Connecticut:

Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center: <https://www.pequotmuseum.org/>

New York/New Jersey/Pennsylvania:

Delaware Nation THPO Extension Office: <https://www.delawarenation-nsn.gov/historic-preservation-office/>

Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians: <https://www.mohican.com/>

Nanticoke-Lenni Lenape Tribal Nation: <https://www.nlltribalnation.org/>

St. Regis Mohawk Tribe: <https://www.srmt-nsn.gov/>

Nation-wide:

American Indian College Fund: <https://collegefund.org/>

- AICF provides scholarships and resources for Native students pursuing higher education, aiming to increase the number of Native professionals in various fields.

First Nations Development Institute: <https://www.firstnations.org/>

- FNDI supports Native American communities through investments in economic development, cultural preservation, and land stewardship.

Native American Rights Fund: <https://narf.org/>

- NARF provides legal representation and advocacy to Native American Tribes, organizations, and individuals, particularly in areas like land rights, resource protection, and human rights.

Native Ways Federation: <https://www.nativeways.org/>

- NWF is a network of national Native-led nonprofit organizations that works to strengthen the circle of giving and impact within the Native American community.

Advancing Indigenous People in STEM: <https://aises.org/>

- AISES focuses on increasing the representation of Indigenous peoples in STEM fields.

Partnership with Native Americans: <https://nativepartnership.org/>

- PWNA provides aid and services to Native Americans with the highest needs in the U.S., particularly those living on remote reservations.

Center for Native American Youth: <https://www.cnay.org/>

Origin of US State Names: <https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/origin-names-us-states>

Land Trust Alliance: [Partnerships for Indigenous Land Access and Return: A Summary of Legal and Relational Pathways - Land Trust Alliance](#)

Tribal Nations maps in AMC locations: <https://www.tribalnationsmaps.com/>

Native Governance Center: <https://nativegov.org/about/our-land-acknowledgement-statement/>

National Park Service TEK: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/tek/>

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women:

Not Our Native Daughters: <https://notournative daughters.org/our-mission>

It Starts With US - MMIW: <https://itstartswithus-mmiiw.com/>