

# Madison Friends Meeting: Land Acknowledgement Minute

## Why a Minute

- As Madison Friends Meeting continues to inhabit our new space, we are cognizant of wanting to make a statement about how we identify with the land under our care and how this relates to the original Indigenous stewards of this land.
- We want to create a land acknowledgement, but do so with the integrity that we seek as Quakers. We want a minute as a statement of both what we believe and what we commit to do so a land acknowledgement is not simply performative.
- This is another step in our ongoing process to develop right relationships with Indigenous people. On May 2, 2021, Madison Friends Meeting approved a Minute on the Doctrine of Discovery and Quaker Indian Boarding Schools. The commitments stated in that Minute have guided our work and are further strengthened by this Minute. Reflecting on this Minute should guide our work.

## Guiding Principle

Humility: In his book, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask* Anton Truer noted that “Indians are so often imagined but so frequently misunderstood.” As a community, Madison Friends has begun to increase our understanding of the Ho-Chunk Nation, in particular, and of the history and concerns of the Indigenous community more broadly. But we recognize that we have only scratched the surface. Knowing how dangerous a little knowledge can be, we approach the creation of this minute with humility. We know that sincerity and good intentions have created harm to Indigenous people in the past. We do not wish to inflict further harm. This requires us to continually examine and interrogate what we think we know.

## Land Acknowledgement Statement

With humility and respect Madison Friends Meeting acknowledges we occupy ancestral, sacred, and continuously inhabited Ho-Chunk land, the four lakes region known to the Ho-Chunk people as TeeJop (day JOPE) since time immemorial. Through a series of treaties in the early 1800’s, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede their territory in Wisconsin. Decades of ethnic cleansing followed when the federal government repeatedly, but unsuccessfully sought to forcibly remove all Ho-Chunk people from Wisconsin. We acknowledge the role the United States government and settlers played that led to the forced removal of Ho-Chunk people and honor their legacy of resistance and resilience. We further acknowledge that the impact and trauma of colonization exists to this day and needs to inform our understanding of becoming allies with the Ho-Chunk Nation. We are inspired by the Indigenous people’s vision of stewardship and seek to emulate their relationship with nature as sacred. We acknowledge the inherent sovereignty of the Ho-Chunk Nation and are grateful for the continuing contributions of Indigenous people to our lives.

As we acknowledge the harm the United States caused the Indigenous peoples, we also acknowledge the harm inflicted on ourselves as a consequence of these efforts to eliminate the Indian. Because European colonists believed they carried the only “good news”, they failed to ask the Indigenous people they encountered, “What good news do you have for us?”. As a result, we did not benefit from that wisdom, which included the following:

- The potential for spiritual connection to the land.
- The stewardship practices that follow from this spiritual connection may have prevented the environmental degradation we are currently experiencing.
- Seventh generation thinking.
- More humane governance practices, such as restorative justice practices.

We understand that the things to which we commit are not solely for the benefit of the Ho-Chunk. In the words of Lilla Watson: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

**What we commit to do towards Right Relationship with the Ho-Chunk Nation and other Indigenous people.**

Education- continual learning

- To the degree possible, find opportunities to learn about the Indigenous people today directly from them or from those in our community who have this knowledge.
- Continue to educate ourselves about the history of the Ho-Chunk Nation, the history of other tribes in Wisconsin and Indigenous people more broadly. Seek to understand more fully the ways Indigenous people were harmed and the generational effects of that trauma.
- Include education about Indigenous history and contemporary life into our First Day School (FDS) program and support efforts to ensure this education is provided in our public schools.
- Identify and display books for the Meeting library and FDS library to support these education efforts.
- Support this education effort through forums, study groups, displays, the Anti-Racism Update and events such as an event associated with Indigenous People's Day or Earth Day.

Public/Political Support – learn and change through being engaged.

- Seek to understand the goals and vision that the Ho-Chunk and other tribes have for themselves and the broader community. As allies support and participate in actions that further Indigenous people's goals. For example, federal recognition of the Brothertown Tribe, threats to the Indian Child Welfare Act, establishment of the Truth and Healing Commission on Native American Boarding Schools, and Rights of Nature movement.
- Explore making a meaningful financial contribution as one form of reparations to the Ho Chunk Nation.

Building and Grounds – stewardship of our resources

- Explore commissioning artwork by a Ho Chunk artist for our Meetinghouse.
- Ensure that as we make plans for our buildings and land we do so through the lens of Indigenous ecological practices and philosophy of connection to nature.

We plan to use land acknowledgements as a way to further all the items identified in this minute, making them living statements. It is our expectation that as we engage in these efforts, we will be led to make further commitments based on what we have learned and experienced.