

Inclusion Council Report Spring 2021

Land Acknowledgement

Committee Members

Eric Abele, Senior Lecturer, Theatre

Maggie Holland Associate Professor, Geography and Environmental Systems

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Goals

1. Review land acknowledgement issues .
2. Identify resources for information on indigenous people and land acknowledgement.
3. Develop recommendations for the UMBC campus community to engage in for meaningful acknowledgement of the indigenous peoples who used these lands.

Summary of Land Acknowledgement Workgroup Process

The workgroup met virtually four times during the spring semester (2021). Our first meeting was used to discuss the purpose and goals of our workgroup. We shared resources regarding land acknowledgement that we were aware of with one another. It became apparent that the UMBC Women's Center had done a great deal of work on land acknowledgement providing an online description and recommendations (these are included below). UMBC began using a land acknowledgement statement in October 2020, prior to the convening of our workgroup. Group members wanted more information on the process for developing the land acknowledgement and had some concerns that the impacts of colonialism were not acknowledged. Members also noticed some discrepancies between the statement issued as official by the OEI, and other versions of the statement that appeared on webpages of different entities on campus. We noted in particular a statement and informative [blog post](#) published by the Women's Center on their myUMBC group page. We invited Ashley Minner (author of the UMBC land acknowledgement statement) to meet with us. By our second meeting we reviewed the resources that we had shared with one another between meetings. Maggie Holland had gathered ideas about land acknowledgement from students in her class and shared those with us. We considered all the information we had thus far and generated recommendations.

We recognize that many groups have used the UMBC lands over the years and may have experienced negative impacts. We decided to focus on land acknowledgement as it relates to indigenous people.

We learned that UMBC currently has 7 students and 20 faculty and staff who identify as Native American (the number of students dropped in recent years; see <https://umbc.app.box.com/s/18dqfh1lkur5gqvsub1zgoes7v8p9uar>).

Shelly Wiechelt contacted Kerry Hawk Lessard, Executive Director of Native American Lifelines in Baltimore and discussed land acknowledgement and potential contacts in the area. Our group met with Ashley Minner who shared resources with us and suggested it is best not to burden indigenous people with doing work for us.

Workgroup Recommendations

- Roll out the land acknowledgement statement to the entire university with formal announcements, acknowledgement and clear commitments.
- Encourage use of a uniform land acknowledgement statement throughout the university, in particular for official communications.
- Incorporate a statement regarding colonialism into the land acknowledgement statement and/or clearly acknowledge impacts of colonialism in roll out and ongoing land acknowledgement in action.
- Provide specific guidance to university departments, centers, institutes on use of the land acknowledgement, and on ways to communicate the land acknowledgement, recognizing it as a “living” statement.
- Include information on indigenous people and groups on the university diversity web pages.
- Engage in outreach to UMBC students, faculty, and staff who identify as indigenous persons.
- Facilitate listening sessions with those who self-identify as indigenous on campus to develop a set of actions UMBC can take to support them.
- Conduct focus groups/listening sessions with members of the UMBC community regarding land acknowledgement.

- Engage in conversation with leaders of indigenous groups in the region – particularly the Piscataway tribal groups.
- Provide a physical representation of our acknowledgement of indigenous people with input from indigenous people in the area.
- Develop a policy for providing access to land and university facility use for indigenous people free of charge.
- Dedicate gallery space to photos and art representing the layers of peoples who used and lived on the land over time.
- Provide educational opportunities such as a speakers series regarding the experience of indigenous people.
- Intentional hiring and retaining engagement/ support of indigenous staff and faculty .
- Support the development and offering of a required module or session to all new incoming and transfer students on the history of the peoples who have used and lived on the UMBC lands overtime with an emphasis on decolonization.
- Use the work and recommendations already developed by the Women’s Center (See below).

UMBC Women’s Center Recommendations

<https://my3.my.umbc.edu/groups/womenscenter/posts/96574>

- Conduct outreach toward the Piscataway Conoy tribe through their Tribal Council and discuss how to make a more readily available path to higher education for those who we owe our campus to .
- More research on UMBC’s Indigenous student populations, especially in differentiating American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN), Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI), and other Indigenous students.
- Address the alienation Indigenous students may feel rather than simply asking them to participate in “diversity” initiatives.
- Implement a Land Recognition policy for all school-funded events.

- Include a Land Recognition on all UMBC affiliated websites (we are one step closer as of today with an official UMBC land recognition statement).
- Whenever possible, discuss how programming, curriculum may relate to Indigenous people and their history and interests.
- Structure classes to allow students to explore non-normative pedagogies such as those informed by Indigenous cultures and scholars.
- Redirect profits made from Indigenous land to supporting the education of indigenous students.
- Going **beyond awareness of the injustice** and actually **doing work to challenge the injustice**. This means working with the Piscataway Conoy Tribal Council to understand their specific wishes on this.
- Work with offices like Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion, and Belonging (I3B) and/or the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) to create intentional space for Indigenous identifying students on UMBC's campus.
- Support, amplify, and create platforms for Indigenous voices.
- Create large-scale events, campaigns celebrating Indigenous People's Day.
- Highlight and encourage research that identifies the inequities Indigenous students face.
- Research! Get your stories from Indian Country Today, High Country News, Native Lens, or other [Indigenous media platforms](#).
- Learn about Indigenous studies through *more than just a historical lens*.
- Whenever possible, discuss how programming, curriculum may relate to Indigenous people and their history and interests.

- Structure classes to allow students to explore non-canonical pedagogies such as those informed by Indigenous cultures and scholars.
- Redirect profits made from Indigenous land to supporting the education of indigenous students.
- Ask Indigenous students what they need to be best supported.
- Create more programming that specifically centers Indigeneity.
- Support Indigenous organizations by donating your time and/or money
 - § [Baltimore American Indian Center](#)
 - § [Native American Lifelines, Inc.](#)
 - § [Piscataway Conoy Tribe](#)
 - § [National Museum of the American Indian](#)
- Support Indigenous-led grassroots change movements and campaigns
 - § Start here: Support local government initiatives to officially change “Columbus Day” to “Indigenous People’s Day” OR call your local representative and ask them why your state is still celebrating Columbus Day. [Not sure? Here’s a list from 2019 of states that have made a change.](#)
- Commit to returning land (local, state, federal governments around the world are currently returning land to Indigenous people).
- Support, amplify, and create platforms for Indigenous voices.
- Create large-scale events, campaigns celebrating events like Indigenous People’s Day and National Native American Heritage Month (coming in November!!).

Resources

UMBC Women’s Center Land Acknowledgement Blog
<https://my3.my.umbc.edu/groups/womenscenter/posts/96574>

Layli Longsoldier - The Freedom of Real Apologies

<https://onbeing.org/programs/layli-long-soldier-the-freedom-of-real-apologies-oct2018/>

Resolution on acknowledging and Apologizing for treatment of Native People in USA

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/14/text>

A bit on Piscataway History and some work with the State of MD.

<https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2018/10/01/piscataway-conoy/>

Piscataway Conoy Tribe's Web Page

<http://www.piscatawayconoytribe.com/index.html>

Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs

<https://goci.maryland.gov/maryland-commission-on-indian-affairs/>

Baltimore American Indian Center

<http://baltimoreamericanindiancenter.org/>

Native American LifeLines

<http://www.nativeamericanlifelines.org/>

The Atlantic; Return National Parks to Tribes

<https://umbc.webex.com/umbc/j.php?MTID=m9685c619f143502288915b116e01a8ba>

The United States Department of Arts and Culture (NOT a government agency)

[Honor Native Land virtual resource pack](#)

Ryan Koons' (ryan.koons@maryland.gov)

[webinar on Land Acknowledgements created for the Maryland State Arts Council](#)

Louise Akerson's American Indians in the Baltimore Area (attached)