



4/05/2021 draft

### Policies for Working with Communities of Color

This session of URGE led us to pause and think deeply about what research we do, why we do that research, and how we have structured our research goals and collaborations in the past. The geology degree that we offer is a B.A., a bachelors of arts degree, and we orient our research towards mentoring undergraduate students. Although this orientation does not preclude more thoughtful collaboration with communities of color, none of the faculty or staff in geology at Mount Holyoke College is currently involved in research with communities of color, either in the US or abroad. We surveyed some related work on campus and outside of our department, including: land acknowledgements; community members engaged in relationship building (for example, Sonya Ataly's Fall 2020 talk "Repatriation, Reclaiming, and Indigenous Wellbeing: Braiding New Research Worlds"); an ongoing effort to repatriate indigenous remains from our museum collection in line with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA); the college's Anti-Racism Action Plan; and the newly formed Mount Holyoke task force on History, Legacy and Memory. In addition, Mount Holyoke College is part of the Five College Consortium (<https://www.fivecolleges.edu/>), and we note here our interest in the Consortium's new initiative on Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) among the consortium's member campuses. One of our pod members who is actively involved in field research with the Wisconsin Survey shared models from the University of Wisconsin (including the hiring of a Director for Tribal Relations), in addition to an exciting example of collaborative research at the University of Minnesota: Kawe Gidaa-naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin (<https://manoominpsin.umn.edu/>).

### Land Acknowledgments

For this session, we explored the practice of land acknowledgments with the goal of developing and starting to use land acknowledgments at the start of geology events at Mount Holyoke College. We pondered both 1) whether or not such a practice in a predominantly white institution like ours is merely performative, and 2) our concerns about doing the acknowledgment without starting long-term work to nurture relationships with indigenous communities. We were inspired by Otakuye Conroy-Ben's statement in the 2021 Nature piece (that was part of the session's reading): "I don't know if there is a wrong way to do a land acknowledgement, unless you get the tribe wrong." In that spirit, the Five College Consortium offers a template for a land acknowledgment that is specific to our location and setting (<https://www.fivecolleges.edu/natam/about-kwinitekw>), and our Miller-Worley Center for the Environment uses this short version of that land acknowledgment: *The Miller Worley Center for the Environment humbly acknowledges that the land on which we reside, learn and work is the*

*ancestral home of the Nonotuck, neighbored by the ancestral lands of the Nipmuc and the Wampanoag to the East, the Mohegan and Pequot to the South, the Mohican to the West, and the Abenaki to the North.* We note here that the colonization of this land (that the Five Colleges occupy) involved devastating epidemics, genocide, and horrific warfare between colonial and indigenous communities during King Phillip's War (1675-1676), after which some indigenous survivors were captured and sold as slaves.

We also considered this example of an extended land acknowledgment, based on the same Five College template, that a colleague has been using: *I'd like to begin our semester by acknowledging that we are gathered "on Nonotuck land. I'd also like to acknowledge our neighboring Indigenous nations: the Nipmuc and the Wampanoag to the East, the Mohegan and Pequot to the South, the Mohican to the West, and the Abenaki to the North"* (<https://www.fivecolleges.edu/natam/about-kwintekw>). *I ask that we pay our respect to the Nonotuck and other Indigenous stewards of these lands and waters and to their elders who have lived here, who live here now, and who will live here in the future. Acknowledgment that we are gathered on colonized land is a critical public intervention, a necessary step toward honoring indigenous communities and joining broader endeavors to decolonize spaces engaged in knowledge production.*

One of our pod members who is a Professor at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania shared that college's land acknowledgment, the spoken version of which is: *As a member of the Gettysburg community, I respectfully acknowledge that Gettysburg College is on unceded Indigenous land, including the traditional homelands of the Susquehannock/Conestoga, Seneca and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Leni Lenape, and Shawnee Nations, and the connections of Indigenous Peoples to this land continue today. We have a responsibility to honor these connections and, as these words of acknowledgement are spoken and heard, we strive to understand our place within the past, present, and future of this Indigenous land by reflecting on our relationships with the human and other-than-human relatives with whom it is shared.*

Another one of our pod members at the University of Wisconsin shared that land acknowledgment: *The University of Wisconsin–Madison occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land, a place their nation has called Teejop (day-JOPE) since time immemorial. In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory. Decades of ethnic cleansing followed when both the federal and state government repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, sought to forcibly remove the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin. This history of colonization informs our shared future of collaboration and innovation. Today, UW–Madison respects the inherent sovereignty of the Ho-Chunk Nation, along with the eleven other First Nations of Wisconsin.*

In the spirit of land acknowledgments appropriate to other locations, we are aware of this resource for understanding and acknowledging indigenous peoples in North American locations and settings: <https://native-land.ca/>.