



April 18, 2021

Richfield United Methodist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota acknowledges that we gather on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of the Dakota People.

These lands hold historical, spiritual, and personal significance to the Dakota People. We are grateful for Indigenous Nations and their continued stewardship of these lands and we appreciate their perseverance and strength. The Dakota People were harmed by the United States government through broken promises and unjust treaties, including the Cession 289 Treaty of 1851 which names the Wahpeton and Sisseton Bands. These atrocities effectively stole this geographical area and further harm and trauma have come through displacement, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. This church formed in 1854 as one of the first institutions established by white settlers in this geographical area and benefited directly from this harm inflicted upon the Dakota People.

In repentance, this church seeks active partnership with Native American communities and organizations in the State of Minnesota and beyond. We affirm tribal sovereignty. We reject attitudes of invisibility and erasure of Indigenous Peoples. We oppose policies and actions that threaten or demean Indigenous culture and tribal sovereignty by any means. We call upon our fellow houses of worship in the interfaith community to acknowledge the realities of the lands on which they gather and take educational and restorative justice action. With God's help, we commit to doing better.

This land acknowledgment was unanimously affirmed by the Richfield UMC Ad Board on March 23, 2021. It was first presented as part of worship on April 18, 2021, which was Native American Ministries Sunday, one of the Special Sundays of The United Methodist Church.

In Christ,

Rev. Nate Melcher, Pastor
Nick Dewey, Ad Board Chair

Sources: (All online sources accessed Spring Quarter, 2021)

Doty, Marjorie Bridge. *We Have This Covenant: The History of Richfield United Methodist Church*. 1979. 1-8.

Indigenous Digital Archive, The. ["IDA Treaties Explorer: Cession 289."](#)

Johnson, Frederick L. *Richfield: Minnesota's Oldest Suburb*. [Richfield Historical Society](#). 2008. 1-15.

Kappler, Charles J., ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws & Treaties*. Government Printing Office. Washington DC. 1904. [588-593](#).

Native Governance Center. ["A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgment."](#)

Native Governance Center. "What is Tribal Sovereignty?" [Video](#).

[Native-Land.ca](#).

State of Minnesota Department of Health. ["American Indian Tribal Governments."](#)

US Department of Arts and Culture. ["Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgment."](#)

TreatiesMatter.org. ["Relations: Dakota & Ojibwe Treaties - 1851 Dakota Land Cession Treaties."](#)

Special Thanks:

Pat Eder, [Richfield Historical Society](#)

Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs, [Minnesota Council of Churches](#)

Rev. Dawn Houser, [CONAM](#) Chair

Rev. Kelly Sherman-Conroy, [Native theologian and storyteller](#)

Dixie Thompson, [Akta Lakota Museum](#), Chamberlain, SD



About Usage, Process, and Ongoing Next Steps

About Usage:

A land acknowledgment is a form of confession and one step of many in repentance by those who benefit from harm and trauma caused to Indigenous Peoples. This confession and need for repentance is in alignment with our missional values and must be owned by the church. Guests and partners of the church who are of Indigenous heritage should not be asked to recite this confession on behalf of the church. This land acknowledgment is intended for use in the following ways:

1. **Worship and Events** The statement should appear in brief frequently and in full occasionally.
 - a. This brief statement should be used in worship and events as frequently as possible such as part of the Welcome, Benediction, or another appropriate place: “Richfield United Methodist Church (or ‘Your church’) acknowledges that we gather on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of the Dakota People (or ‘Indigenous Peoples’).”
 - b. The full land acknowledgment should be used in worship on fifth Sundays, the Sunday closest to Indigenous Peoples’ Day (second Monday in October), and on or around [Native American Ministries Sunday](#) (third Sunday of Easter as a Special Sunday of The United Methodist Church).
 - c. On April 18, 2021, the full land acknowledgment shall debut in worship accompanied by an appropriate liturgy and special offering for Native American Ministries Sunday.
2. **Publication** The following will appear in worship bulletins, newsletter, electronic newsletter, event programs, website, and other appropriate publications whenever possible: “Richfield UMC gathers on Dakota land. More at richfieldumc.org/land.”
3. RichfieldUMC.org/land This website will feature the full land acknowledgment, sources and special thanks, this document, and resources for other houses of worship to do similar work.
4. **Other Media** An effort will be made to bring periodic attention to the land acknowledgment and the importance of land acknowledgment in appropriate platforms (i.e. online social media).
5. **Archives** History of the land and the Indigenous Peoples who are its historical stewards must be included in future “history of” heritage and archive documentation and publications.

About the Process:

On November 24, 2020, Rev. Nate Melcher proposed to the Ad Board the church take action to research and craft a land acknowledgment honoring Indigenous Peoples as a critical first action step. Nick Dewey, Chair, moved to empower Rev. Melcher to research and craft language and usage and present it to Ad Board; Jerry Schilling, Trustees Chair, seconded; the motion was approved unanimously. On March 23, 2021, the Ad Board reviewed and discussed the presented research, land acknowledgment, and “About” document. Nick Dewey moved to approve the land acknowledgment as written; Wayne Johnson, Lay Leader, seconded; the motion was approved unanimously. It first presented as part of worship on April 18, 2021 during Native American Ministries Sunday.

About Ongoing Next Steps:

This land acknowledgment and documentation will be reviewed regularly by Ad Board and/or designated team to ensure its language and impact remain relevant in the life of the church.

Richfield UMC must continue forward on a path of racial reconciliation and repentance. This includes both works of compassion and justice born of a faith in the loving God of all people. Moving forward begins with acknowledging harm caused, continues through openness to learning and taking meaningful action, and a commitment to do better. With God’s help and working together, we will.