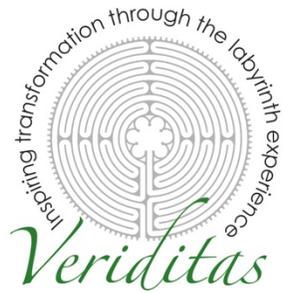


**“Acknowledging the land is a transformative act that works to undo the intentional erasure of indigenous peoples is the first step in decolonizing land relations.”**

~ [CICSC / CSUSM Toolkit](#)



## Crafting a Land Acknowledgement

As labyrinths are intrinsically connected to people and place, you may want to acknowledge the native people(s), culture, and political and natural history of the land. A statement needs to be carefully considered, crafted and unique to your location. First, reflect on the **intention** of your land acknowledgment and the reasons you want to craft one, your regional responsibility and the affect you want to have. **Education** into the history and life of local native peoples is key so that you can cultivate **awareness** with others. Compare examples from other schools, churches, museums, and institutions in your area and gather resources online. Make a personal commitment to an on-going **action plan** that supports native people through allyship, financial support, and cultivate a personal relationship with local tribes and individuals, issues and initiatives.

**“A land acknowledgment is not something you “just do” before an event. Rather it is a reflective process in which you build mindfulness and intention before walking into whatever gathering you are having.” ~ [CICSC / CSUSM Toolkit](#)**

### Intention

Land Acknowledgments are growing in popularity as we endeavor to be active participants in a more inclusive, just, and conscious society. Land acknowledgments should not be solely for the benefit of the organizers and require diligent work to be crafted respectfully and effectively. The land acknowledgment is not a performance, but an-ongoing commitment to education, awareness, and allyship in acknowledging the native people on whose land we occupy and use for our benefit. Consider approaching the process with humility, gratitude, respect, and a sense of the sacred.

### Connection

Listening to examples from other facilitators, many begin by relating the labyrinth to time and space. This could be general, such as the web of life, cosmos, and environment. Some call in the four directions or utilize herbs, water, fire, smoke, wind, or crystals to connect the labyrinth and people to the elements. Others speak of the animals and trees that surround the site, noting how they will help shape the life of the labyrinth. Don't copy someone else's approach, but make the ritual your own.

### Education (explore out of curiosity, not a sense of obligation)

- What are the names (and pronunciation) of the native tribes of your area?
- What is the local history of occupation, displacement, and genocide?
- How are native people's living, working, and contributing to your community today?
- What are the political, environmental, and economic issues faced by local tribes?

- What native museums, centers, events, and gatherings are open in your area?
- How do you personally benefit from privilege and colonization?

### **Awareness** (some ideas could be included in land acknowledgment)

- What is an honest history about the actions and inactions that pertain to this place?
- How can others learn more about local native people?
- In what ways can local tribes be supported?
- What are the major current threats to their culture, land, and health?
- How are people working to de-colonize local areas and create reciprocity?

### **Gratitude**

Many Land Acknowledgments end with an expression of gratitude. Some thank the native peoples for their wisdom and stewardship. Others ask that we 'heed their call'. It can be easy for the process of crafting a land acknowledgment to get stalled or derailed due to discomfort. It takes courage and humility to get out of our comfort zone and prioritize the time and energy it takes to build new relationships. This is just one step, but an important one, in personal and community transformation.

### **Why do we recognize the land?**

"To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgments do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol."

~ [Northwestern University](#)

### **Veriditas Land Acknowledgment:**

Veriditas begins our understanding of racial injustice by acknowledging the oppression of the first inhabitants of this continent, Native Americans. The land we occupy in Petaluma is part of the sprawling ancestral lands of the Coast Miwok tribe, who collectively called the area Peta Lumaa.

We stand in gratitude for a culture that honors their ancestors, the teachings of the natural world and the interconnectedness of all things. May we, the current occupants of this land, hear this call.

We acknowledge the grave injustices of the past and we are committed to the work to create awareness that invites truth to dismantle colonialist structures. We will continue to educate ourselves about the full history of the original people of this region and we honor the Coast Miwok tribe's culture and wisdom - past, present, and emerging.

## **Abbreviated version:**

Veriditas acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather, the *(name the tribe/nation here)*, and pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

## **Resources**

**Map of Native Lands:** [native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca)

**Veriditas Inclusion Initiative:** [www.veriditas.org/Inclusion-Initiative](http://www.veriditas.org/Inclusion-Initiative)

**CICSC / CSUSM Land Acknowledgment Toolkit:** [www.csusm.edu/cicsc/land.pdf](http://www.csusm.edu/cicsc/land.pdf)

**Native Governance Center Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgment:**  
[nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/](http://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/)

**Thanksgiving Address:** [https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/pdf/01\\_02\\_Thanksgiving\\_Address.pdf](https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/pdf/01_02_Thanksgiving_Address.pdf)

See also the poem: Prayer for the Great Family by Gary Snyder

**Beyond Land Acknowledgment Video by the Native Governance Center:**  
<https://youtu.be/FdHuuq0O3Js>

**Northwestern University Native American and Indigenous Initiatives:**  
[www.northwestern.edu/native-american-and-indigenous-peoples/about/Land%20Acknowledgement.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/native-american-and-indigenous-peoples/about/Land%20Acknowledgement.html)

**#HonorNativeLand** (reflections/perspectives of Native Americans on acknowledgments) by the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture <https://youtu.be/ETOhNzBsiKA>

**How to Deliver an Acknowledgment of Country that Really Means Something**  
By Shelley Reys, TEDx Sydney – Australia [https://youtu.be/zx018\\_7BDt4](https://youtu.be/zx018_7BDt4)

**Territorial Acknowledgment: Going beyond the Script** (7 Tips Video)  
Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Alberta <https://youtu.be/yXYhBml2c2I>

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## **Example from Veriditas Labyrinth Facilitators Bobbi Virta and Sharry Nyberg used recently on a Friday finger walk online via Zoom:**

Let us begin our time together by acknowledging that the very Cosmos is sacred. For it is saturated with the One in whom we live and move and have our being and we acknowledge all lands and all waterways are sacred. There is a deep joy today that collectively we gather from different corners of this beautiful planet we call home.

We acknowledge that we gather on the traditional lands of the indigenous peoples who first cared for the land, waterways and creatures that lived in their midst from time immemorial.

We pause to express our heartfelt repentance for the harms done—both in our actions and our inaction.

We pause to express our deepest gratitude and respect for the wisdom of our indigenous neighbors of times gone by as well as those living in our midst today. We lift up all the voices of those who ask us to care for this planet twirling in the midst of the Cosmos of which is our home.

We invite you to include in the chat whose ancestral land you live upon.

### **Example from Veriditas Labyrinth Facilitator Nancy Van Fleet:**

"I speak to you from Naples, Florida, honoring the original peoples of this land—the Paleo Indians, the Calusa, the Seminole, their subtribes, alliances, relatives. May we pause to express our heartfelt repentance for the harms done, in both our actions and our inactions. I lament the injustice done to the original inhabitants by Spanish colonizers and acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from the territory and I honor and respect the many indigenous people still connected to this land.

"As I seek to learn about the unique story of this place, I honor the struggle of all people seeking justice and peace. May I be a part of the wisdom needed to heal the wounds of the past and have the courage and strength to be a part of building a better future with all my neighbors and fellow creatures.

"I look at where I live and I am grateful for the beauty of this land. From the peaceful waters of the Gulf Coast and the Gordon River to the crystal-clear springs and sandhills of Central Florida, from the Everglades of the Ten Thousand Islands to the Florida Keys. For the streams, rivers, estuaries, Mangrove forests and shorelines that connect one region to another for all the beautiful creatures that surround me.

"And I think about the many species of my region that have been pushed toward extinction and I desire to protect all precious creatures, from the manatee to the loggerhead turtle, from the Florida black bear to the Florida panther, from the bald eagle to the gopher tortoise. And so may we all, from our different home habitats and watersheds, express our deepest gratitude and respect for the wisdom of our indigenous neighbors, past, present and emerging, and their wisdom to take care of this sacred planet so we can live a life of harmony realizing that we are all a part of a beloved community and web of life."

### **Personal Example from Veriditas Labyrinth Facilitator Leslie Edmonds:**

"We want to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kumeyaay Nation.

"For at least 10,000 years before colonizers came, the Kumeyaay lived in harmony with this land. Despite genocide and domination, they live here still. We have thrived on their land. We want to be mindful of how we can honor the land and the Kumeyaay people so that all may continue to thrive here."