

At YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, we are working actively to embody Land and Labor Acknowledgment practices. This entails not only crafting a written statement, but also identifying clear objectives and calls to action for our work internally and in communities across the Metropolitan Chicago region.

You may be wondering, what is a land and labor acknowledgment? And why is it important to have one?

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A land and labor acknowledgment is a statement that acknowledges the traditional Indigenous inhabitants of the land in which an organization works. One of its purposes is to recognize the unpaid labor and forced servitude of those Indigenous inhabitants and other minority groups that were integral to the economic success and development of a geographic area. Another purpose is to reflect an awareness and appreciation of modern-day Indigenous communities. Beyond these recognitions, a meaningful acknowledgment must also include calls to action for the organization to deliver resources, services, and education that aim to identify, acknowledge, and remove the systemic inequities caused by colonialism and other oppressive institutional dynamics.

Why have a land and labor acknowledgment?

It is important to have a land and labor acknowledgment statement because it is a public recognition of past and current wrongs by society and the organization. Moreover, it signals that the organization acknowledges those who have historically and/or systemically been excluded or marginalized. It also helps ensure that the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded in all continuing education, and events. At YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, we understand it is our responsibility to acknowledge the history of settler colonialism and its lasting impact on Indigenous communities in our Chicagoland region. Our ongoing land and labor acknowledgment work reflects our commitment to Indigenous rights, racial justice, and equity both in our land and labor acknowledgment statement and in our work to promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

It is important to note that a critical part of our land and labor acknowledgment work has been partnering with American Indian communities to ensure that we decenter ourselves and center their lived experiences, making sure not to rely on our perception of how we ought to be allies or co-liberators and instead seek the community's guidance and scrutiny on how best to honor them and engage with these practices. We are also committed to continuing these partnerships





beyond the statement's initial enactment to ensure our work is responsive and truly inclusive to Indigenous communities in actively supporting their needs and efforts.

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago's Long-Form Land and Labor Acknowledgment

We invite you to acknowledge and pay respect to those who hold ancestral kinship with the land on which we are settlers. In Chicago, we occupy the traditional homelands of the people of the Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe (Oh-JIB-way), Potawatomi (Pot-tah-WAH-tah-mee), and Odawa (Oh-DAH-wah), as well as the Menominee (Meh-NOM-eh-nee), Miami (My-Am-EE), and Ho Chunk (Hoh-CH-unk) Nations. Chicago exists because of, and continues to be shaped by, genocide and settler colonialism, whose goal is removing and erasing Indigenous people so that land seized can be used by settlers in perpetuity.

Long before settlers' arrival, this land was an Indigenous site of trade, travel, gathering, and healing, and it is still home to over 100,000 group members in the state of Illinois. The history of the city of Chicago is intertwined with histories of Indigenous peoples, evident even in the city's name, which is adopted from the Algonquin language.

The history of American Indians is one of resilience through great pain and injustice, from broken treaties and loss of land and language in the past, to derogatory sports mascots and biased history taught in schools today. It is also a history of great strength and revitalization. It is a story built around values that have shaped Indigenous cultures and American society: respect for family and elders, shared responsibility to care for the land, and an obligation to do right by the next generation.

We also invite you to honor and pay respect to the African Ancestors. Euro-American settlers seized Indigenous land only to force people of African descent to work that land without compensation or rights. Slavery existed in Illinois for more than a century, and the Illinois Black Codes denied basic rights to even free Black people through 1865. The enduring legacy of White Supremacy still shapes our social, economic, and cultural systems, though the history of African Americans, too, is one of resilience through trauma and oppression. Remembering the history and honoring the contributions and traditions of African and Indigenous people is one way to reflect on our continued participation in settler colonialism.

As a Chicago-based organization, it is YWCA Metropolitan Chicago's responsibility to acknowledge this history and how it continues to shape our society. We are committed to Indigenous rights, racial justice, and equity both in this statement and in our work to promote peace, justice,



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freedom, and dignity for all. One way we are acting on this commitment is our ongoing work to better understand and support the needs of American Indian groups in our area.

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago's Abbreviated Land and Labor Acknowledgment

In Chicago, we occupy the traditional homelands of the people of the Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe (Oh-JIB-way), Potawatomi (Pot-tah-WAH-tah-mee), and Odawa (Oh-DAH-wah), as well as the Menominee (Meh-NOM-eh-nee), Miami (My-Am-EE), and Ho Chunk (Hoh-CH-unk) Nations. Long before settlers' arrival, this land was an Indigenous site of trade, travel, gathering, and healing, and it is still home to over 100,000 group members in the state of Illinois. As a Chicago-based organization, it is YWCA Metropolitan Chicago's responsibility to acknowledge this history and how it continues to shape our society. We are committed to Indigenous rights, racial justice, and equity both in this statement and in our work to promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. One way we are acting on this commitment is our ongoing work to better understand and support the needs of American Indian groups in our area.



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