

# Mennonite Heritage Sunday

October 28, 2018



# Lamenting the Doctrine of Discovery

Worship Resources

Mennonite Heritage Sunday 2018 worship resources were written by members of the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition ([www.dofdmenno.org](http://www.dofdmenno.org)): Alison Brookins, Katerina Friesen, Barbara Funnell, and Kate Kortemeier. Resources provided by Jason Kauffman with the Mennonite Church USA Archives.

# Introduction

**Imagine** a quilt stretching from sea to sea across the North American continent; a quilt of many patches representing hundreds of sovereign Nations who called this place home before European Christian “discovery.” Thousands of threads make up the squares of this quilt that some call Turtle Island, which took hundreds of generations to create. Each square symbolizes first people’s ways of stitching their cultures together with the distinct fabric of their land and place, their layered alliances and conflicts with other Nations, and the ways their lives were interwoven with prayer and ceremony.

Today we see this quilt only in remnants and scraps, after having been shredded by conquest, disease and degradation, broken treaties and divided lands, by over-hunting, over-logging, over-dumping. Over-taking. These ongoing impacts of what is known today as the “Doctrine of Discovery”<sup>\*</sup> are not only part of our history as residents of Turtle Island, but are also part of our heritage as Mennonites.

That is why this year on Mennonite Heritage Sunday, we want to acknowledge that the Doctrine of Discovery is part of our inheritance as a Mennonite church body. As Christians, we have inherited the effects of the sin, violence and hubris that defined the imperial act of planting a cross and sword in another peoples’ soil. Some of us have consequently suffered great losses over generations, while others have benefited from this inheritance. Yet whether we are people of color, and/or descended from white settlers, our stories here on Turtle Island lead us to lament the ongoing wounds of colonialism and to call out to God for healing and justice.

In this service of lament, we listen to the voices of past and present Indigenous peoples who identify in various ways with Anabaptism and/or Mennonite churches. Their voices bear testimony to the violence of 500 years of ongoing colonialism, as well as to the resilience of Indigenous peoples today. In response to the current Journey Forward process, we emphasize storytelling as a way into this complex and painful aspect of our journey as church. Like all stories, those represented here are much more complicated than the short quotes we chose in the editing process, and so we invite you to read more by exploring the resources in our “Suggested Reading” section at the end.

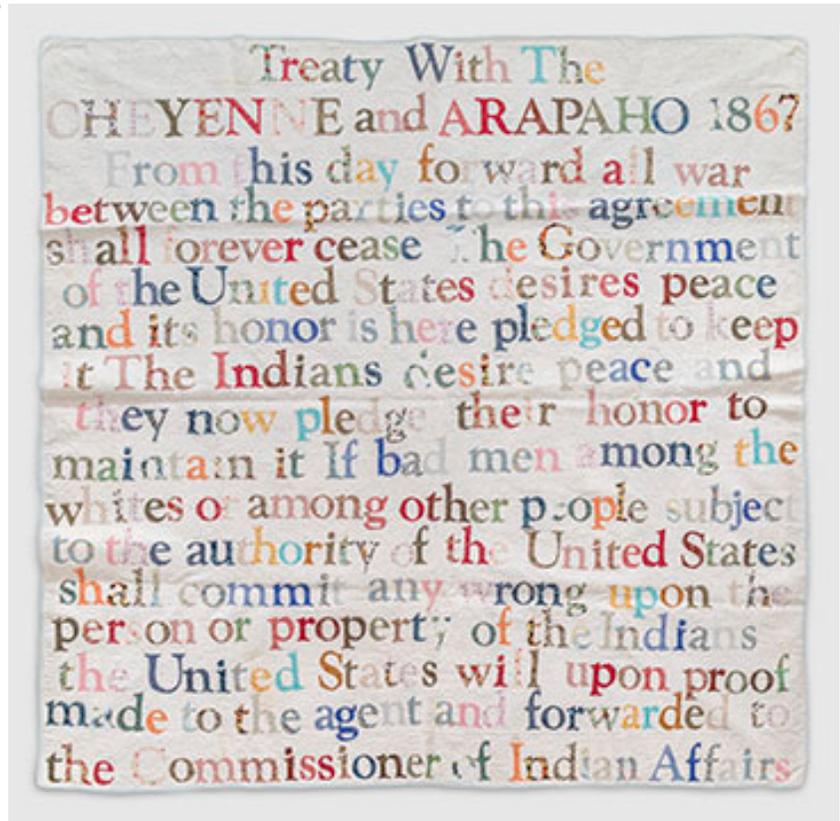
Can the quilt of Turtle Island ever be stitched back together again? As Mennonites, we come from a tradition of yearning for and working toward reconciliation. Yet genuine reconciliation is only possible with whole-hearted repentance, if we as a church body turn away from the ways of death and towards the new life God offers. This is why we begin with lament and confession. In the words of Emma LaRocque (Métis), “Reconciliation is a painful process which takes time, effort, and a lot of tears.” May God give us grace and courage as we open our hearts to lament, and to the new life that may flow with our tears.

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<sup>\*</sup> The Doctrine of Discovery is the legal and theological framework under which European Christian rulers and subsequent governments and settlers claimed the rights of ownership over Indigenous lands. We encourage congregations to learn more about the Doctrine of Discovery through a variety of ways, such as using the study guide, Bible reflections, and free film available on [www.dofdmenno.org](http://www.dofdmenno.org), inviting a facilitator of the Loss of Turtle Island Exercise through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Central States, or hosting the play *Discovery: A Comic Lament* through Ted & Company.

# Image for worship bulletins: Broken Treaty Quilts

We have permission from artist Gina Adams to use the images from her project “Broken Treaty Quilts” for this worship service. She sewed the words of broken treaties onto handmade antique quilts, items of comfort that are also dear to many Anabaptist family traditions. If you would like to use her images and artist’s statement for church bulletins or in Powerpoint slides, please visit and credit her website here:  
[ginaadamsartist.com/broken-treaty-quilts](http://ginaadamsartist.com/broken-treaty-quilts)



## Ritual element:

As we seek to hear indigenous voices and recognize our part as Anabaptists in the colonization that has occurred in this land, it is helpful to have visual representations and rituals to assist us in lament. A ritual during this worship service could recognize the breaking of treaties and unraveling of culture and family life that colonization brought about, but could also offer a note of hope for yet unfulfilled reconciliation. Drawing from MCC’s Loss of Turtle Island exercise, which uses blankets to represent the loss of Indigenous land and lives under colonialism, we suggest incorporating the action of fabric being torn apart as a symbol of grief throughout the service. Other suggestions of rituals that could be used throughout the service are outlined below for your consideration:

- Take apart a woven basket, with the fibers being placed in water to soften, and to weave again.
- Untie a hand-tied quilt.
- Unravel a crocheted scarf or sweater, rolling the yarn into a ball.
- Cutting or ripping fabric into squares, left to be pieced together like a quilt in the future.



# Call to Worship

*Note to worship leaders:* These are the first words the congregation is hearing, serving to remind us that God's presence is always with us. God's love for us does not depend on us doing things right. Breathing in these gifts can help the congregation prepare for the harder work of confession and lament.

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Leader:

Come. You are welcome here, as everywhere, in the faithful presence of God. Sit. Listen. Breathe. This presence is a gift.

**All:**

**We breathe in the gift of joy.**

Leader:

Bubbling, beautiful joy that bursts from our lips in song and laughter. Joy in this earth, for the blessed bustle of beings that make their homes here.

**All:**

**We breathe in the gift of hope.**

Leader:

Hope for the past, that we can hear true stories of those who came before us. Hope for today, that we can begin to be people of God's healing. Hope for the future, for the world to be made new when justice and peace shall kiss.

**All:**

**We breathe in the gift of love.**

Leader:

Love that fills and overwhelms us. Love that will never turn away its face, even from our darkest places.

**All:**

**We breathe in the gift of life.**

Leader:

Come, into the gift of new life  
In the name of the true and living Holy One,  
Who made us for love  
Who saved us by love,  
And who loves us still,  
Come, in fullness of life!



# Welcome and Land Acknowledgment

*Note to worship leaders: See Appendix A for a Guide to Acknowledging Territory*

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## Prayer

**Song:** STJ 24 Creation is a song (written by Cheyenne Peace Chief and Mennonite pastor Lawrence Hart)

## Scripture readings:

Lectionary texts: Mark 10:46-52; Job 42:1-6,10-17 or Jeremiah 31:7-9

Other suggested reading: Psalm 130 (we have adapted this Psalm as a repeated refrain of lament in the next section)

## Introduction to the Service

*Note to worship leaders: This is a good time to introduce the theme of the service and invite people into a space of lament over the impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery. You may choose to read from the Introduction section (page 1), or create your own bridge between praise and lament here.*

*You have the option to project images and text of the following quotes from our accompanying Powerpoint onto a screen, or to invite members of the congregation to stand and read these quotes aloud without a projector.*

## Readings: Broken covenants and stolen land

*(Optional: Powerpoint Slide 1. Text Below)*

The U.S. has made over 500 nation-to-nation treaties with Tribal Nations. All of them have been broken, changed, or nullified. We dwell in a land of broken covenants, and so we lament: we live on land gained by injustice.

“Our peoplehood concept and our tribally oriented thinking looks upon individual ownership of land as an alien concept. This concept has also been rejected and is being resisted most by reserve or reservation Indian tribes. A reserve or a reservation is their land to be sure. It may be owned, but it is owned by the entire tribe. One of the major articles in peace treaties is that a reserve or a reservation is to be held by the tribe in perpetuity. There are strong outside forces at work today to break up those reserves and reservations.” - Lawrence Hart

“See this, all this around Cantonment, is all white man land now. There’s no Indian settlement here. No trees here. All wheat, all level. See how they cheated us. They didn’t just cheat, they stole! They stole it! They stole a lot of Cheyenne and Arapaho lands and they call us ‘poor things, poor things.’ Sure, they made us poor. Let us have some more land, then we wouldn’t be so poor.” - Bertha Little Coyote

“I am a Northern Cheyenne woman who grew up on the Northern Cheyenne reservation attending the White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church. I grew up with strong people. I grew up knowing my tribal nation survived years of attempted genocide by the U.S. government. I knew we had to fight for our homelands, and even though we live on them we are legally only allowed “the right of occupancy.” We are not landowners. I was also keenly aware of the dangers to me specifically as an Indigenous woman. I knew that Native American women like Anna Mae Aquash went missing and were murdered especially for speaking out.” - Erica Littlewolf

# Confession:

Creator God, you have joined yourself with us in covenant. You are steadfast and faithful in your word to us. We confess that our Anabaptist churches have not been faithful in covenants with the first peoples of this land. We confess that out of hunger for cheap land, our faith ancestors went along with theologies and laws that allowed settlers to take land unjustly from Indigenous Peoples who loved and tended the land. We confess that our churches did not raise their voices for justice for Indigenous Peoples. And we confess that descendants of Anabaptist settlers have benefited from broken covenants and stolen land.

## Lament (based on Psalm 130):

### Leader

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.  
Lord, hear our voice!  
We are deep under the weight of sin  
that piles up generation upon generation.  
Pressed into the ground we wait for the Lord,  
our souls wait, and in God's word we hope.

### All

**Our souls wait for the Lord,  
more than those who watch for the morning.**

**Song:** HWB 136 From the depths of sin and sadness

## Readings: Cultural assimilation and intergenerational trauma

*(Optional: Powerpoint Slide 2. Text Below)*

Cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples into dominant white society in the U.S. was part of Federal Indian Policy in the 19th and 20th centuries, with disastrous effects on Native communities. Mennonite church mission played a complicated role that often accompanied government efforts to "civilize" Native Americans through Christianity. While there were efforts to learn and preserve indigenous languages, Mennonite denominations ran three Indian boarding schools that separated children from their families.

"Oppression is a process, and as such, it has a beginning. The beginning is often physical in nature. Historically, oppression usually begins when peoples are invaded, uprooted, absorbed, or transported from their homeland. For example, Euro-American oppression of North American Indians really began in 1492... My generation is still feeling the vibrations from all of this. Oppression recycles itself from generation to generation." - Emma LaRocque

"In most Indigenous communities the effects of genocide, dispossession, forced removal from homelands and families, intergenerational trauma and racism have manifested in poverty, alcohol and drug problems, violence and other forms of social breakdown." - Harley Eagle

"My two brothers and I went to Intermountain Boarding School... in Brigham City, Utah. And for two years I went - I remember, it was 1956, I was maybe 10 or 11. And that was very devastating... I had my brothers there, but my brothers were in different dorms. I know I was lonely. I missed my mother." - Priscilla Wero

"Somewhere in my young years I became convinced that I wouldn't live to be old." - Erica Littlewolf

# Confession:

Mothering God, you see and know every child ripped from the loving arms of parents and put into schools. You see and know every generation living under the shadow of trauma and oppression. We confess that our Anabaptist churches have been complicit in this system of assimilation that did not see the image of God in Indigenous peoples. We confess that our churches have tried to remake Indigenous children in the image of a white savior. We lament that our churches have contributed to harms done to the vulnerable.

# Lament (based on Psalm 130):

## Leader

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.  
Lord, hear our voice!  
We are deep under the weight of sin  
that piles up generation upon generation.  
Pressed into the ground we wait for the Lord,  
our souls wait, and in God's word we hope.

## All

**Our souls wait for the Lord,  
more than those who watch for the morning.**

**Song:** HWB 367 For the healing of the nations (could sing to a different tune)  
OR HWB 377 Healer of our every ill

# Readings: Ecological devastation and neocolonialism

*(Optional: Powerpoint Slide 3. Text Below)*

The Doctrine of Discovery grew out of a theology of dominance over land, people, and resources. We lament the wasteful, greedy and polluting ways of colonialism, and proclaim the Creator's intentions for us to have right, balanced, and interdependent relationship with the earth.

"Most people think of Cheyenne as nomadic and warlike, existing off the buffalo on the plains. Indeed that was so, but for a brief period of our history. And incidentally, we along with many tribes on the plains were eventually subdued by a strategy that eliminated thousands of buffalo. When we were uprooted as a horticultural village people, we were forced to exist on the buffalo. We learned to respect this animal and we took only as we needed and we used all of it. The meat was dried and preserved. The hide was used for clothing, bedding, and shelter. Some of the bones were used for tools. In the slaughter of the buffalo by the thousands [by white settlers] only the tongue and hide was taken from the animal. The carcasses were left to rot." - Lawrence Hart

"I work with indigenous peoples in Suriname, South America, who face illness, death, displacement.....due to gold mining and other 'economic development' projects in their traditional lands. ....The government provides concessions to mining companies that pollute indigenous territories with mercury and cyanide - even receiving foreign aid to do this. As economic interests have pushed them out of their traditional lands, indigenous peoples...become refugees in their own country, fleeing violence imposed by private militias that are controlled by mining interests and concession holders...

"the Wayana have no legal recourse that will provide them protection from the financial interests that continue to extract resources from, and destroy Wayana territories. Suriname courts do not recognize the rights of the Wayana to own or control their own lands, because of the principles of discovery. European "Christian" states alone had the legal right to own land and the resources there during the times of colonization. Laws and policies justified by Christian doctrine formed the legal precedent for national and international policies that govern land use in the Americas to this day..." - Sarah Augustine

# Confession:

Sustaining God, you are the creator of this world's abundance. You named this abundance good, and intended it for all peoples. We confess that at times we have been afraid that we would not have enough or that we would not be safe unless we secured land, resources and power for ourselves. We confess that our churches have been part of the system that sucks the lifeblood from Indigenous communities, leaving them with few options for survival. And we confess that our churches continue to benefit from laws and policies that deny Indigenous peoples' rights and lay waste to the land.

## Lament (based on Psalm 130):

### Leader

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.  
Lord, hear our voice!  
We are deep under the weight of sin  
that piles up generation upon generation.  
Pressed into the ground we wait for the Lord,  
our souls wait, and in God's word we hope.

### All

**Our souls wait for the Lord,  
more than those who watch for the morning.**

**Song:** STS 54 What does the Lord require of you?

## Readings: Resilience, survival and hope

*(Optional: Powerpoint Slide 4. Text Below)*

"We are still alive," she said. "We really do exist. When people listen to our story, they can no longer claim to not know. That makes you accountable." - Erica Littlewolf

"Now when I pray, I pray in Cheyenne. I pray in Indian because I feel that God gave me the Cheyenne language to speak, to converse with Him. I always say, 'He gave me the Cheyenne language, and I feel free when I pray in my Cheyenne language.' I feel that it's coming from my heart. I pray from my heart, I don't have to think what I'm going to say. It just naturally comes out because it's from my heart." - Bertha Little Coyote

"I love this Mennonite Church, and I've worked in it. One time they had this big meeting, a big conference with people from all over the world there, and I went. And they had me up on this platform, so I could see. And they took all those people, all different colors, and they asked them to stand up, and walk around. And I watched them, all colors of people, and it was so beautiful....And I said [into the microphone, to everyone,] 'How beautiful is God's creation. Why can't we get along?' - Bertha Little Coyote

"What would it be like if our church institutions stood in solidarity with us? What might we accomplish if we approached the human rights commission, the banks, and corporations as a united Church?" - Sarah Augustine

"My hope for the Mennonite Church is that it not lose its Anabaptist roots and human values, which is what makes it unique and puts it in a position to reach across cultures and nations for service and non-violence. The world needs an alternative ethic, alternative to hatreds born out of implacable leftist and right-wing ideologies.... I also hope that the Mennonite community will not forget on whose land they stand--that they will seek to understand and to support Indigenous peoples' struggles for justice, land and resource restitution." - Emma LaRocque

# Response (based on Psalm 130):

## Leader

O my people, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,  
and with God is great power to redeem.  
It is God who will redeem us  
from all iniquities, who will show us the way  
of justice and peace.

## All

**Our souls wait for the Lord,  
more than those who watch for the morning.**

Silence (may offer a prayer here)

**Song:** HWB 497 Come ye disconsolate OR HWB 430 God be with you

## Closing:

Eagle Poem  
To pray you open your whole self  
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon  
To one whole voice that is you.  
And know there is more  
That you can't see, can't hear;  
Can't know except in moments  
Steadily growing, and in languages  
That aren't always sound but other  
Circles of motion.  
Like eagle that Sunday morning  
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky  
In wind, swept our hearts clean  
With sacred wings.  
We see you, see ourselves and know  
That we must take the utmost care  
And kindness in all things.  
Breathe in, knowing we are made of  
All this, and breathe, knowing  
We are truly blessed because we  
Were born, and die soon within a  
True circle of motion,  
Like eagle rounding out the morning  
Inside us.  
We pray that it will be done  
In beauty.  
In beauty.  
-Joy Harjo

## Benediction



## Additional Song Suggestions:

- HWB 148 By the waters (settler congregations may want to experiment with substituting “they” for “we”)
  - STS 16 Peace before us
  - STS 115 Beauty for brokenness
  - STS 121 Nothing is lost on the breath of God
  - STJ 77 The peace of the earth be with you
  - HWB 78 Father God, you are holy
  - HWB 153 Agnus Dei (the companion to the Kyrie – Taize)
  - HWB 152 Kyrie
  - STJ 51 As tranquil streams
  - STS 70 For God alone my soul awaits in silence
  - HWB 372 O Healing River
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## Resources for Further Learning:

Digitized primary sources on Native American history and Mennonite-run Boarding Schools from the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College:

<https://bethelks.libguides.com/c.php?g=750712&p=5376437>

Discovery: A Comic Lament - a play by Alison Brookins produced by Ted & Co.

<http://www.tedandcompany.com/shows/discovery-comic-lament/>

Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition: <http://www.dofdmenno.org>

A 45 min. documentary film, study guide, and Bible reflections are available on the website.

Learn about the history of the Doctrine of Discovery, its basis in Christian theology, its effects on Indigenous Peoples today, and how we might start to undo it.

Heinrichs, Steve, editor. Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry. Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2013.

Hinz-Penner, Raylene. Searching for Sacred Ground: The Journey of Chief Lawrence Hart, Mennonite. Telford, Pa: Cascadia Pub. House, 2007.

MCC Intersections: “Overcoming the Doctrine of Discovery,” Winter 2018

Volume 6, Issue 1: <https://mcc.org/media/resources/7621>

MCC Central States Indigenous Visioning Center: [mcc.org/learn/what/categories/indigenous-work](http://mcc.org/learn/what/categories/indigenous-work)

The Loss of Turtle Island: A participatory learning experience that depicts the historic relationship between European settlers – including Mennonites – and the original inhabitants of the land we now call the United States of America. Contact to invite a facilitator to your church or group: [centralstates@mcc.org](mailto:centralstates@mcc.org); 316-283-2720.

MCUSA page on the Doctrine of Discovery: <http://mennoniteusa.org/resources/doctrine-of-discovery/>

Native Lands App for learning what Native land you live on:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/native-land/id1194356597?mt=8>

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

Reserve 107 ([reserve107thefilm.com](http://reserve107thefilm.com))

In the small town of Laird, Saskatchewan, an old injustice is providing new opportunities for dialogue, friendship and a fierce determination to right the wrongs of the past between Mennonites and the Young Chippewyan First Nation.

# Bibliography of sources used for quotations

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Joy Harjo, "Eagle Poem." In *In Mad Love and War*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1990. Available online at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46545/eagle-poem>

Lawrence Hart. "A Message from Native American People." Symposium II Conservation/Ecology: A Mennonite Mandate, Laurelville, Pa., December 27-30, 1982.

Emma LaRocque. "Christian Faith and Ethnic Awareness." In Eglia Birmingham, ed. *Christian Faith and Ethnic Awareness: Addresses Presented at Cross Cultural Youth Seminar* [Elkhart, IN]: [Mennonite Student Services], 1976.

"Me and Mennonites: The Way We Were 'The Other.'" *Center for Mennonite Writing Journal* 4:6 (2012), <https://mennonitewriting.org/journal/4/6/metis-and-mennonites-way-we-were-other/>

Bertha Little Coyote and Virginia Giglio. *Leaving Everything Behind: The Songs and Memories of a Cheyenne Woman*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.

Erica Littlewolf.

"Discovering the Root of My Fear." *The Mennonite*, 2 December 2016, <https://themennonite.org/discovering-the-root-of-my-fear/>

"The Tears of a Northern Cheyenne Woman." *The Mennonite*, 1 June 2018, <https://themennonite.org/feature/tears-northern-cheyenne-woman/>

Mackenzie Miller and Mennonite World Review. "MCC's Erica Littlewolf: 'We are still alive: We really do exist.'" *Mennonite World Review*, 23 October 2017, <http://mennoworld.org/2017/10/23/feature/mccs-erica-littlewolf-we-are-still-alive-we-really-do-exist/>

Interview with Priscilla Wero, July 31, 2002, Farmington, NM. Mennonite Women of Color Oral History Interviews, 2001-2003. HM6-304. Mennonite Church USA Archives. Elkhart, Indiana. Audio recording available online at: <https://archive.org/details/MennoniteWomenOfColorOralHistoryProjectPricillaWeroInterview>

# Appendix A

## Guide to acknowledging territory

Created by Alison Brookins

for Ted & Company TheaterWorks

A public land acknowledgment shows respect for Indigenous Peoples, raises settler awareness, animates settler responsibility to these stories and signals a desire to strengthen relationships between settlers and Indigenous Peoples. This is not difficult, and can be done with a few simple sentences.

### **Who lived/lives here?**

Check out this interactive map: [invasionofamerica.ehistory.org](http://invasionofamerica.ehistory.org)

The map may tell you what group(s) lived on the land, when they lost it, and how, and which Indigenous bands and tribes may continue to live on this land. Further Internet searches can help fill in some information.

**Example:** The map tells us that Orlando, Florida was home to the Seminole, ceded in 1832. Wikipedia then tells us that the Seminole, Miccosukee, and Muscogee tribes currently live on lands around the state of Florida.

### **Write just a few sentences.**

Once you have gathered and checked information, write a few sentences that acknowledge the original stewards of this land.

### **Three examples:**

- Orlando, Florida: I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered tonight on the homeland of the people collectively known as the Seminole, ceded to the United States in 1832. Today, this is the home of the Seminole, Miccosukee, and Muscogee tribes.
- Winnipeg, Manitoba: I want to begin tonight by recognizing with you that we are doing our work on Treaty 1 lands, a covenant made with the Anishinabek and Swampy Cree of southern Manitoba, and also homeland of the Métis Nation.
- Redlands, California: I want to begin by acknowledging that we stand on traditional territory of the Morongo and Aguas Calientes tribes of the Cahuilla people.