

What is Land Acknowledgement?

A land acknowledgment is an act of conciliation, a statement that recognizes indigenous people as the traditional stewards of the lands.

“When approached humbly, in authentic consultation with indigenous people as equals, land acknowledgments can help pave the way to honouring those with whom we share this land”

- Selena Mills

Hilltop Montessori School, in the work for understanding biases, confronting racism and any other form of discrimination, has committed to acknowledging the land of the Abenaki people as a first step to initiate historical reparation and decolonizing history in our community. For the last two years, our Head of School has dedicated time to initiating most of our meetings with a land acknowledgment. In the beginning it felt strange, perhaps because it was something unusual for us. Perhaps because it has not been part of the “tradition”, or because the history books did not consider this practice as part of the history of those who have inhabited this land before European colonizers. The awareness for understanding and hearing the voices of indigenous people is starting to echo in our everyday teaching practices. For us, it began with a simple but courageous act of stepping forward and acknowledging their existence and the injustices made towards them. We know that this is an important act to include in our daily life, but we also know that there is more work that needs to be done.

This week, I met with some of the programs to discuss Indigenous Peoples’ Day and the historical accounts that are still perpetuating bias and racist ideas in our school and society. Sharing our thoughts and ideas, curating our classroom libraries, sharing classroom experiences about redirecting students when using improper concepts, reflecting on our childhood awareness in the context of indigenous people’s presence,

asking for feedback, experiencing vulnerability, and constructing possible lessons to share with students and families were some of the points to share from this week's meetings.

Next week, I'll be meeting with the rest of the programs to continue exploring and discussing our bias, and reflecting and constructing new approaches for continuing decolonizing historical narratives.

- Marco