

Where can I learn more?

Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness

Active Tribal Nations in the region: Pennacook-Abenaki, Massachusett, Nipmuc

Town of Chelmsford's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Chelmsford Public Library's Civic Engagement and Social Justice page

Chelmsford Public Library's Chelmsford History page and local history collection



Scan to visit the DEIC website

Prepared with help from the Chelmsford Public Library



Where can the Town promote the Land Acknowledgement?

The land acknowledgement can be promoted in many different ways. Some examples include, reading it at town happenings such as events in the town common, at local/national holiday celebrations, festival openings, library programs, and other public meetings where town officials are presiding. The Town can post the land acknowledgement on their main website and can also post the acknowledgement physically in public buildings and parks to foster opportunities for education and engagement. Physical postings would be accompanied by a scannable QR code leading readers to find more information on Chelmsford History via the Library's website.



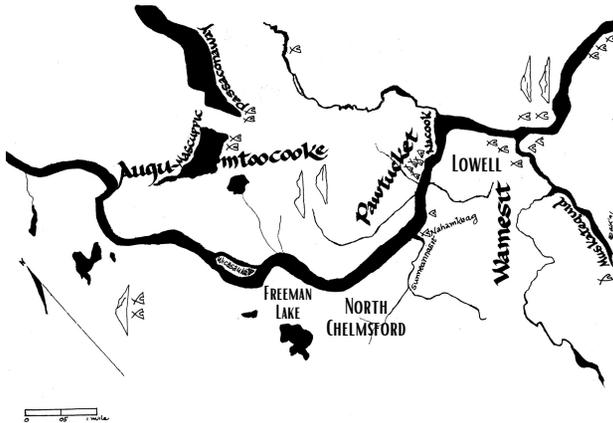
What is a Land Acknowledgement?

A land acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and shows respect to Indigenous peoples as traditional residents and stewards of what is now known as Chelmsford. This kind of statement highlights the enduring relationship between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. It also reminds us that it is an honor to live, work, learn, and, play on these lands. Land acknowledgements can be verbal or written statements, or presented visually as a part of programming.

Why do we need a Land Acknowledgement?

Our aim in having the Select Board approve a Town-wide land acknowledgement is primarily to raise awareness within the community, as well as to uplift Indigenous peoples within our community and beyond. The Vision and Values statement adopted by the Select Board in 2020 emphasizes “inclusiveness and diversity,” as well as being “mindful of our historic past.” A land acknowledgement takes one step forward in beginning a conversation about how to address respect for Indigenous traditions and rights today and is a natural outgrowth of the Select Board’s mission as well as the work of the Town’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

Additionally, Chelmsford is not exempt from New England’s troubled history and local historical records point to the dispossession of Indigenous lands.



Chelmsford Timeline

1653 - English settlers arrive in the area where the Wamesit-Pawtucket bands of the Pennacook people live.

In the following years many Indigenous people convert to Christianity and retain rights to their land and the Merrimack River.

1675-76 - King Philip's War brings settlers in southeast Massachusetts into conflict with Wampanoag and Naragansett bands, and Indigenous people throughout the state are made scapegoats for violence.

1675 - Wamesit leaders Samuel Numphow and John Lyne write letters to Chelmsford leaders detailing false accusations, murder, and the burning of their homes, causing them to flee to the north.

1677 - Missionary leader Daniel Gookin writes *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England* recounting death and displacement among the Pennacook.

1685 - To prevent further violence, Pennacook leader Wannalancit signs over deeds of ownership to settlers in Chelmsford.

How can a Land Acknowledgement enable further action?

Land acknowledgements are a step toward truth-telling and context setting that is necessary to start the path toward reconciliation. It is also important to take actions that support Indigenous peoples. This can occur in a myriad of ways such as:

- Hosting Indigenous speakers at public programs and events
- Supporting Indigenous-led grassroots movements and campaigns
- Collaborating with Indigenous-led land trusts, like the Native Land Conservancy and the Bomazeen Land Trust
- Supporting and amplifying the work of Indigenous content creators and artists (in books, films, music, visual arts and craft)
- Hosting educational programs to dispel the myths and misconceptions about Indigenous peoples in the dominant narratives of our culture