

Land Acknowledgement

An Expression of Gratitude to the Land and Her First People

December 21st, 2021

Hello Alnobak (Humans),

We have gathered close to the geographic center of what is now called Vermont, the very western side of N'dakinna. We gather at Montpelier, the place that was once the bottom of Lake Winooski. We acknowledge the traditional homelands of the Winooski people on the day of the winter solstice. The sun is at its lowest point. For many cultures this is a day of celebration, a day that marks the death and rebirth of the sun. We thank the sun, the soil, the water, the air, the plants and the animals, for our food and water, for our clothing and shelter, for the air we breathe: for life.

We acknowledge the beautiful snow that shines brightly in the sunshine and shows us a hundred shades of white, blue and gray, and the rabbit, turkey, deer, racoon and squirrel prints on her blanket. We hear the gentle wind rustling the maple leaves on the ground and rust brown beech leaves in the trees. There are evergreens and trees who have lost their leaves and trees whose leaves are brown and still on the branch. We hear the wind whispering in the white pine's boughs, weighted with snow. We hear the songs of the chickadees, juncos and crows, and see the blue jays and squirrels foraging. The land has had a thousand ages, and will have a thousand more. It has lain at the bottom of the sea, and been pushed up into towering peaks, has borne flood and fire and glacier.

We honor the Winooski People that have cared for this land since the last glacier receded and long before. We recognize the community they created across untold generations, and the physical and cultural genocide they have endured for 400 years. We acknowledge with humility and gratitude how they have endured with one heart and one mind, and the protection they have provided to this land in spite of the atrocities from which they themselves were not protected.

The waterways and watersheds are essential to understanding the land. Caring for the watershed is caring for the people. Today, December 21st, 2021, the snow melts into rivulets, flowing into the North Branch of the Winooski, home to crayfish and mussels and a thousand other creatures. The surface ripples of the Winooski River shine like glass as the wind blows it along.

This special place is the meeting place of many confluences. The Winooski's seven large tributaries, the Little River, the North Branch, the Kingsbury River, the Huntington River, the Dog River, the Mad River, and the Stevens Branch, all join the Winooski near here. In the past ancient ones would gather at this confluence for meetings and treaties and weddings, for planning and celebrating. It is here that many still meet to plan and celebrate this land. It is here that we meet to make our commitments to the land and to the future. We know our work will affect every living thing in this land, and we acknowledge our debt and our responsibility to all of them.