

Land Acknowledgment

We respectfully recognize the Bodéwadmi/Potawatomi, the Myaamiaki/Miami and other Nations as generational stewards of this land, now known as northern Indiana and southern Michigan through the process of European settlement and land dispossession.

Lament and Commitment. We lament the Tribes' loss of ancestral land through military pressure, unjust treaties and forced removals. We acknowledge our benefits as current residents of the land. With courage and humility, we commit to

- deepening our appreciation of their history, their resilience and their flourishing communities in Michiana, the Great Lakes region, Kansas and Oklahoma.
- advocating for the sovereignty of the Potawatomi, the Miami and other Indigenous Nations.
- promoting awareness of ongoing unjust treatment of Indigenous Peoples and engaging in the work of repair and restitution.
- joining with Indigenous Peoples in caring for this land and for all of creation.

Historical Background. In the early 1800s, Indigenous Peoples of Indiana were forced to sign treaties ceding their land to the United States government for settler occupation. Breaking a series of treaties, the government took more territory and removed most Potawatomi and Miami from their ancestral lands.

In fall 1838, 859 Potawatomi were forced by state militia to walk from their homes in Marshall County (IN) to northeastern Kansas on what is known as the "Trail of Death". Over forty adults and children died and hundreds more later perished in brutal conditions in Kansas. Shortly after the forced removal of Potawatomi, Amish and Mennonite farmers began purchasing land in Elkhart County. Today, the descendants of the Trail of Death are members of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, based in Oklahoma, and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, based in northeastern Kansas.

After years of resisting government pressure to cede land and move west of the Mississippi River, Miami leaders capitulated. But Miami People did not wish to leave and began seeking individual family exemptions to removal. However, on October 6, 1846, 315 Miami were compelled by the US military to board canal boats in Peru (IN) for a journey that ended on November 5 at a tent encampment in eastern Kansas. Seven adults and children died on the journey and by the end of the year, over thirty had perished in harsh winter conditions. Years later, the Miami Tribe was once again removed, this time to Oklahoma. Today the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma serves a diaspora community spanning from their homelands in Indiana and along their removal route.

The Art. The turtle design is a gift of Aaron Martin, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. Strawberries symbolize healing and growth. The shell of the turtle depicts a medicine wheel with four colored sections that represent the four compass directions and key Potawatomi teachings. Geometric shapes below the statement highlight Miami ribbonwork.

