

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Town of Great Barrington, MA Land Acknowledgment

BACKGROUND: Great Barrington sits on indigenous lands belonging to the Mohican People. The Mohicans' lands extended from what is now Lake Champlain, south to Manhattan, on both sides of the Hudson River. Their territory also extended east into what is today Western Massachusetts. On April 25th, 1724, the lands upon which Great Barrington, Sheffield, Mount Washington, and Egremont (as well as parts of several other towns west of the Housatonic River), were exchanged by the Mohicans for four hundred sixty pounds, three barrels of cider, and thirty quarts of rum.^{1,2}

Before the Revolutionary War, the Mohicans resided primarily in Stockbridge but after the war, they were displaced westward, with the indigenous government today headquartered in Shawano County, Wisconsin. The Mohicans banded with other indigenous communities in this region to form the Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

On September 23rd, 2019, Great Barrington proclaimed the second Monday in October as "Indigenous Peoples' Day." To recognize our history and that of the Mohican People who inhabited the land upon which our town is built, @GBLabs, an innovation partner working with the Town of Great Barrington, has drafted the accompanying land acknowledgment.

A land acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes the indigenous populations who lived on the land where a community is now located. As residents, we have a duty to reflect upon, and learn, from our past, by recognizing indigenous peoples as the traditional stewards of our land, by learning about their history and culture, and by closely examining the history of how our community came to. It is our hope that this land acknowledgment will help empower indigenous voices within our community and beyond, inspire non-indigenous individuals to learn more about native communities and their history, and to bring us all together in the pursuit of a stronger, more inclusive, and equitable future for our town, community, and country.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

RECOMMENDATION: @GBLabs recommends that the attached land acknowledgment be read aloud before the Great Barrington Town Meeting on an annual basis.

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APPROVED BY:

Mark Pruhenski/Town Manager

10/23/2020

¹ Rachel Wheeler, *To Live upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Cornell University Press, 2008), 17, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7z92k>.

² Bernard A. Drew, *Great Barrington: Great Town - Great History*, First Edition (Great Barrington Historical Society, 1999), 191.

Town of Great Barrington - Official Land Acknowledgement

“As we gather this evening for our annual town meeting, where we will decide upon the future direction of our community, it is important that we also look to, and learn from, the lessons of the past. We want to acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional lands of the Mohican People, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. We commit to continuing to learn how to become better caretakers of the land we inhabit, to understand the history and traditions of those who cared for it before us, and to learn from the successes and failures of preceding generations, in the pursuit of a more just, equal, Great Barrington.”