

Land Acknowledgement

This is Narragansett land. Let's take a moment to acknowledge this together and reflect on what that means. Narragansett people have stewarded these lands and waterways for generations—gathering here for the herring run in the spring and to hunt in the summer. Indigenous people have lived in relationship with this land and its abundance for as long as memory goes back, and they continue to do so today.

The Narragansett people have seen many changes to these lands, from the retreat of the ice sheet 16,000 years ago which carved this river basin to the ecological and cultural violence of European colonization. But through these changes, their traditional culture has been passed down from generation to generation and is even stronger today. They maintain sacred relationships with the land, water, and all their living things, and they maintain diplomatic and kinship relations with the other Native Nations in Rhode Island, including the Nipmuc, Pokanoket, Wampanoag, and Niantic Nations.

There is no Rhode Island history without Indigenous history. We are all connected to this history and we honor with gratitude the contributions and knowledge of First Peoples.

But this acknowledgment isn't the end of our accountability to the First Peoples of this land. Narragansett people today are fighting to maintain their rights to this land, to clean water, to their ancestral fishing practices and foodways. We're reading this acknowledgment together now to remember and affirm that Indigenous rights and sovereignty are central to environmental justice. It's up to all of us to follow the leadership of Indigenous people as we shift the way we treat the land.

This acknowledgment is a step towards correcting stories and practices that erase Indigenous people's history and culture and a step toward inviting and honoring the truth. As we build our own relationships with this land during our time here, we remember that we are guests here, and we pay our respect to Narragansett elders of both past and present.

Definitions

Accountability: accepting your responsibility for ethical treatment of others

Kinship: a person's connections and belonging to their communities, their families, their ancestors, and the land

Sovereignty: the right of a community to make their own decisions about how to govern themselves and their land