We Acknowledge the Indigenous Land We Reside On

Manistee occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and all of the Anishinaabek of the Three Fires Confederacy--the Odawa (Ottawa), Ojibwe (Chippewa), and Bodewadmi (Potawatomi) people. In particular, Manistee resides on land ceded in the 1836 Treaty of Washington.

We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan's twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. We further recognize the ongoing relationship of, dependence upon, and respect for, all living beings of earth, sky and water.

We collectively understand that offering a Land Acknowledgement does not absolve settler-colonial privilege or diminish colonial structures of violence, at either the individual or institutional level. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold ourselves and our community accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.

Burt Lake Burn-Out

Land Acknowledgments are a mere nod to the fact that indigenous peoples owned this land before the white settlers forced them out. Treaties did not solve this issue. Some local history underscores this fact:

As part of the 1836 Washington treaty, the Burt Lake Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (at the time known as the Cheboiganing Band of Indians) was supposed to receive 1000 acres on Burt Lake. When that didn't happen, the Burt Lake Band purchased a 375-acre parcel to the west of Burt Lake. Federal agents advised them to place these lands, called "Indian Point," in trust with the governor of Michigan.

Later, issues arose over whether lands held in such trusts were taxable. In 1899, a Cheboygan county land speculator named John McGinn claimed to have acquired the property by way of paying back taxes and insisted the Burt Lake Band vacate it. In the fall of 1900, accompanied by the local sheriff and several other men, John McGinn arrived at Indian Point while the village's men were away cashing their paychecks. The sheriff and his deputies removed the people and their household goods and, while the women and children sat in the rain watching, John McGinn doused every house with kerosene and torched the village, sparing only the church building.

The Burt Band tribal members scattered, taking up residence with nearby friends and family members or leaving the area altogether. The area once called "Indian Point" was renamed "Colonial Point." Three years later, the Michigan House and Senate passed a resolution to provide 400 acres to the displaced tribe. That never happened.
ASDFS\` Somewhere along the way, the government ceased recognizing the band as a federal tribe, despite the fact it was acknowledged as existing in two treaties. To this day, the Burt Lake Band has yet to be reaffirmed as a federally-recognized tribe. Why has that not happened? One of the requirements to be federally recognized is that the tribe own land. And the land? Most of it is privately owned resort property. The remainder is owned partly by the Little Traverse Land Conservancy and partly by the University of Michigan. The issue of tribal recognition and ownership of the land remains in litigation in the courts.

So, while land acknowledgments pay verbal tribute to the original inhabitants of this land, they do nothing actionable to address the injustices tribes experienced and continue to face.
For more, see https://bit.ly/BurtLakeTribe.