**Indigenous Land Acknowledgement for OCUFA - SWEC:**

I recognize that the land upon which I speak in St Catharines, Ontario, is the traditional territory of Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee people, many of whom continue to live, work, and study here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.

I begin with these words in order to honour the members of the Aboriginal Education Council at Brock University who have suggested this text to members of the Brock community. Their work in crafting this text has resulted in its proliferation across campus, on syllabuses, and at committee meetings, and it has engendered important conversations about its power, its importance, and its limits as one mechanism of decolonization and indigenization.

I also wish to acknowledge local case history in my region, one mechanism through which the presence of those of us who are settlers on this land between the shores of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, is facilitated by the unjust ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada in St Catharines Milling and Lumber Co. v. R, (1887) 13 S.C.R. 577:

The lands within the boundary of Ontario in which the claims or rights of occupancy of the Indians were surrendered or became extinguished by the Dominion Treaty of 1873, known as the North West Angle Treaty, No. 3, form part of the public domain of Ontario and are public lands belonging to Ontario by virtue of the provisions of the British North America Act[[1]](https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/3769/index.do?iframe=true" \l "_ftn1" \t "_blank). (<https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/3769/index.do#_ftn1> ).

By acknowledging this local, unjust act of settler colonialism that contravenes the spirit and the letter of the 1613 Two Row Wampum Treaty governing the presence of all of us on Turtle Island, we work to contribute toward reconciliation, decolonization and the renewal of Indigenous Nation Sovereignty. In fact, I only know about this court ruling, because conversations around the purposes and goals of territorial acknowledgements as a practice instigating decolonization and reconciliation in teaching, administering, and studying at Brock pushed me to investigate the spaces I occupy as a white, cis-gendered, female settler more closely—yet, it is easy to acknowledge my settler identity while looking to what other who share it have done, but more difficult to chip away at the traces of an internalized colonizer presence and pretense that lurks inside me and seduces me into that key marker of whiteness, the mindset of “I already know better. I am already doing better.”

This pretense acts as a settler buffer against true decolonization and indigenization through complicity, fragility and denial. If I am linked to a community of white, cis-gendered female settlers, I am linked to a history of “nice white women” who have been complicit with patriarchy and white supremacy, and who have actively sought empowerment by “leaning in” over the bodies of black, brown, queer, and indigenous peoples. We have been missionaries, we have accepted jobs as teachers at boarding schools, we have been posted by state governments to indigenous lands to instruct indigenous women on how to be nice white housewives, even as we proudly resisted doing so ourselves. We have called the police on people of colour, because we knew we would be heard, whether we told the truth or not. We still do. I do not wish to be part of this “we;” however, I have no business denying that my membership has shaped and facilitated my comfort with institutional status quos and my free movements though space and across social boundaries. Throughout my life I have been poor, I have worked hard in undervalued employment, and I have been harassed for having a female body, but it is undeniable that my whiteness, like a Weeble, has regularly prevented me from falling all the way down. Even as I say this, I feel a resistance inside me that wants to attribute all I have to “hard work” and it reminds me how much work I have to do.

This gathering is governed by principles around the land acknowledgement that suggest “it is a reflection process in which you build mindfulness and intention walking into whatever gathering you are having.” I first misread that sentence as building “mindfulness and intentional walking,” and so I would like to walk intentionally here by sharing a story about space and place that causes me to reflect on my relations to others, to things and to land. I will tell this small story about myself, and then I will trace my movement across Turtle Island in order to acknowledge and honour more of the indigenous lands and peoples that have held me throughout the education that led me to be here at this meeting of the Ontario Confederation of Faculty Association’s Status of Women and Equity Committee. I have embedded links throughout this text in order to allow for the story to continue on without me.

I grew up in Lexington Massachusetts, territory of the [Massa-adchu-es-et Nation](http://massachusetttribe.org/) whose name and lands were appropriated for that settler state. As a child, I learned repeatedly in school about the bravery of Columbus, the mystery of Plymouth Rock, and the happy relationship between settlers and natives at the first Thanksgiving, but I learned little in school about the real impact of these peoples, places, and events in colonial history. I ran around in the woods behind my house pretending I was a member of the Seneca Nation—it frustrated me that my feet could not be perfectly silent. I didn’t know about the Seneca from school, rather I knew about the Seneca, because of pop culture—particularly a series of historical novels I read with my sister that began with *Renno, the White Indian,* part of a prolific genre of white redemption stories that include *Dances with Wolves*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Avatar*. In my childhood, I fully internalized the “real Indian,” the one that [Simon Ortiz](https://jacket2.org/commentary/simon-ortiz-what-indians-complete) writes about in [“Real Indians?”](https://jacket2.org/commentary/simon-ortiz-what-indians-complete) the ones that “were what Europeans believed."

Once again, the internal resistance I cited earlier also wants to hold on to the pleasure of these memories and deny the ways they reveal the part I have played in the appropriation of indigenous cultures and stories. Instead, I would like to end by honouring and thanking the [Water Protectors](https://www.honorearth.org/welcome_water_protectors) whose real actions protect the earth today, and by listing and honouring a few more of the indigenous nation territories that have held me as I passed through the education that made it possible for me to attend this meeting.

Westwood High School in Mesa Arizona occupies the territory of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community ([SRPMIC](https://www.srpmic-nsn.gov/)). [Northern Arizona University](https://in.nau.edu/dine/)  in Flagstaff Arizona is the traditional land of the [Hopi](https://www.hopi-nsn.gov/) nation, [Western Apache](https://yavapai-apache.org/) nation, the neighboring Navajo nation ([Diné](https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/contact.htm)) and the actually disappeared Hohokam ([derived from the Akimel O’odham word for “those who have gone”](http://www.azheritagewaters.nau.edu/loc_hohokam.html)), whose extraordinary paintings and ruins are scattered throughout the Southwest after 1000s of years, and whose name and history were casually appropriated for the housing complex where we lived in Mesa, Hohokam Highlands. The [University of Wisconsin](https://gns.wisc.edu/uw-madison-land-acknowledgement-statement/) sits on the traditional lands of the [Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo](https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/kiikaapoi-kickapoo/)), [Peoria](https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/peoria/), [Sauk and Meskwaki](https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/sauk-and-meskwaki/), [Ho-Chunk (Winnebago](https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/ho-chunk-winnebago/)), [Myaamia](https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/miami/), [Očhéthi Šakówin](https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/oceti-sakowin-sioux/). [Syracuse University](https://thecollege.syr.edu/land-acknowledgement/), like Brock, sits on the traditional lands of the [Ho-de-no-sau-nee-ga](https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/haudenosauneega-confederacy/) (Haudenosaunee) and the [Onundagaonaga](https://www.onondaganation.org/) (Onondaga), though these sovereign indigenous nations have been divided like so many others by the settler borders between Mexico, the US, and Canada.

I would ask that we acknowledge these lands and all those on which you have walked and the indigenous peoples who have nurtured and protected them since Time Immemorial as we enter into this meeting.

[Website: Map of indigenous territories, languages, and treaties.](https://native-land.ca/)