

The Wright-Ingraham Institute Living Land Acknowledgment & Position Statement

The Wright-Ingraham Institute (WII) is an education, grant-giving and research organization with roots in the homelands of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, Núu-agma-tʼavvą-pę (Ute), Cheyenne and Jicarilla Apache (Colorado Springs and Elbert County, Colorado). Although currently the organization operates remotely, the Wright-Ingraham Institute (WII) recognizes and respects Indigenous peoples as traditional original stewards of the lands of Turtle Island (North America) and elsewhere, and the enduring relationships that exist between Indigenous peoples and their homelands.

Some of our current programming centers in and around Durango, Colorado, the ancestral homes and territories of the Núu-agma-tʼavvą-pę (Ute Nation), Apache, the Pueblos, Hopi, Zuni, and the Diné (Navajo) Nation. The WII recognizes the need for continuous Indigenous stewardship of these lands in order to honor their rights, interests, relationship to lands and waters, and their ways of being, knowing and doing. We also recognize the many Indigenous contributions to architecture, art, science, engineering, mathematics and land stewardship in the Southwest region of the San Juan Mountains as deep sources of knowledge to draw from.

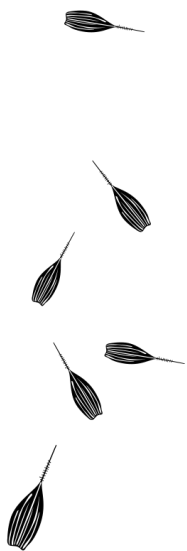
In recognition of the responsibility that comes with a land acknowledgment, we look forward to ongoing and collaborative dialogue about the impacts of settler colonialism on the Indigenous Nations of the Southwest during fieldwork. We also recognize the need for our organization to reflect inwardly on what it means to be living in, working on and visiting these lands as non-Indigenous individuals, and how our actions and efforts might work towards reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples and organizations.

WII's History of Land Holdings

As part of our work and mission, the Wright-Ingraham Institute is deeply interested in land issues and how humans relate to the natural systems that we are a part of, and in that context, the interrelations between land access, governance, treatment, and stewardship is critically important. The WII operated a place-based educational field program from 1972 to 1983, during which time the Institute held a conservation easement in Elbert County, CO in the Running Creek watershed. The Parker Charitable Trust purchased the Running Creek Field Station on behalf of the Wright-Ingraham Institute in 1983 and the property was sold in 2010. During those years, the organization did not build relationships with Native Nations or Indigenous-led organizations, and we acknowledge that the Institute is new to engaging issues of sovereignty and land restitution. We humbly recognize that it is important to understand and recognize the harm that white-dominant environmental organizations and settler colonialism have created through actions that have restricted use of land and collective ownership, and we are committed to ongoing learning and unlearning to address this.

Ways Forward

We acknowledge the Land in an expression of gratitude to Indigenous peoples whose territories we reside on and visit, and we aim to honor, through respectful actions, the Indigenous peoples who have lived on and cared for the land since time immemorial. The Wright-Ingraham Institute commits to building relationships with Indigenous Peoples and their representatives through intentional approaches relating to the rights, interests and concerns of Indigenous Peoples. Knowing that we are just beginning, some of the work currently planned and anticipated broadly includes:



Learn, un-learn, and reflect

- We ask of our Institute, and encourage other settlers, to educate themselves about the lands where they live and visit. This includes deepening our understanding of Indigenous peoples' historical and ongoing relationships to these lands, as well as the historical and ongoing impacts of settler colonialism. It also includes respectfully centering knowledge from Indigenous leaders, knowledge-keepers and organizations related to their lands, experiences, cultures, technologies and innovations;
- Build our awareness of the sacred significance of Indigenous lands, and respectfully understand our place in learning from and interacting with Indigenous leaders, stewards, and peoples and their knowledge, and their rightful ownership of that knowledge;
- Ongoing reflections related to settler colonialism, decolonization, and Indigenous worldviews to deepen the organization's ability to create a space of cultural safety, multiplicity, equity and belonging for all those involved in the WII;
- Consideration of the ways in which our interdisciplinary interventions at different scales are political acts. We aim to prioritize creating a space for reflexive dialogue on the intersections between planning, engagement and design and their connection to justice issues, including environmental racism and settler colonialism;
- Recognizing Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing as valuable contributions to knowledge-building and relating to land.

Relationship-building

- Cultivate relationships with Indigenous peoples, organizations, institutions and governments that are based on reciprocity, trust, and mutual benefit;
- Engage with Indigenous peoples, organizations, institutions and governments for project development and implementation according to their protocols, desires and interests in engagement;
- Respect and uphold protocols related to data sovereignty, cultural knowledge and heritage, and intellectual property of Indigenous peoples on whose territories our work takes place;
- Utilize the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent as roadmaps when engaging in projects or activities that take place on Indigenous territories.

Financial Contributions

- Engage dedicated staff members to provide guidance on how to build institutional equity and practices;
- Build the organizational capacity to offer scholarships and grants to individuals who face barriers to participating in programming;
- Support organizations that are focused on environmental justice and eco-social issues, through organizational programming, philanthropic means, and internal financial commitments;
- Prioritize working with and purchasing from organizations, such as Indigenous-owned businesses and those that reflect the ethics of the Institute.

References

Southern Ute Indian Tribe: <https://www.southernute-nsn.gov/history/>
Weeminuche Band of Ute Nation: <http://www.utemountainutetribe.com/>
Jicarilla Apache Nation: <https://janofficial.com/>
Navajo Nation: <https://www.navajo-nsn.gov/>
Native-Land database: <https://native-land.ca/resources/territory-acknowledgement/>
"Beyond territorial acknowledgements." âpihtawikosisân, 2016.
<https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>

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