



Land Acknowledgment



We respectfully recognize the Potawatomi people who stewarded this land for generations. We acknowledge the grave injustice they suffered as the US government forced them to leave this land. With courage and humility, we commit ourselves to acknowledging the wrongs of the past, to building relationships with Potawatomi people, and to joining them in caring for this land and all creation.

Historical Background. In the early 1800s, the Potawatomi people were pressured to cede more and more of their land to the US government. Following the last land cession in Indiana (1836), more than eight hundred members of the tribe were forced to walk from their reservation in Marshall County to northeastern Kansas. On this 660-mile trek in the fall of 1838, over forty adults and children died. This tragedy has become known as the Trail of Death. Within three years, Amish and Mennonite farmers began purchasing land in Elkhart County.

Recognition of Injustice. The display of this art piece is a response of Eighth Street Mennonite Church to our growing awareness of the US government's unjust treatment of Native Americans. We affirm that while we cannot change history, we can work for justice. Justice begins with recognition and acknowledgment.

Potawatomi People Today. The descendants of the Bodéwadmik/Potawatomi who were deported in 1838 are in the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, now based in Oklahoma, and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, now based in northeastern Kansas. Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi are also descendants of the original inhabitants of this region. These federally recognized tribes are vibrant communities based in southwestern Michigan and northwestern Indiana.

The Artist. Graphic designer Aaron Martin is a member of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and a resident of South Bend, Indiana.

Artist's Statement. The turtle is a symbol of a Potawatomi band of this region. The shell of the turtle is in the shape of the medicine wheel, whose four colored sections represent aspects of Native American spirituality, including the compass directions. The Potawatomi People associate traditional medicines with these directions: east (tobacco), south (cedar), west (sage), and north (sweetgrass). The strawberries around the turtle represent healing and growth.

