

# Land Reparations

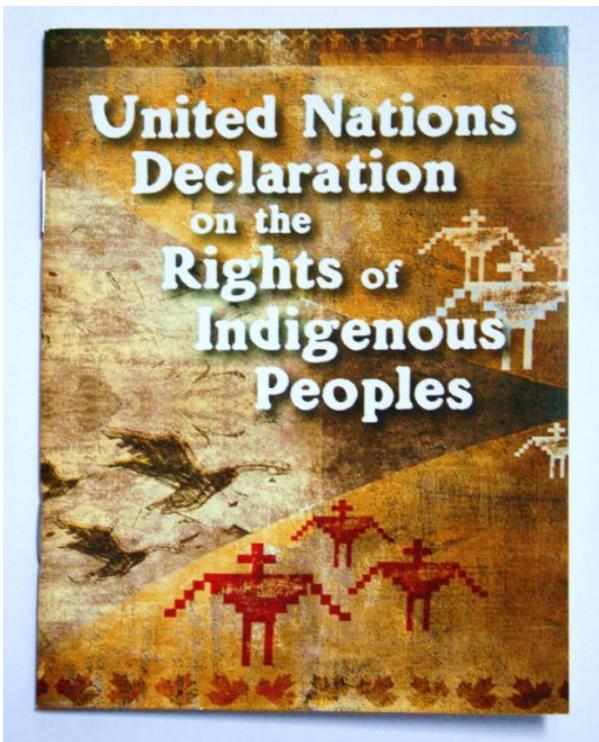
By John Stoesz

## What do I mean by Land Reparations?

1. Reparations by whom? By the descendants of European American settlers
2. Reparations to whom? To Indigenous communities
3. Reparations for what purpose? Recovery of Indigenous lands, cultures and languages

## Reasons for Land Reparations

1. UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - Article 28 states that Indigenous peoples have the right to restitution or compensation for lands they traditionally owned or occupied and which have been confiscated without their free, prior and informed consent.



2. A practical consideration - It is unrealistic to return all the land, but it is unjust to return none.
3. Systemic racism has two sides - Oppression of people of color and unjust benefit for white people. In this case land theft from Indigenous peoples to benefit settlers.
4. Repudiation and dismantling of the Doctrine of Discovery - This is the religious and legal framework created by papal proclamations of the 15th century that justifies theft of land and oppression of Indigenous peoples.
5. Ecological - Environmental destruction and the loss of biodiversity are directly related to the loss of Indigenous cultures and peoples.

6. Right relationship with the land - Let's reject a sense of entitlement and develop a sense of fairness.



7. Restorative justice asks three questions - What harm was done to whom? The land was stolen from Indigenous peoples. How can the harm be repaired? Land return. Who is responsible for making the repair? Descendants of European American settlers.
8. Three insights from restorative justice - Personal responsibility for making repair. A moral responsibility, not merely a moral option. There is moral healing for the party who makes repair.
9. Land reparations increase the power base of Indigenous people working for decolonization.

## Ways of Doing Land Reparations

Practical ways white people are making reparations include: returning a portion of proceeds from land or real estate sales, returning a portion of farm rental income, returning "back rent," returning the amount of property taxes, deeding land over to Indigenous communities, and putting reparations in their wills and estates.

## Some Examples of Land Reparations

1. Reparations to *Makoce Ikikcupi* (Land Recovery in the Dakota language) in Minnesota



The purpose is to reconnect Dakota people to our homeland through land recovery in *Minnesota Makoce* and the establishment of culturally-oriented and self-sufficient Dakota communities. (See [makoceikikcupi.com](http://makoceikikcupi.com).)

2. Reparations to the White Earth Land Recovery Project in Minnesota



The mission is to facilitate the recovery of the original land base of the White Earth Indian Reservation (Ojibwe) while preserving and restoring traditional practices of sound land stewardship, language fluency, community development, and strengthening our spiritual and cultural heritage. (See [welrp.org](http://welrp.org).)

3. Reparations to the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (Lakota) in South Dakota



In the 1880's the US government gave 525 acres to the Jesuits. "It is now time to give back to the tribe all those pieces of land that were given to the church," said Father John Hatcher. "It's an opportunity to return land that rightly belongs to the Lakota people." (Search "Jesuits to return 525 acres," **National Catholic Reporter**.)

4. Reparations to Real Rent Duwamish in Seattle



Real Rent calls on people who live and work in Seattle to make rent payments to the Duwamish Tribe. Though the city named for the Duwamish leader Chief Seattle thrives, the tribe has yet to be justly compensated for their land, resources and livelihood. (See [realrentduwamish.org](http://realrentduwamish.org).)

5. Reparations to the Kanza Heritage Society in Kansas



When her family sold the family farm, Florence Schloneger, a retired Mennonite pastor, chose to make reparations to the Kaw Nation. Pictured above are Florence and Pauline Sharp, a Kaw tribal member and board member of the Kanza Heritage Society. (Search "Land of the Kanza," **Mennonite World Review**.)

6. Reparations to Oneida women in New York



Oneida women celebrate their unity upon lands returned to them in their ancestral territory after 200 years of separation from the land. Divided by centuries of the U.S. government's removal, a younger generation of Oneida women accepted a gift of nearly 30 acres from a Quaker woman, Liseli Haines, who had lived on the land for 43 years. (Search "For two centuries these lands have not heard the songs or felt the Oneida's feet on the ground," **Indian Country Today**.)

**About the author**

For more than thirty years John Stoesz worked in leadership roles with several peace and justice organizations. In 2012 his family sold his grandparents' farm in Minnesota. He returned half the sale amount to Native communities working for land justice. In 2013 he pedaled his recumbent tricycle 2,000 miles through 40 Minnesota counties to raise awareness.

