

Territory Acknowledgement Guide

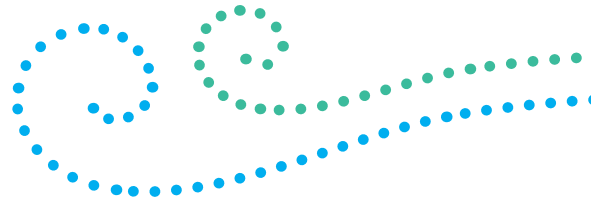


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Introduction to Territory Acknowledgements



Territory acknowledgements are a practice rooting in connecting to a specific space and affirming intentions to share and care for the land on which we live, work and play. They are a way to pay respect to the place where you are, and the people who have been stewards of that place.

Territory acknowledgments must go beyond words to include concrete commitments to reconciliation, such as supporting Indigenous-led initiatives, revitalizing Indigenous languages, and challenging colonial systems.

More recently, territory acknowledgements have been implemented by settler communities as a step towards Truth and Reconciliation. Within this practice, you have the responsibility to learn about the original people, the land, and settler responsibilities. This is a learning opportunity to understand the city names, the origins of that place and names, and then through your acknowledgement to share these learnings.

"It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation."

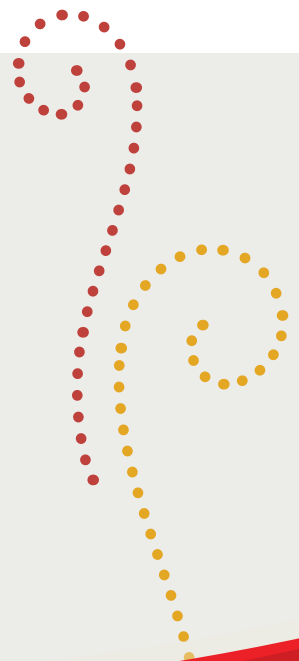
—Northwestern University

It is also a recognition of the dark history of genocide and colonialism here in Canada. Through these land/territory acknowledgements, we recognize the atrocities that have been perpetrated against Indigenous peoples nationwide. These include broken treaties, Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, dog slaughters in the north, Eskimo tags, bans on sacred ceremonies, displacement and exclusion of people based on blood quantum, to name just a few examples.

"These introductions weren't labelled as land acknowledgements—it was just how we carried and presented ourselves when gathering for governance and ceremony. Sometimes a verbal announcement wasn't even necessary, as clan and territorial signifiers were present by way of dress, types of hides, tattoos and art weaved into all forms of aesthetics. Today, some Indigenous peoples might introduce themselves in their language and claim the land they are from, along with their name."

—Sarah Roque, Filmmaker

<https://locallove.ca/issues/what-are-land-acknowledgements-and-why-do-they-matter/#.XujLczpKhPZ>





Why do we acknowledge the Land?

A land or territory acknowledgement is a means of honouring and recognizing the land and peoples of a territory. Territory acknowledgements are not a new practice – they have existed long before the arrival of settler people, in the form of verbal introductions (i.e., the naming of clans) and non-verbal recognition (through things like traditional clothing and designs). They were a way for Indigenous people to demonstrate where they are from, traditional values, roles and more.

A land or territory acknowledgement challenges individuals and groups of people to listen, unlearn and call in the history of colonization. It takes up space to honour the original occupants of a place. Acknowledging the land affirms the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations today and highlights their leadership in environmental stewardship. When original occupants and nations of the territory are acknowledged, it affirms their role in caring and sharing the land, challenges practices of erasure and assimilation, asserts Indigenous rights, and highlights acts of oppression and trauma still felt today. Land acknowledgments should include commitments to specific actions, such as partnering with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers or contributing to language revitalization programs.

Dos and Don'ts



Do consult Indigenous communities to verify your acknowledgement. In undertaking this please do your own work first to learn about territories, pronunciation, use of resources like nativeland.ca and then when you reach out to Indigenous communities, do so with openness and humility to learn.

Do be consistent in leading with acknowledgements. This should be up front in meetings, on email signatures, websites and at events.

Do acknowledge the territories you are currently standing on.

Do include commitments to ongoing reconciliation efforts.

Do incorporate Indigenous languages into your acknowledgement, where appropriate.

Do be informal and human. These are not about perfection – they are about acknowledging relationships and building connection.

Do be aware that in some places territory acknowledgements may not be practiced. Do your research and ask about what the protocols are and then take that guidance. An example is that sometimes North of 60 people do not always follow acknowledgement protocol as it is seen as a “southern thing”.



Don't just recognize communities in the past tense – Indigenous people are living thriving Nations that continue to fight for their rights within Canada.

Don't centre your own emotions or guilt in the acknowledgment.

Don't use overly complex language that detracts from authenticity.

Don't create a generic acknowledgement that is nation-wide. This is a form of pan-Indigenizing. Specifics are important.

When should we acknowledge the land

Some examples of when a land/territory acknowledgement would be appropriate:

- At the beginning of an event or gathering where people from different places are coming together
- To honour the opening of a new space, recognize relationships and set respectful intentions
- Formal meetings, special events, or meetings to form new relationships
- Before publishing materials that reference Indigenous communities.
- When beginning relationships with Indigenous organizations.
- On email signatures and websites.

General guidance - It is better to offer one than to not.

Who should facilitate a territory acknowledgement

The host of a meeting, event or gathering should be prepared to facilitate a land territory acknowledgement. For more events, providing you have the lead time, wise practices indicate that somebody from the territory should be invited to participate in an opening (not just a land or territorial acknowledgement). This could be an Elder, knowledge keeper or chief ensure appropriate protocols are followed, such as offering honorariums and gifts (see Elder Involvement resource).

**Do not rely on Indigenous folks in the room to automatically assume this responsibility; it can be taken as tokenistic or traumatic for some folks. This discussion should take place in advance so that people are prepared and not put on the spot.*

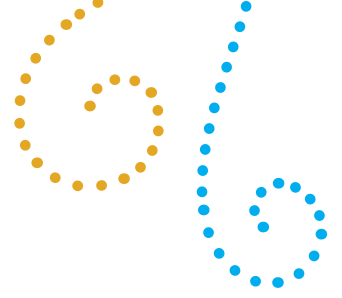
What structure should a territory acknowledgement take?

What are the key elements?

- Names of the nations and Indigenous people whose traditional territory you are gathering on
- Treaties, if any apply or acknowledging the land as “unceded territory”
- Statement or action of giving thanks to the nations and lands
- Include a statement of your organization’s specific commitments to reconciliation.
- Personal connective statement to the land or territory you are on
 - Reflect and share this piece, themselves, as a personal statement
- Connective statement to the purpose of the event, gathering or topic at hand.

Note: some treaties did not cede land – like the Peace and Friendship treaties in the Maritimes and Gaspé regions

Creating Personal Connective Statements or Relational Practice



Indigenous ways of being teach us to build connection before content. This can be practiced in a number of ways in how you organize the time together, and include sharing circles, and opening and closing in good ways. Adding a connection or relational practice to your territory acknowledgement can be part of this.

A relational practice helps to situate you with the territory, it adds meaning and connection by including a personal connective statement within a territory acknowledgement, you can demonstrate care and understanding in some of the following ways:

- Trust that you have taken the steps toward expanding your learning
- Intention of action and allyship toward Indigenous peoples
- Awareness in the space you occupy and the privilege you hold
- Commitment to weaving stronger inclusion practices into your personal and professional life
- Confidence in your ability to share and empower others around you to also demonstrate care and understanding.

Preparing a personal connective statement is very much a self-reflection exercise. It takes time and challenges you to think about the past, present and future. To help you out in this exercise, we have sourced the following reflective questions from various online resources and research for consideration:

- Why is this important to you?
- “Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? Who am I?” —Senator Murray Sinclair
- Where do I live, (city, street, region) and what are the origins of that word? If colonials is there an Indigenous name? what is it? Why/when did this change?

- What is your relationship to the territory? How did you or your family come to be here?
- Where are you physically situated? Where is your home? Where is your work? Do you know the Indigenous group whose traditional lands you are situated on?
- How is your cultural identity celebrated, represented and honoured in your community? How can Indigenous cultural identities and traditions be positively reflected?
- Why are you preparing this land or territory acknowledgement? How does it relate to the event/meeting you are hosting?
- In your position, what intentions do you have to disrupt and dismantle colonialism beyond this territory acknowledgement?
- What specific steps will you take to support reconciliation?
- How does your acknowledgment relate to the purpose of the event?

Example Connection Statement:

I am grateful to be on these lands of the Songhees [song-geez], Esquimalt [es-kwai-malt], and W̱SÁNEĆ [wh-say-nuch] nations where I live, work and play as an uninvited settler. I am personally committed to learning about the histories and origins of the people who have stewarded these lands and I attend local community events and continue to build relationships across the communities. One of the places that I appreciate exploring with my family is a local mountain called PKOLS which reclaimed its original name a few years ago. I have a responsibility to continue to learn truths, and to take actions around reconciliation and being a good neighbor.

Templates

We encourage you to use these examples as a starting off point – but personalize them according to your own relationships, histories, experiences and needs. They have the basic structure and core elements you may need, but you are invited to adapt them as you need.

Written Special Olympics Canada Template

The land and waterways that Special Olympics Canada work upon are the traditional territory of [nation or nations]. We honor the stewardship of the Indigenous Nations of [Treaty acknowledgement or recognition of unceded territory] As part of our work, we commit to advancing reconciliation through partnerships with local Indigenous communities

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations.

Special Olympics Canada Email Signature

As Special Olympics Canada is headquartered in Toronto the following signature is based on that general geographic location – if you are located somewhere else, adapt your signature to your specific location. As with any of the territory acknowledgements provided in this document, you are welcome to adapt to your personal preferences and circumstances. Where possible, adapt your email signature acknowledgment to reflect your personal or professional commitments to reconciliation.

Held in Treaty (Example: Toronto)

I give many thanks to the original caretakers of the territory I work on, the Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Anishinaabeg, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant and more recently Treaty 13. Toronto is now the meeting place and home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island.

Unceded (No treaty) (Example: Ottawa)

I give many thanks to the original caretakers of the unceded territory that I work on, the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation. Ottawa is now also the meeting place and home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island.

Oral Special Olympics Canada Template



Unceded (No treaty)

[insert personal introduction or personal connective statement]

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional, unceded territory of [nation or nations].

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

[connective or reflective statement to purpose of the event]

Held in Treaty

[insert personal introduction or personal connective statement]

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of [nation or nations]. All of the people living on this land are tied together by [Treaty Name or Number], which guides the reciprocal relationships between Nations, people, lands and waters.

We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

[connective or reflective statement to purpose of the event]

Online Territory acknowledgement Template

"As we gather here today in this virtual space, I want to acknowledge the lands that connect us. While we may not share a physical location, it is important to recognize that the territories we are present on belong to Indigenous Nations who have stewarded these lands for generations.

I, personally, am joining from [your location], which is the traditional and unceded territory of [Indigenous Nation(s)] and is part of [Treaty name or "unceded land"]. All of the people living on this land are tied together by [Treaty Name or Number], which guides the reciprocal relationships between Nations, people, lands and waters.

We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.



Appendix A - Directory of Major Canadian Cities

This directory is meant to give you a starting point to offering Territory Acknowledgements in many places across the country. Please add your own connective and reflective pieces to these, and also check them for accuracy as you move forward as the proper ways to recognize territories can change.

Calgary

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy of the Siksika, Piikani and Kainai First Nations, Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Îethka Nakoda Nations (Chiniki, Bears paw, Goodstoney), the Otipemisiwak Métis Government (Districts 5 and 6), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

All the people living on this land are tied together by Treaty 7 which was intended to guide the reciprocal relationship between Nations, peoples, and land. We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Siksika	[Sik-sik-GAH]	youtube.com/watch?v=CBL7GzEnnKc&t=84s
Piikani	[Pee-gun-ee]	youtube.com/watch?v=CBL7GzEnnKc&t=81s
Kainai	[Gah-na]	youtube.com/watch?v=CBL7GzEnnKc&t=88s
Tsuut'ina	[SOO-tih-nah]	youtube.com/watch?v=CBL7GzEnnKc&t=96s

Edmonton

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of Cree, Nakota, Dene, Saulteaux, and Blackfoot peoples, as well as an ancestral homeland of the Métis.

All the people living on this land are tied together by Treaty 6 which was intended to guide the reciprocal relationship between Nations, peoples, and land. We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.



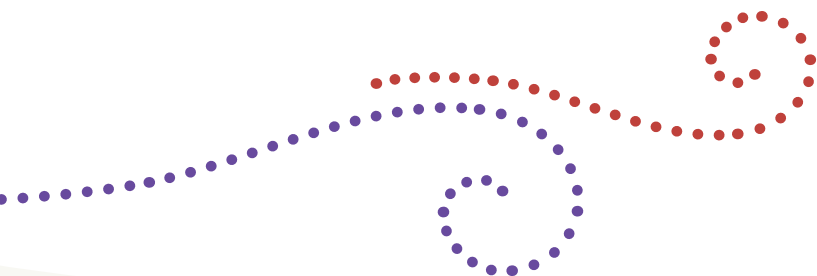
Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Nakota	[Nah-kot-ah]	youtube.com/watch?v=PA7eY4q0R48
Dene	[Deh-neyh]	youtube.com/watch?v=WKs3UkqqSqw
Saulteaux	[So-to]	youtube.com/watch?v=EKHya5oSeA0&t=60s
Otipemisiwak	[Oh-teh-pim-swak]	youtube.com/watch?v=iOdW-BnX6ss&t=176s

Halifax

The land and waterways that our office is on has been, and continues to be, the traditional unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. This territory is covered by the Peace and Friendship Treaties, which did not cede land but established ongoing relationships based on mutual respect, peace, and coexistence.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honor the stewardship of the Mi'kmaq and the many Indigenous peoples who call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Mi'kmaq	MEEG-mah or MEEG-mawk	youtube.com/watch?v=QfpG3rf2wtk



Montreal

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Kanien'kehá:ka Nation	Ga-niyen-ge-HAA-ga	youtube.com/watch?v=I8Gu2sO7C4I

Ottawa

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Algonquin	Al-gon-kwin	youtube.com/watch?v=ISnqaNHJ1vw
Anishinaabeg	[ah-nish-in-ah-bay]	youtube.com/watch?v=U0zixejrvNE



Quebec City

The land and waterways that our office is on has been, and continues to be, the traditional unceded territory of the Huron-Wendat, Wabanaki, Innu, and Wolastoqey peoples.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Huron Wendat	wawn-DA(t)	–
Wabanaki	WAH-bana-kee	youtube.com/watch?v=6b7NWsX9vGw&t=3s
Innu	[IN-new]	youtube.com/watch?v=yUgfngqAN4kl&t=22s
Wolastoqey	[WOOL-ah-sto-gway]	youtube.com/watch?v=1u-yUgag2ls&t=28s

Toronto

The land and waterways that our office is on has been, and continues to be, the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Anishinaabeg, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

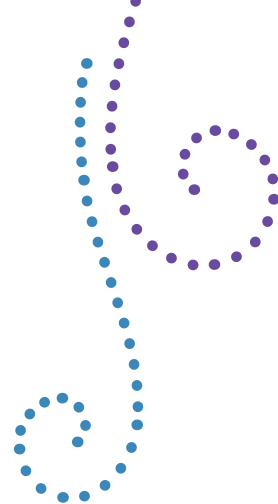
All the people living on this land are tied together by Treaty 13, which was intended to guide the reciprocal relationship between Nations, peoples, land and waters. Prior to colonization, the peoples of this land agreed in the Dish With One Spoon wampum to peaceably share and care for these lands and waters. We also recognize and appreciate that we host programming and events across Turtle Island. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call these lands home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Haudenosaunee	[hoh-DEE-noh-SHoh-nee]	youtube.com/watch?v=cT9JR_Gsl0q&t=47s
Wendat	[wawn-DA(t)]	youtube.com/watch?v=4d3D9B0ZzZM
Anishinaabeg	[ah-nish-in-ah-bay]	youtube.com/watch?v=U0zixejrjvNE

Vancouver

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional, unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish).

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.



Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam)	[MUSS-kwee-um]	youtube.com/watch?v=AzUlrKMb63Y&t=27s
səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh)	[tSLAY-wah-tooth]	youtube.com/watch?v=paWn3fKaLkk&t=62s
Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish)	[SKWA-mish]	youtube.com/watch?v=hX6xUPQb9D8&t=18s

Winnipeg

The land and that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples. This land is the ancestral heartland of the Métis. The waters of Winnipeg originate in Shoal Lake 40 First Nation Territory.

All the people living on this land are tied together by Treaty 1 which was intended to guide the reciprocal relationship between Nations, peoples, and land. We honor the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Anishinaabeg	[ah-nish-in-ah-bay]	youtube.com/watch?v=U0zixejrvNE
Oji-Cree	O-gee Cree	—
Dakota	Da-koht-ah	—
Dene	[Deh-neyh]	youtube.com/watch?v=WKS3UkqqSqw