

# **The Lands We Walk**

A Guide for Land and Territorial Acknowledgements in Canada

Developed by Indigenous Perspectives Society

Created July 2024

## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Contents</b> .....                             | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>IPS Land Acknowledgement</b> .....             | <b>4</b>  |
| Indigenous Perspectives Society Contact.....      | 4         |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....                         | <b>5</b>  |
| Objectives: .....                                 | 5         |
| <b>Why Acknowledge the Land?</b> .....            | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Types of Acknowledgements</b> .....            | <b>7</b>  |
| Welcome: .....                                    | 7         |
| Verbal Acknowledgement:.....                      | 7         |
| Written Acknowledgement: .....                    | 7         |
| <b>Understanding Identities</b> .....             | <b>8</b>  |
| Encompassing Global Identity.....                 | 8         |
| Indigenous Groups Within Canada.....              | 9         |
| <b>Who Can Give an Acknowledgement?</b> .....     | <b>11</b> |
| Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts .....            | 11        |
| <b>Learning About the Land</b> .....              | <b>12</b> |
| Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts .....            | 12        |
| <b>Who Are the Local Caretakers?</b> .....        | <b>13</b> |
| Further Learning Resources.....                   | 13        |
| Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts .....            | 14        |
| <b>What are Your Relations to the Land?</b> ..... | <b>15</b> |
| Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts .....            | 15        |
| <b>Awareness of Events</b> .....                  | <b>16</b> |
| Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts .....            | 16        |
| <b>Indigenous Days of Significance</b> .....      | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Politics or Walking Gently?</b> .....          | <b>17</b> |
| Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts .....            | 17        |
| <b>Bringing in Indigenous Speakers</b> .....      | <b>18</b> |
| Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts .....            | 18        |
| <b>Additional Considerations</b> .....            | <b>19</b> |
| Intention .....                                   | 19        |
| Language.....                                     | 19        |
| Mixed Opinions .....                              | 20        |
| <b>Recommendations to Avoid</b> .....             | <b>21</b> |
| Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts .....            | 21        |

**Acknowledgements** ..... 22  
    Research and Development:.....22  
    Review and Development Support: .....22  
    Interviews.....22  
**Resources for Further Learning**..... 23  
    General Learning .....23  
    Learning About Land Acknowledgements .....23  
    Working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers .....24  
**Resources for Supporting Indigenous Peoples**..... 25  
**References** ..... 26

## IPS Land Acknowledgement

The southern tip of Vancouver Island (including Victoria and Langford), the San Juan, and the Gulf Islands are the traditional territories of the Lkwungen (Lekwungen) Peoples. Where IPS is located was an area rich with resources shared with the neighbouring relations of Schian'exw (Beecher Bay), Ts'ouke (Sooke), Elwa Klallam and Makah.

Lkwungen means "Place to smoke herring", Lkwung means "to smoke herring" and Lkwungen'athun refers to the language of the land. Lkwungen traditionally and still to-date unites the Esquimalt and Songhees Peoples as one family.

We acknowledge and thank the Lkwungen People, also known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations communities for their continued stewardship, care, and leadership on these lands. As an urban Indigenous organization, we are settlers on these lands. We also give thanks to the ancestors, supernatural ones, hereditary leaders and matriarchs, creatures big and small for looking after the rich resources and cultural teachings of this beautiful land.

### Indigenous Perspectives Society Contact

Phone: 250-391-0007

Email: [info@ipsociety.ca](mailto:info@ipsociety.ca)

Address: 664 Granderson Road, Langford, BC.

## Introduction

Whether presented verbally or through email signatures and online platforms, land and territorial acknowledgements are becoming more common as awareness of colonization and the need for decolonial practices increases across Canada. As organizations and events are more frequently providing acknowledgements, there are mixed opinions on whether or not they should be customary. If they are protocol, then how does one respectfully deliver a land acknowledgement?

This guide is intended to assist individuals in their self-reflection through queries, and diverse Indigenous insights, nuances and perspectives. This inner work can contribute to creating culturally grounded land and territory acknowledgements in one's daily life.

### Objectives:

- Introduce the importance of land and territory acknowledgements
- Share a brief worldview regarding Indigenous Peoples and their connections to the land
- Reflect on one's role as community members and allies to Indigenous Peoples
- Provide frameworks and prompts for individuals to deliver their own authentic land and territory acknowledgements
- Provide resources for further learning

### Important Note:

While this guide is intended as a framework for providing genuine land acknowledgements, it is important to emphasize that this resource provides **a framework and is not a script**. The connection to a land acknowledgement is highly personalized to each individual, and it is essential that we give them each the life and respect they deserve.



## Why Acknowledge the Land?

“To thoughtfully prepare an in-depth acknowledgement requires time and care. As we engage in processes of reconciliation it is critical that Land Acknowledgements don't become a token gesture. They are not meant to be static, scripted statements that every person must recite in exactly the same way. They are expressions of relationship, acknowledging not just the territory someone is on, but that person's connection to that land based on knowledge that has been shared with them.”

*~Raven Trust*

Land and territorial acknowledgements are regularly being advocated for as a fundamental step towards decolonization. Each acknowledgement has its own unique and significant meaning between Nations and Indigenous Peoples. To some Nations, it is part of traditional protocols which date back to time immemorial. To others, it is a sign of showing respect to the land as a living spirit and the Indigenous Peoples who have cared for their territories for generations. Beyond connection to the land, for many, it brings awareness and truth to the historical and present-day treatment of Indigenous Peoples. Whether due to traditional protocol or a modern step towards reconciliation, land and territorial acknowledgements are becoming common practice across Turtle Island (North America).

When giving an acknowledgement it goes beyond speaking from a script to inform the group of where they reside. Acknowledging the local Nation(s) connects their identity and spirit to the land, just as much as it connects settlers to the land in their own unique roles involving reconciliation. An acknowledgement is not exclusively about either the Indigenous Peoples or the land, the role of settlers and reconciliation, or bringing awareness and truth to the history of Turtle Island. Rather, it is about recognizing the overlapping layers between each of these pieces. Because of this, each acknowledgement should have a distinct meaning to the individual who is providing one.

## Types of Acknowledgements

There are several ways to incorporate a land acknowledgement within your organization, institution, events, and daily life. Typically, land acknowledgements are presented at the beginning of work meetings and formal events. Acknowledgements can most commonly be seen in three variants, each with their own unique energy and purpose:

### Welcome:

Traditionally, a welcome is a ceremonial opening of a large community event and is presented by an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or a political representative or chief who is a descendent of the ancestral lands upon which the event is being held. Welcomes can be a way to respectfully launch the beginning of large community events or gatherings while following local protocols. A welcome can only be presented by an Indigenous person whose ancestors are traditionally from those lands which the event is being held, and who has permission from their Nation to hold that role.

### Verbal Acknowledgement:

A standard land or territorial acknowledgement can be presented by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals. Recognition of the land and local Nations can be given at the beginning of a meeting, public event, or gathering. Whoever is giving the acknowledgement does not have ancestral ties to the local lands where the gathering is taking place. Different than a welcome – which can be part of a Nation’s traditional protocol to welcome individuals to their territory or an event – acknowledgements are often presented as a starting point towards reconciliation, decolonization, and protocol.

### Written Acknowledgement:

A written acknowledgement can be included in a variety of ways. They can often be seen on email signatures, a business’ website, public resources, event descriptions and promotion and more. A written acknowledgement can be anywhere from a couple of short sentences to a few paragraphs in length. When creating a written land acknowledgement, remember to capitalize “Indigenous” as you would for any other race or nationality.

## Understanding Identities

Language and names are continuously transforming to better align with the uniqueness amongst and between Nations. For instance, both "Indian" and "Aboriginal" – which we still see throughout Canadian legislation today – are now considered outdated and inappropriate, as noted in the below definitions. Having an understanding of the distinction between the Indigenous Peoples both globally and specific to the lands we now call Canada (Métis, Inuit, and First Nations, which can be further broken down into specific Nations) can provide the basic language recommended when giving a land acknowledgement.

Today, the recommended best practice is to use the term "Indigenous". This term is used in both a national and global context. It is also recommended to connect with the local Nations of the territory you will be giving the acknowledgement to confirm which terms and names they prefer to be used.

### Encompassing Global Identity

Today, the most widely accepted term to identify the original caretakers of the land is "Indigenous". This term is used in both a National and global context. Despite the commonality of "Indigenous," there are many layers where you may see different language, such as Aboriginal, Native, or Indian. Similarly, you may see individual Indigenous Nations or groups prefer to be referred to as their unique identity, such as the breakdowns of Canadian groups in the next section.

---

### Indigenous

Most frequently used in an international, transnational, or global context. This term came into wide usage during the 1970s when Aboriginal groups organized transnationally and pushed for greater presence in the United Nations (U.N.). In the U.N., "Indigenous" is used to refer broadly to Peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others.

(Indigenous Arts Foundation of UBC)

---

### Aboriginal

In the Canadian Constitution of 1982, three peoples are recognized as "Aboriginal": Indians (First Nations), Inuit, and Métis. Aboriginal is thus considered a term that has legal significance and is fairly commonly used. Note, however, that there are Indigenous people who do not favour this term. One of the objections is the Latin deconstruction of the word: the root meaning of the word "ab" is a Latin prefix that means "away from" or "not." And so Aboriginal can mean "not original"



## Indigenous Groups Within Canada

In Canada, there are three distinct Indigenous groups, each with their own unique cultures, languages, and traditions: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

---

### First Nations

"First Nations" refers to status and non-status Indigenous Peoples in Canada (excluding Inuit and Métis) where there is a land base that the Nation belongs to. Many communities also use the term "First Nation" in the name of their community. Currently, there are over 630 recognized First Nation communities in Canada, which represent more than 50 Nations or cultural groups and 50 Indigenous languages.

(Adapted from <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013791/1535470872302>)

---

### Métis

The Métis people were said to originate in the fur trade of the 1600/1700s when Cree and Anishinaabe women married French and Scottish fur traders. Their descendants formed a distinct culture, collective consciousness and nationhood in the Northwest, extending into the Great Lakes region and eastward. The Métis people are distinct from mixed-race First Nations people and continue to evolve a unique culture and worldview.

The Métis have their own unique culture and language, in part, defined by the language, Michif, the traditional dance, the Métis Jig, and the resilience to carry on through the decades.

(Adapted from Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels (2006); Richardson (2022a); the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria)

---

### Inuit

Globally, the Inuit people are a group of culturally similar Indigenous Peoples who live in the Arctic regions of Canada, Denmark, Russia and the United States. The word "Inuit" means "the people" in the Inuit language of Inuktitut. The singular of "Inuit" is "Inuk."

There are 53 communities across the northern regions of Canada in the Inuit Nunangat, which means "the place where Inuit live." The Inuit Nunangat is comprised of four regions:

- Inuvialuit (NWT/Yukon)
- Nunavik (Northern Quebec)
- Nunatsiavut (Labrador)
- Nunavut

(adapted from <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.ca/eng/1100100014187/15>)

---

## **Indian**

The historical term "Indian" collectively describes all the Indigenous people within Canada who are not Inuit or Métis that was established through early use and legislation.

"Indian" is a misnomer and the language is still used in various legislation, such as the "Indian Act". The term is outdated and not the appropriate language to respectfully refer to an Indigenous person by a non-Indigenous person.

However, it is a term that has been reclaimed by some and is often used colloquially and/or ironically within community.



## Who Can Give an Acknowledgement?

"I think that anybody is capable of giving a land acknowledgement. The people who should be doing it are people who see value in it, and that has nothing to do with ancestry or background. The intent of a land acknowledgement, from my perspective, is to remind folks of where they are, and why that's come to be and also to pay respect to the local nation whose territory you're on.

If someone's delivering a land acknowledgement because it's just something they have to do, then that's, in my perspective, pretty disingenuous. That also doesn't do anything for the nation and just kind of destroys the entire point. I think it doesn't matter who's doing it as long as they're doing it in a good way, and they have good intention for it."

~Shayli Robinson (Lyackson)

Though a welcome can only be presented by an individual with ancestral ties to the land the event is occurring on and who holds a special role, land acknowledgements can be delivered by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals who have settled on those lands. As noted in the "Types of Acknowledgements" on page 7, an acknowledgement will look different depending on who is presenting it, the purpose of delivering one, and the individual's relation to the local land.

With land acknowledgements becoming more widely practiced across Canada in recent years, they are developing into a more shared responsibility between both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. When delivering your opening, we encourage you to take the time to reflect and to be mindful of why you are presenting it.

### Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts

- What is your personal intention and reason for giving the land acknowledgement?
- Are you opening a meeting, small event, or big event?
  - Note that hosting a small event or meeting does not make the importance of the land acknowledgement any less valuable. However, with larger events, such as a conference or public event, you may want to consider inviting a local Elder, Knowledge Keeper or representative to deliver a formal welcome.
- What is your own lineage and history? Who are your ancestors and where did they come from?
- When introducing yourself, consider sharing a bit about your own heritage.



## Learning About the Land

Health and well-being goes beyond one's physical or mental state. It is important to also recognize our emotional and spiritual health, as these pieces are interconnected. For many Indigenous Peoples, connection to the land is at the core of balancing health and caring for oneself. When on the land, as Indigenous Peoples, we connect to our culture and our spirit. We care for the land, and the land returns that care to our people by providing food, water, and places for ceremony. People and land cannot be separated, as their existence has been intertwined since time immemorial.

When providing a land acknowledgement, it can be beneficial to consider and recognize the "where" of where the event is being held. What is unique about the land of the area that you live or will be presenting the opening? Having an understanding of your local history can also be beneficial to help add context for individuals living or visiting the region.

### Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts

- Do you know the traditional name(s) of these territories and are you welcome to share them?
- What is unique or inspiring about the land you live on?
  - Is it connected to water?
  - Are there fresh, earthy forests to explore?
  - Can you see mountains with ice caps that quench the lands below?
  - Do you live on or near plains, where you can see the land run for miles?
  - Are there wildlife and plants that are integral to the wellbeing of the territory and its Nations?
- What do you personally love about the lands you live on?
- What is the local history of the area?



## Who Are the Local Caretakers?

"Even if I go into another territory, which is not my territory, like another treaty area, I will give a little version.

"This is what I know of this beautiful area. I acknowledge that the history of the Blackfoot people, Confederacy and their involvement in this area and what they were doing here. If I am wrong, please correct me." We're not expected to one hundred percent have the knowledge of the Knowledge Keepers in that area. Those Knowledge Keepers' role is to add some more seeds into what we already know."

*~Elder Laurie McDonald (Enoch Cree)*

One of the most integral pieces of giving a land acknowledgement is the people. Consider doing research by using reliable sources online. Once you know whose land you are on by searching online the Nation's name, you may be able to find their website which includes further information regarding their history, people, and culture. If you're still unsure, you can also learn more by calling the Nation's band office or an organization run by the Nation. You may find that there are many complex layers; some Nations have dedicated territories based on landmarks or site lines, while other Nations may have traditionally lived a Nomadic lifestyle and travelled between multiple areas. You may also find that some Nations do not believe in the concept of "owned" territory.

It is also important to recognize that borders between countries, provinces and cities is a colonial concept. When looking into your local Nations, you may find that there are multiple distinct Nations in your area with overlapping territories. You will likely need to recognize each Nation during your acknowledgement, depending on where you live or where the acknowledgement is taking place.

When giving a land and territorial acknowledgement, it can be as simple as saying "we recognize the Lkwungen-speaking peoples of the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, who have cared for these lands since time immemorial." Or if you feel comfortable with your knowledge and you have permission to share, you may wish to share public information that you may have discovered, similar to Indigenous Perspectives Society's acknowledgment in the beginning of this guide. Are there local public gatherings, online resources, or cultural tours that you can participate in to learn of some of the Nation's history and traditions? These resources can also be a great opportunity for learning about local protocols that are encouraged when presenting a land acknowledgement on those territories. Remember to ask permission from the Nation if you wish to share any of their information publicly.

### Further Learning Resources

Here are some resources that can help you begin to recognize whose land you live on or may be visiting:

- [native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca)
- Or search online "[your city] First Nations" & go to their Nation's website
  - i.e. "Saskatoon First Nations" or "Toronto Indigenous communities"



## Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts

- Which Nations are the traditional caretakers of the territories you live on?
  - This may be more nuanced than what can easily be found online. For example, you might see acknowledgement of the Nations of Vancouver Island and the lower mainland extending down into Oregon state as “Coast Salish Peoples.” However, even amongst Coast Salish Peoples, there are diverse and unique identities, cultures and languages. Learn specifically which language groups and Nations' lands you live on or are visiting.
- Do you know how the Nation(s) and communit(ies) want to be referred to?
  - When possible, list all the Nations in your area by name unless advised otherwise. When referring to an Indigenous organization or community group as participants or guests of your event, ask them how they would like to be mentioned.
  - For example, “We would like to thank Indigenous Perspectives Society for joining us today” compared to “We would like to thank Indigenous Perspectives Society members from the Dene, K’omoks, Métis, Montagnais, Tāltān and Ko Hawai’i Pae ‘Āina Nations for joining us today.”
- What is something unique or inspiring about the Nation's people and communities?
- Are you aware of some of the important or foundational protocols of the Nations of territories you live on?
  - How can you ensure you respect those protocols (without appropriating)?
- Ensure you can correctly pronounce the names of the Nations you will be acknowledging.
  - Many Nations have videos on social media to assist with pronunciation.
  - Practice the pronunciation regularly in the days leading up to the event.



## What are Your Relations to the Land?

“One of the big reasons I give a land acknowledgement is that I'm not from this specific Territory. Land acknowledgments for me are a commitment of my responsibility to the space that I occupy. And so, I feel as though that when I give an acknowledgement I'm reinforcing and validating my commitment to where I live. I have a responsibility to take care of it because it isn't mine.”

~Rachelle Dallaire (Montagnais Innu, Ojibway)

Since each land and territorial acknowledgement will be unique, individuals are encouraged to reflect on their own social location and connection to their local communities and land. Social location is defined as the groups or categories that individuals belong to according to their place in society. These include gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic location. Each group membership confers a certain set of social roles and rules, power and privilege (or lack of), which heavily influence our identity and how we see the world.

One is not expected to share every detail of their identity. However, practices like mentioning where your own ancestors are from and their history to the lands can be humbling and a way to respectfully help the listeners identify your connection to decolonization and why you're presenting the acknowledgement in the way that you do.

It is typically encouraged to de-centre oneself when giving a land and territorial acknowledgement. Yet understanding your own relationship to the land can be a useful tool. By understanding your own histories, identity, and connection in relation to your local Nations, you can begin to develop an authentic and action-based mindset. It is important to recognize that giving a land acknowledgement is one small step towards decolonization. In order to give an authentic land acknowledgment in a respectful way, the individual must also actively do the work in their day-to-day lives beyond the acknowledgement.

### Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts

Some things you can consider may include:

- How long have you lived on the lands that you currently call “home”?
- Are you aware of your ancestor's histories with the local land and Nations?
- What brought you to these lands?
  - i.e. perhaps you moved there for the nature or immigrated for work.
- Why are land acknowledgements important to **you**?



## Awareness of Events

Ceremony and community gatherings are an integral part of connection and well-being for Indigenous Peoples. In addition to traditional practices, gatherings can be a time to be together during times of mourning, celebration or protest. Being aware of Indigenous days of significance and local community gatherings can help encourage further participation with Indigenous Peoples beyond recognizing whose lands you're on. If an Indigenous event or day of significance is near the day of your own gathering, promote it for others to be aware and encourage participation for those who can attend. These days can also be used as prompts for further education and learning opportunities.

### Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts

- What are some current events affecting Indigenous Peoples that could be shared?

Consider events such as:

- Indigenous days of significance.
- Public Indigenous celebrations and events coming up or that have recently passed.
  - i.e. Indigenous pop-up markets, public vigils, marches, public gatherings etc.
- Colonial holidays that have contributed to the erasure of Indigenous Peoples can be a time to bring awareness to the history of Colonization.
  - i.e. Canada Day, Remembrance Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.
- Indigenous news and current events.

## Indigenous Days of Significance

**January 4:** National Ribbon Skirt Day

**February 11:** Moose Hide Campaign Day (check annually if held in tandem with May 5)

**February 21:** Louis Riel Day (depends on province)

**May 5:** National Day of Awareness for MMIWG2S (a.k.a. Red Dress Day)

**June:** Indigenous People's History Month

**June 21:** National Indigenous People's Day events

**August 9:** International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

**September 30:** National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (a.k.a. Orange Shirt Day)

**October 4:** National Day of Action for MMIWG2S

**November 7:** International Inuit Day

**November 8:** National Aboriginal Veteran's Day





## Politics or Walking Gently?

"I think a big part of determining what's appropriate is the context for the event. And so you can get political a little bit. [...] what's the point? What's the purpose? Why am I doing this? And I think what matters most is that it doesn't take away from the message you're bringing.

I think you can get political if there's a crisis going on that people aren't paying attention to, but tying it into a bigger conversation. If doing an acknowledgment where you "go off" about something political, that's not okay. You need to have something that bridges that there. And you need to talk about why it's important to talk about things. And if you are going to go that way, then have something tangible."

~Shayli Robinson (Lyackson)

Due to the individualized connection to giving a land acknowledgement, you may recognize that there are many unique approaches to giving one. Since more people are now opening events, gatherings, and meetings with an acknowledgement, there are diverse intentions behind the words. You may find yourself asking "do politics belong in land acknowledgements?"

Some Indigenous individuals encourage to keep the land acknowledgement to recognizing the land and Nations. Others may include messaging around current events or the need for active support of Indigenous sovereignty during their land acknowledgement.

As Indigenous Peoples, our existence is political in itself. Since colonization, governments and individuals have tried to erase Indigenous Peoples, their identity, cultures, languages and pride. We have experienced removal and displacement from our lands, the creation of the RCMP, the Indian Act, Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and present-day colonial systems and practices. Yet, we are still here reclaiming our traditions and innovating practices to adapt in a world that is vastly different than before colonization. Publicly recognizing the people and the Nations of the land by saying "these lands belong to these Peoples" is a political act, even if you don't explicitly use those words. There will be times when politics are unavoidable, for example during certain days of recognition, during Indigenous community-impacted events like protests or resource extraction, or if you are hosting a political-based meeting or event.

If politics are included during the opening of the event, it is important to acknowledge why they are included. If you wish to address a current event, is there a way you can encourage actionable items for the spectators to walk away with?

### Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts

- If politics are mentioned, how can you bridge them to the bigger picture?
- Are there resources or community groups to support that you can promote for individuals to do their own further learning?
- What actions are you personally taking in your day-to-day life in supporting Indigenous Peoples beyond land acknowledgements?



## Bringing in Indigenous Speakers

If you are hosting an event, you may be considering working with someone who's Indigenous to do the opening welcome or land acknowledgement. Though land acknowledgements may be traditional protocol for some Nations, there is still a certain level of time, travel, and emotional labour involved in the process. Treat this connection as an opportunity for relationship building and learning.

Land acknowledgements and Indigenous guest speakers should not be an afterthought or last minute request. Individuals who present welcomes or land acknowledgements for events are often inundated with requests on top of their other roles. Provide as much time in advance as possible before the event to request their services. The invited guest may request that you send them a calendar invite or reminder leading up to the event to help them out.

When reaching out to your local band office or an individual, provide information about the event and why you're reaching out. Include information like the purpose of the event, how long the event is and whether the guest is invited to be present for the whole event or if they can leave after the opening if they wish.

As per common westernized business practices, you may find yourself wanting to ask the individual for their standard "rate" when inviting them to present as a respectful gesture. However, depending on their Nation's teachings, it may be considered inappropriate to request payment directly or put a financial value on the work as the invited guest. When in doubt, talk with the band office or other community members to see what your local honorarium scale is. An honorarium is a gift rather than a payment. Additional gifts, such as food, blankets, or other forms of gifts are also welcome gestures of appreciation for the Elder's or Knowledge Keeper's time.

If an Elder or Knowledge Keeper will be doing a welcome, remember that these individuals are highly respected members within their community. Whether you're working with an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or other community member, treat them with the same respect as you would any of your other presenters or guests. If you have a guest space like a backstage greenroom or presenter lounge, ensure the invited guest knows that they have a place to prepare and rest before and during the event.

### Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts

- Provide the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Representative with plenty of notice before the event.
- Have an honorarium prepared in cash to gift to the presenter before the end of the event or before they leave.
- Additional gifts with honoraria are always welcome.
- Have a liaison available for the invited guest to connect with.
- Confirm in advance whether the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Representative plans to be present for the opening only or entire event.



## Additional Considerations

There is becoming an increased understanding that land acknowledgements transform through the generations and Nations. As mentioned throughout this guide, each land acknowledgement will look different depending on who is presenting it and the reason for the acknowledgement. Because of this, it is equally important to recognize that beliefs and approaches towards progress are diverse between Indigenous communities and individuals. Our cultures, traditions, protocols, and ways of being are each distinct between one another, both as communities and as individuals. You will likely find that land acknowledgements and protocols in your local community look and sound very different than if you were to visit a different community or area.

### Intention

Despite good intentions, we encourage you to not speak on behalf of Indigenous Peoples when giving a land or territorial acknowledgement. Use this opportunity to acknowledge, and uplift Indigenous Peoples and educate. De-centre yourself and stay humble. Keep the intention of the acknowledgement on centering and uplifting the local Indigenous communities and individuals.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Acknowledgements are a protocol that often do not come naturally to most people. It may feel uncomfortable for the first few times but it does become more natural overtime.

### Language

When using language like "we thank the local Nations for allowing us to live, work, and play on their lands as guests", consider whether this language is accurate or appropriately aligns with your intention and its impact. When reflecting on the colonization of Canada, there are often mixed beliefs whether being "allowed" or "invited" is appropriate terminology to use today. Thanking Indigenous communities for their invitation is appropriate when you are attending an Indigenous held event where you are an invited presenter or in a meeting with an Indigenous organization. However, it may be discouraged, to include this language in a written acknowledgement or when opening an event or meeting that you are hosting.

There are also mixed perspectives whether it is appropriate for settlers to use the traditional language of their local Nations when doing a land acknowledgement. For example, using the Tāltān term "Medūh" for saying "thank you" when acknowledging the Tahltan Nation. Generally, it is discouraged to use traditional language or words while giving an acknowledgement unless you are addressing that specific Nation and have explicit permission from the Nation(s) to do so. If you ever feel unclear about whether using the traditional language or sharing certain information about the Nation is appropriate, we recommend asking an individual from the Nation(s) for their perspective.



## Mixed Opinions

Despite this push for today's opening protocol, there are still conflicting opinions regarding the practice. As you do this work, here are some disagreements you may come across:

- Having the acknowledgements come from a place of complacency without action behind the territorial acknowledgements. This can lead to being superficial and performative.
- Assuming that since land acknowledgements are traditional protocol for certain Nations, that it should be the responsibility of exclusively Indigenous Peoples to present the acknowledgement in a good way. When in reality, learning how to present a thoughtful land acknowledgement is everyone's responsibility.
- When done with minimal research or consultation prior to implementing an acknowledgement, it can lead to mispronunciations of Nations, misinformation, Pan-Indianism and inaccuracies of which Nations are being included as the original caretakers for which lands.
- Acknowledging Territory won't give it back

"Even with the current mixed opinions, it is still generally recommended to continue with the practice of giving land acknowledgements as a fundamental step towards decolonization.

"The problem is that there are people, groups, institutions and systems that are benefiting from the continued land dispossession of Indigenous peoples while making territorial acknowledgments."

Despite the problems with land acknowledgments, George wants people to continue making them. She views them as opening the door toward decolonizing practices, reconciliation, or bridging awareness into action.

"It's still the beginning of some kind of conversation," she said."

*~CBC interview with Kahsennoktha George*



## Recommendations to Avoid

Here are some recommendations to avoid when giving a land acknowledgement.

### Acknowledgement Tips and Prompts

- Avoid using the local Nation's language unless you have explicit permission from the Nation to do so.
- Consider possible interpretations of language like "guests," "we thank the Nations for allowing us to be here," or "we are grateful to be here today." At times, these phrases may be interpreted to mean that either the individual(s) were given permission by the Nations to exist on those lands or that they are thankful for colonization.
- Avoid speaking on behalf of Indigenous Peoples and Nations.
- Don't speak as if Indigenous Peoples are a relic of the past. Bring awareness to our history while emphasizing the work being done, resilience, and cultures of today.
- Avoid addressing only the hardships Indigenous Peoples experience. It is equally important to uplift and celebrate Indigenous communities and their resilience.
- Don't assume your audience is all non-Indigenous. More often than not, there will likely be Indigenous people hearing your acknowledgement.



## Acknowledgements

This guide is the gathering together of individuals within Indigenous Perspectives Society and community Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members. We would like to thank the following individuals for their support during the creation of this resource:

### Research and Development:

Lizz Brooks (Tāltān)

### Review and Development Support:

Connie Martin (K'ómoks)

Rachelle Dallaire (Montagnais Innu, Ojibway, French)

Kelly Legge

Clairissa Kelly (Anishinaabe, Peguis First Nation)

Alex Dolen (Métis)

Kaia Hill (Kānaka Maoli)

### Interviews

Laurie McDonald (Enoch Cree Elder)

Butch Dick (Songhees Elder)

Shayli Robinson (Lyackson)

Rachelle Dallaire (Montagnais Innu, Ojibway, French)



## Resources for Further Learning

Below are some public resources available for your own learning and sharing.

### General Learning

BC First Nations Pronunciation Guide

<https://www.first-nations.info/pronunciation-guide-nations-british-columbia.html>

Indigenous Allyship: An Overview

[https://healthsci.mcmaster.ca/docs/librariesprovider59/allyship/indigenous-allyship-an-overview.pdf?sfvrsn=29e4a8b9\\_2](https://healthsci.mcmaster.ca/docs/librariesprovider59/allyship/indigenous-allyship-an-overview.pdf?sfvrsn=29e4a8b9_2)

Indigenous Canada Course by the University of Alberta

<https://www.ualberta.ca/admissions-programs/online-courses/indigenous-canada/index.html>

Joining the Circle: An Indigenous 101 Toolkit

[https://guides.library.ubc.ca/ld.php?content\\_id=35700900](https://guides.library.ubc.ca/ld.php?content_id=35700900)

Reports and Calls to Action like “The Truth & Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action”; “In Plain Site”; “Sacred and Strong”; “Reclaiming Power and Place”

Residential School Interactive Map

<https://nctr.ca/records/view-your-records/archival-map/>

VIDEA Decolonization Toolkit

[https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Decolonization-Toolkit\\_VIDEA2020.pdf](https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Decolonization-Toolkit_VIDEA2020.pdf)

VIDEA Organizational Decolonization Action Plan

[https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/VIDEA\\_actionplan.pdf](https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/VIDEA_actionplan.pdf)

Whose Land Am I On?

<https://native-land.ca/>

### Learning About Land Acknowledgements

Beyond Land Acknowledgement: A Guide

<https://nativegov.org/news/beyond-land-acknowledgment-guide/>

Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments

<https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>

In Our Voices - Land Acknowledgement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtG7j19na4>

Know The Land Territories Campaign

<http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>



Land Acknowledgements: From Recitation, to Real  
<https://raventrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LandAcknowledgementGuide.pdf>

Making Coast Salish Territorial Acknowledgments Matter  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Tei5tGoQ4s>

The Importance of Indigenous Cultural Safety and Land Acknowledgements to Indigenous People  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1eUYobpOKY>

Understanding the Land Acknowledgement  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNZi301-p8k>

What are Land Acknowledgements and Why Do They Matter?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTWDMsgqB4U>

Why are Land Acknowledgments Important?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDIfRWdSXIQ>

We All Go Back to the Land by Suzanne Keptwo

## **Working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers**

Elders in Schools  
[https://www.ntassembly.ca/sites/assembly/files/13-06-3td\\_84-174.pdf](https://www.ntassembly.ca/sites/assembly/files/13-06-3td_84-174.pdf)

Elder Protocols and Guidelines  
<https://www.ualberta.ca/public-health/media-library/elder-protocol.pdf>

First Nation Elder Protocol  
<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/first-nation-elder-protocol>

Working with Elders by the First Peoples Cultural Council  
[https://fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FPCC-Working-with-Elders\\_FINAL.pdf](https://fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FPCC-Working-with-Elders_FINAL.pdf)

"Elders tend to be in high demand. Beyond language, arts and cultural heritage projects, they are often asked to participate in council activities, funerals, other community events and non-Indigenous events outside the community. Be aware that you may not be the only one requesting their time and be considerate of the fact that they may have other obligations.

Elders will always seek to find a way to do what is being asked. So it is the responsibility of the people who are asking to ensure that Elders have the supports they need to do the task."

*~ FPCC Working with Elders*





## Resources for Supporting Indigenous Peoples

As mentioned throughout this guide, land acknowledgements are just step one towards decolonization. It is essential that we carry our words into our day-to-day lives with actions and uplifting Indigenous voices.

Supporting Indigenous Peoples looks like advocating for Indigenous sovereignty and rights. Beyond that, it includes donating time, finances, and energy to supporting Indigenous communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals. Lastly, it includes showing up when called upon through movements, times of grief, and writing to government representatives when Indigenous Peoples rights are at risk.

Below are some Indigenous-led organizations, communities, and individuals you can support throughout the year.

Indian Residential School Survivors Society: <https://www.irsss.ca/>

Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women: <https://www.csvanw.org/mmiw/>

First Nations Health Authority: <https://www.fnha.ca/>

Indigenous advocates, authors, businesses, artists and workers who you can uplift and promote

Métis National Council: <https://www.metisnation.ca/>

Michif Language Revitalization Circle: [www.speakmichif.ca](http://www.speakmichif.ca)

Moosehide Campaign: <https://moosehidecampaign.ca/>

Native Women's Association of Canada: <https://nwac.ca/>

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada: <https://pauktuutit.ca/>

The Inuit Circumpolar Council: <https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/>

Qikiqtani Inuit Association: <https://www.qia.ca/>

Your local Native Friendship Centre and Indigenous non-profits and organizations



## References

- âpihtawikosisân. (2016). Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments. Retrieved from <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>
- Alliance for Native Programs and Initiative. (2020). An Ally Toolkit: Incorporating Land Acknowledgements and Hosting Indigenous Peoples' Day. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d9f66115463cc77fc6a77e6/t/5f1a1bc1446e9f28978812e7/1595546562195/ANPI+Ally+Toolkit.pdf>
- Black, M. (2021). Opinion: Before You State a Land Acknowledgement, Mean It. The Eye Opener. Retrieved from [https://theeyeopener.com/2021/03/opinion-before-you-state-a-land-acknowledgement-mean-it/?fbclid=IwAR0Ilo6vWggj2Y4tm1Y6CY9672C2WSLeIB\\_FKAb6zwc7Ve2MfrtN72BO\\_Mto](https://theeyeopener.com/2021/03/opinion-before-you-state-a-land-acknowledgement-mean-it/?fbclid=IwAR0Ilo6vWggj2Y4tm1Y6CY9672C2WSLeIB_FKAb6zwc7Ve2MfrtN72BO_Mto)
- Canadian Friends Service Committee. (2020). Why are land acknowledgments important? Naomi Bob - Indigenous Voices on Reconciliation. [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDIfRWdSXIQ>
- Cass Yorku. (2019). Understanding the Land Acknowledgement. [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNZi301-p8k>
- CBC News. Did you live near a residential school? Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/beyond-94-residential-school-map/>
- CBC Radio. (2019, January 18). I Regret It: Hayden King on Writing Ryerson University's Territorial Acknowledgement. *CBC Radio*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/redrawing-the-lines-1.4973363/i-regret-it-hayden-king-on-writing-ryerson-university-s-territorial-acknowledgement-1.4973371>
- Coast Salish Cultural Network. (2016). Making Coast Salish Territorial Acknowledgments Matter. [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Tei5tGoQ4s>
- Dallaire, R. (2022, August 29) Personal communication [Personal interview].
- Deer, K. (2021). What's Wrong with Land Acknowledgements, and How to Make Them Better. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/land-acknowledgments-what-s-wrong-with-them-1.6217931>
- Dick, B. (2021, December 13). Personal communication [Personal interview].
- First Nations Health Authority. Territory Acknowledgements. Retrieved from <https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Territory-Acknowledgements-Information-Booklet.pdf>
- Herchak, K. (2020). Decolonization Toolkit. VIDEA. Retrieved from [https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Decolonization-Toolkit\\_VIDEA2020.pdf](https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Decolonization-Toolkit_VIDEA2020.pdf)



- Indigenous Corporate Training. (2019). First Nation Protocol on Traditional Territory. Retrieved from <https://www.ictinc.ca/first-nation-protocol-on-traditional-territory>
- Indigenous Health VCH. (2020). The Importance of Indigenous Cultural Safety and Land Acknowledgements to Indigenous People. [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1eUYobpOKY>
- Keptwo, S. (2021). We All Go Back to the Land: The Who, Why, and How of Land Acknowledgements. Brush Education Inc.
- Know The Land Territories Campaign. Retrieved from <http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>
- Leblond, A. & Gagnon, N. (2020). Learning Insights: Acknowledging Indigenous Traditional Territory. Canada School of Public Service. Retrieved from <https://www.cspcs-efpc.gc.ca/tools/blogs/insights/indigenous-territory-eng.aspx>
- McDonald, L. (2022, February 14). Personal communication [Personal interview].
- Morin, J. Joining the Circle: An Indigenous 101 Toolkit. University of Toronto Libraries. Retrieved from [https://guides.library.ubc.ca/ld.php?content\\_id=35700900](https://guides.library.ubc.ca/ld.php?content_id=35700900)
- Native Governance Centre. (2019). A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. Retrieved from <https://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>
- Native Governance Centre. (2021). Beyond Land Acknowledgement: a Guide. Retrieved from <https://nativegov.org/news/beyond-land-acknowledgment-guide/>
- Native Land Digital. Retrieved from <https://native-land.ca/>
- Paquette, S. (2020, April 23). Youtube Video: Indigenous Voices - Land Acknowledgement. Sheridans Institutional Repository. [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtG7j19na4>
- Raven Trust. (2023). Land Acknowledgements: From Recitation, to Real. Retrieved from <https://raventrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LandAcknowledgementGuide.pdf>
- Robinson, S. (2022, October 26). Personal communication [Personal interview].
- Smith, J. Puckett, C. & Simon, W. (2015). Indigenous Allyship: An Overview. Office of Aboriginal Initiatives. Wilfred Laurier University. Retrieved from [https://healthsci.mcmaster.ca/docs/librariesprovider59/allyship/indigenous-allyship-an-overview.pdf?sfvrsn=29e4a8b9\\_2](https://healthsci.mcmaster.ca/docs/librariesprovider59/allyship/indigenous-allyship-an-overview.pdf?sfvrsn=29e4a8b9_2)
- Wheeler, K. & Bentley C. (2018, October 1). What are land acknowledgements and why do they matter? What She Said Talk. [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTWDMsqgB4U>



VIDEA. (2021). Organisational Decolonisation Action Plan. Retrieved from [https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/VIDEA\\_actionplan.pdf](https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/VIDEA_actionplan.pdf)