

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

For 200 years First Nations and Indigenous people, in what we now call Canada, have sought recognition of our historical and current presence, cultures and languages, and deep relationships to our homelands and unceded territories.

In recent years, we have seen growing awareness, inspired in large part by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The testimonies, research and generosity of many Indigenous people in sharing their stories have helped the general public to become aware of their responsibility to recognize and honour First Nations.

Offering a territorial acknowledgement honours the Nations on whose lands you live, work and prosper, and is an important first step on the path toward better relationships. Territorial acknowledgements demonstrate recognition and respect for Indigenous people, past and present. In order to offer an accurate, meaningful and respectful territorial acknowledgment, we encourage a process of researching and learning about the place and interacting directly with the relevant Nation(s). Although this takes more time and effort than simply repeating a scripted acknowledgement, these steps can have an important ripple effect. This sincere effort increases understanding and ultimately serves as a step toward building respectful relationships with Indigenous people, First Nation communities, and organizations.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND STEPS

- Territorial acknowledgements are a good first step. Reflect and consider what this means in a deeper way, and allow this truth to guide further learning and actions to honour the Nations, reciprocate with gratitude, and commit to walking gently on the land
- Why are you doing this? What is your sincere intention?
- Consider as examples the composition of other territorial acknowledgements you've heard or read. Do any of them resonate with your intentions and circumstances?
- Is the acknowledgement local, regional, provincial or nation-wide?
- Identify the First Nations communities in the area. Language and culture territories often overlap within communities. Within these Nations there will be more than one local First Nation or Band. It is best to mention all.
- Draft an acknowledgement, and then initiate a relationship by reaching out to the relevant First Nation community, leadership or cultural organization to humbly request assistance and feedback.
- Humbly explain what you are working on and ask if there is someone you can ask for guidance. Offer to share your draft acknowledgement rather than asking someone to write it for you. If this becomes a lengthy process, be prepared to offer an honorarium for this expert advice.
- Even if you're nervous, or embarrassed, be brave. Approach people in a way that you would like to be approached – with respect and appreciation.

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RESOURCES AND TOOLS THAT CAN HELP GET YOU STARTED:

First Peoples' Map of B.C. (www.maps.fpcc.ca) can help you learn more about the First Nations you want to acknowledge. You can use the map to learn which Nation, language and cultural group to acknowledge and identify local communities that you can reach out to for guidance.

Using the Language tab on the map, you can enter a place name in the search bar or click on the general area of the map you are wanting to acknowledge. Once the map zooms into the language area, the display sidebar on the left will list the communities in the region. You will also find additional details about the language spoken, and in some cases, audio to assist with pronunciation of name and greetings.

For more detailed guidance and examples:

<https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory>

<https://galianoconservancy.ca/acknowledging-our-shared-territory/>

If you are going to acknowledge territories in specific cities in B.C., this resource might be useful:

https://cnc.bc.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/indigenous-territory-guide.pdf?sfvrsn=60123e83_0

EXAMPLES OF TERRITORIES WHERE THERE ARE MAJOR CITIES IN B.C.

- Victoria is on the territory of the ɫəkwəŋiʔnəŋ speaking peoples, the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations.
- Vancouver is on the unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwutlh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.
- The Lower Mainland includes the traditional territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, QayQayt and numerous Stó:lō First Nations.
- Prince George is on the territory of Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, Dakelh-speaking people.
- Kelowna is on the territory of Westbank First Nation who suggest this acknowledgement as an example: "Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that we are gathered here today on the homeland and unceded territory of the Okanagan Syilx people. We recognize, honour and respect the presence of Indigenous people, past, present and future."

Source: https://www.wfn.ca/docs/2019-08_wfn_medial_style_guide_web.pdf