



# A GUIDE TO LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Land is what sustains us physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. We use the land for hunting, fishing, and gathering. The land is where we come from and is our identity. It is more than just the earth. It includes the ocean, air, food, medicines, and all of nature. We have a responsibility to care for the land and to share knowledge of the land with our people. Land and health are closely intertwined because land is the ultimate nurturer of people. It provides not only physical but emotional and spiritual sustenance, because it inspires and provides beauty; it nurtures our souls.”

- First Nations  
Health Authority,  
2012




# TERMINOLOGY

- *Traditional*: Recognizes lands traditionally used and/or occupied by First Nations in all parts of the country.
- *Ancestral*: Recognizes land that is handed down from generation to generation.
- *Unceded*: Refers to land that was not turned over to the Crown (government) by a treaty or other agreement.

**We invite you to take some time to learn about the history of this land and to honour its original inhabitants.**

- Critically reflect on the deep meaning and implications of these words.
- Reflect on the violence of the colonization of indigenous lands, and its impacts on indigenous people's life, past, present and future.
- Think about the on-going injustice against indigenous people, because of the unceded nature of the lands they still can't re-possess.
- Also, think about your own responsibilities and the implications of learning and doing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work in *traditional, ancestral and unceded territory*. What does this imply? What should be your responsibilities? How can you contribute to justice towards indigenous people and all beings?



*“Land acknowledgments are  
a stepping stone to honouring  
broken treaty relationships.”*

## STEP 1

For what area will you craft your land acknowledgement?  
City, town, building, site, etc.

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## STEP 2

Who does the land belong to? Use the following resources to get started:

- [“Native Land” Interactive Map](#)
- [“Whose Land” Website](#)
- [First Peoples’ Map of BC](#)
- [BC Treaty Commission](#)
- [Canadian Association of University Teachers \(CAUT\)](#)  
[recommended territorial acknowledgement for institutions in](#)  
[Canada](#)
- [A Guide to the Pronunciation of Indigenous Communities and](#)  
[Organizations in BC](#)
- [Pronunciation Guide for Indigenous Communities in BC](#)

Tip: Use multiple sources of information to verify the rightful guardians of the land.

[illegible]



## STEP 3

It may have been straightforward to determine the rightful guardians of the land or there may have been inconsistencies and/or overlapping territories. Did you use multiple sources to verify the rightful guardians of the land? Where else might you verify your land acknowledgement?

Think: First Nations offices and other trusted sources with validated land acknowledgments such as local government, schools (including universities and colleges), city websites, etc. These sources might also be able to verify whether the land has a treaty or is unceded. Who will you email or call?

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## STEP 4

If you only have time for a short land acknowledgement, you might consider using wording that is similar to:

*“I would like to begin by acknowledging that we gather here today on the traditional and (unceded or treaty) territory of the \_\_\_\_\_ First Nation(s).*

*We acknowledge our hosts and thank them for allowing us to carry out this work on their land. In so doing, we recognize their inherent Indigenous rights and title, the implementation without qualification of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and our support for the 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.”*

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## STEP 5 (OPTIONAL)

When there is time for an in-depth land acknowledgement, consider the following points and keeping this document as a resource. Invest the time to prepare and do the homework on the land and its rightful guardians.

In-depth land acknowledgements are not just about the people; they are about the land and what it looked like prior to colonization – the vegetation, wildlife, seasons, oceans, rivers, lakes, and teachings of the land. How can you personalize the land acknowledgment? Is there a landmark that was particularly important to the First Nation that you love to visit? Ex) a river.

Express how language connects to the land and what the First Peoples of this land call themselves in their language. When acknowledging a treaty, inform the audience about the parameters: who signed it, what was agreed to or what did those signatories believe they were agreeing to, and whether the treaty is being honoured today.

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## STEP 6

Work to create relationships with your local First Nations people. Can you learn something new each time you need to make a land acknowledgment so you can add to it and keep it live and relevant to you and to your listeners? In part a reason to do this is to ensure that the First Nations people are seen. As you learn more about the history of our first people, have you noticed new things about your community?

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