



Row Ontario Guidelines for Land Acknowledgements

Introduction

Land Acknowledgments are an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the territory of the Indigenous peoples who called the land home, prior to the arrival of settlers, and in many cases, still do call their lands home.

A land acknowledgment is given to honour and remember the rich Indigenous governance, culture, traditions, and history of Indigenous peoples. It is not a box to check off a list.

Its purpose is to recognize that we, as settlers and as people who are not a part of Indigenous groups, are here on their land – sharing their land. It is to think about what has happened in the past and what changes can be made going forward, in order to further the reconciliation process. It acknowledges our relationships to space and place.

Learn about land acknowledgements, Canada's history as it relates to Indigenous peoples, Indigenous history, and have conversations and ask questions. Remember, that the land acknowledgements are a reminder that we are accountable to these relationships and that they remind us every day that we have to listen to the concerns of the community and how we can align these concerns with the Indigenous community.

It is a demonstration that you are willing to listen and learn, and that you recognize the importance of Indigenous culture and history. It is the beginning of this learning process.

As part of this process, contact the First Nation(s) directly to ask for input and address any questions you may have, as it relates to the construction of your land acknowledgment or the First Nation's history, as well as to get their consent to using it. The land acknowledgment should not be created in isolation from the First Nation(s) whose territory you are in.

The land acknowledgments should lead to more questions about who the people listed in the acknowledgements are and how their land came to be possessed by settlers. It also needs to be personal. Ask yourselves, "How am I benefiting by living on this land that is the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples?"

We encourage you to utilize land acknowledgments in opening your Board of Director meetings, meetings generally, workshops, camps, regattas, and so on.

For more information on what it means to have a land acknowledgment, please see <https://vimeo.com/517181293>. Please note, however, that this video should not be shared in lieu of a land acknowledgement but in addition to one, from time to time.

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STEP 1 - RESEARCH

Research the location of your event/organization to find which Treaty Lands and/or Territory you are in by using the **Map of Ontario treaties and reserves** (located at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/map-ontario-treaties-and-reserves>).

- a) If the location falls within a treaty area, your land acknowledgement should recognize that Treaty and the Territory of the identified First Nation(s).
Ex. We meet today within the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation...

- b) If your location falls outside of a treaty area, but within the territorial boundaries of a First Nation, reference should be made to the Territory of the identified First Nation(s).
Ex. We are pleased to meet today on the traditional and unceded Territory of the Algonquin Nation...

STEP 2 – TREATIES

In the land acknowledgement, one may cite the specific treaty area in which the organization/event is located, or alternatively, simply make a more general statement regarding the Treaty Lands.

Ex. (specific treaty area)

As we gather in Thunder Bay today, we recognize that we meet within the bounds of the Robinson Superior Treaty agreed upon by the Fort William First Nation and the British Crown in 1850.

Ex. (general)

As we gather today in Peterborough, we meet within the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of Curve Lake First Nation and the Mississaugas of Hiawatha First Nation.

STEP 3 – REFERENCING FORMER OCCUPANTS OF THE LAND

Many land acknowledgements give recognition to First Nations that had previously occupied the land prior to the arrival of the ancestors of the Anishinaabe, where the case may be (as in much of Ontario). The land in question is known as the “traditional territory” of the former occupants.

Depending upon the location, and where appropriate, the acknowledgement might reference the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, Neutral, Petun, or Haudenosaunee Nations.

Alternatively, a collective acknowledgement referring to the previous occupants of the land may also be employed.

Ex. (specific First Nations)

Today, we gather on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Chippewas of Mnjikaning (Rama) First Nation as well as the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat peoples.

Ex. (collective non-specific)

Today, we gather on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and recognize this land as being home, and traditional territory to, other Indigenous people since time immemorial.

STEP 4 – ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

Additional statements, beyond a simple land/treaty recognition, are often included within the body of a land acknowledgement.

Statements might include references to a spirit of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; a commitment to the wise stewardship of an area; or expressions of good will.

When including such statements, care should be taken not to include material considered a source of contention between Indigenous Nations. As an example, many land acknowledgements make mention to the “Nanfan Deed, 1701” or the “Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt” or Agreement, as a model for sharing the land and its resources.

The “Nanfan Deed” is not considered a valid document by many Anishinaabe but is considered as such by some Haudenosaunee. The “Dish with One Spoon” is considered controversial among First Nations, as there is no consensus as to the particulars of the “Agreement,” as it relates to its interpretation by the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee.

STEP 5 – BE SPECIFIC

Be specific when constructing the land acknowledgement. Some statements, for example, mention the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and the Anishinaabe at the same time:

“We recognize we are on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and the Traditional Territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and the Huron Wendat.”

The term “Anishinaabe” refers to a broad range of culturally related peoples including the Ojibway, Odawa, Pottawatomi, Oji-Cree, and other Algonquians. As noted in the example above, the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point are a sub-group of the Ojibway, and are therefore, Anishinaabe.

Using the term “Anishinaabe” after citing the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point is a redundancy. It is also suggested that the term “Anishinaabe” is too broad a term to be used within a land acknowledgment statement, as it inadvertently includes other First Nations that have no connection with the specific lands in question. Removing the word “Anishinaabe” from the statement avoids redundancy and prevents misunderstandings.

STEP 6 – DO NOT COPY AND PASTE

Construct the land acknowledgement to meet the needs of your situation. Try not to “copy and paste” land acknowledgments from other sources, even popular ones, as they are not always good or proper sources, and incorrectly include references to other Indigenous groups, treaties, and/or territories; as outlined in examples within these Guidelines.

The acknowledgement may be made verbally, in print, or even posted on a plaque at your Boathouse. Above all, the acknowledgement should be accurate as to facts and sincere in its deliverance.

STEP 7 – WORK WITH THE TREATY/TERRITORIAL FIRST NATION(S)

Once you have a draft of your land acknowledgement prepared, contact the First Nation(s) directly to ask for input and address any questions you may have, as it relates to the construction of a land acknowledgment or the First Nation’s history, as well as to get their consent to using it.

Note: Row Ontario is also available for assistance in reaching out to the Indigenous group(s), for answering questions, providing resources, and providing support as we walk down this path together.

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