

Brandon University

Land Acknowledgement Protocol



Purpose: To provide guidance on delivering a land acknowledgement with respect to Indigenous peoples' traditional territories.

What is a land acknowledgement?

A land acknowledgement is a formal statement performed at the beginning of a gathering to share awareness on land history, traditional territories, and Indigenous people, and to express gratitude for the land in which we occupy. For many Indigenous people, acknowledging traditional territory is a long-standing practice and a regular aspect of governance relationships and ceremony (First Nations Health Authority: Health through Wellness, 2023). In recent years, territory acknowledgements have become standard across Canada and around the world as an act of respect and reconciliation towards Indigenous people.

What is the intent of a land acknowledgement?

- To honour the traditional territory of the Indigenous people who were here before the arrival of settlers and who have called this land home since time immemorial.

Why do we offer land acknowledgements?

- To ground people and set the tone of the gathering with good intentions,
- To acknowledge and show respect for Indigenous people with a deep historical relationship to the land,
- To raise awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life, and
- To demonstrate a commitment to Truth & Reconciliation.

Who can deliver a land acknowledgement?

Everyone. Land acknowledgements offer a learning and teaching moment by increasing one's own personal knowledge and understanding, and by spreading awareness about the true history of colonization to promote reconciliation (First Nations Health Authority: Health through Wellness, 2023).

Here is an example of Brandon University's land acknowledgement:

Brandon University has campuses on Treaty 1 and Treaty 2 lands, and we are a gathering place for people from many backgrounds and around the world. In this way, we carry on the Indigenous customs of our home in Brandon. We acknowledge Brandon is on shared territory between the Dakota Oyate, the Anishinaabeg, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. Today, many other Indigenous people call Brandon their home, including the Inineew, Anisininewuk, Denesuline, and Inuit.

The plants, animals, and people who share their history and traditions on the land and water of this area deeply influence our gatherings today. Thank you to all for sharing this space with us today.

-As an act of reconciliation, we encourage you to create your own land acknowledgement-

How to create your own land acknowledgement?

1. *Reflect:* As colonialism is still an enduring process in Canada, acknowledging the land is not done passively. All who live, visit, and work on this land are invited into the spirit of the treaty and are therefore responsible for upholding it. Reflect on the following:
 - a. The **historical processes** that brought you to live on this land and your place as a result e.g., what is the history of this territory? how did you come to be here?
 - b. Your **connections** to all living and non-living entities e.g., what is your relationship to the land, animals, insects, water, and people?
 - c. Your **intent** for delivering a land acknowledgement e.g., how does the land acknowledgement relate to the event or work you are doing? What does reconciliation mean to you? What intentions do you have to disrupt and dismantle colonialism beyond your land acknowledgement?
 - d. Your **end goal** for sharing a land acknowledgement e.g., what do you hope listeners will do after hearing the land acknowledgement?
2. *Research:* Put in the time necessary to research the following topics:
 - a. The **Indigenous people** to whom the land belongs
 - b. The **history** of the land and any related treaties including signatories
 - c. **Names** of living Indigenous people from these communities. If you're presenting on behalf of your work in a particular field, highlight Indigenous people who currently work in that field.
 - d. **Indigenous place names and language**
 - e. **Correct pronunciation** for the names of the Nations, places, and individuals you are including.

3. *Introduce yourself:* During land acknowledgements, it is important to share information about yourself to establish kinship and relationship. Please note, the purpose of a land acknowledgement is to bring awareness of traditional territory and its original inhabitants. As such, always keep in mind the intent of a land acknowledgement. Introduction can include the following:
 - a. Where you are from
 - b. Your relationship with the land and the Nation(s) where you reside
4. *Use appropriate language:* Land acknowledgements are a subtle way to speak the truth of historical and ongoing processes of colonialism (First Nations Health Authority: Health through Wellness, 2023). Do not sugarcoat the past. Use terms like genocide, forced removal, stolen land, and ethnic cleansing to reflect actions taken by colonizers (Native Governance Center, 2019).
5. *Use past, present, and future tenses:* Indigenous people are still here, and they are thriving.
6. *Personalize your statement (optional):* Include how you will advance reconciliation moving forward e.g., I will reframe my responsibility to the land and community. You can highlight any values and teachings from an Indigenous perspective that stand out for you e.g., I will practice the seven sacred teachings.
7. *Post-reflection:* Further reflect on what reconciliation means to you? As such, consider the following question:
 - a. How am I leaving Indigenous people in a stronger, more empowered place because of this land acknowledgement?

Should I still do a land acknowledgement even if there are no Indigenous people in the room?

Yes. Acknowledging Indigenous people both directly and indirectly further promotes reconciliation.

What is the difference between a land acknowledgement and a welcome to the territory?

Land acknowledgement is a sign of respect to acknowledge the local territory and the Indigenous peoples who have a historical relationship with the land.

Welcome to the territory is when an Indigenous person who is local to the territory on which the gathering is taking place welcomes guests to their territory (The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund, 2023)

Delivering virtual land acknowledgements:

Delivering a land acknowledgement virtually is more challenging than when everyone is in the same room. In this case, people may join your gathering from anywhere in the world. Here are a few tips to help you when creating a land acknowledgement for a virtual gathering:

- As the host, give recognition to the land that you, individually, are on.
- Acknowledge that many others may be on different territory.
- If possible, invite others to offer their own land acknowledgements.

Pronunciations:

English Term	Indigenous Term	Phonetic
Cree	Ininew	<i>in-nih-NEW</i>
Ojibway	Anishinaabek	<i>ah-NISH-ih-naa-BEK</i>
Metis	National Homeland of the Red River Metis	<i>MAY-tee</i>
Oji-Cree	Anisininew	<i>ah-NISS-ih-nih-NEW</i>
Dene	Dene-Suline Dene-Sayisi	<i>deh-NAY – SOO-lee-naa</i> <i>deh-NAY – say-EES-ee</i>
Inuit		<i>ihn-YOU-eat</i>

References

- First Nations Health Authority: Health through Wellness. (2023). *Territory Acknowledgements*. Vancouver: First Nations Health Authority: Health through Wellness.
- Morin, J. L. (n.d.). *Joining the Circle: An Indigenous 101 Toolkit*. Toronto: University of Toronto Libraries.
- Native Governance Center. (2019, October 22). *A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement*. Retrieved from Native Governance Center: <https://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>
- Reese, D., & Mendoza, J. (2019, March 09). *Are you planning to do a Land Acknowledgement?* Retrieved from American Indians in Children's Literature: <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2019/03/are-you-planning-to-do-land.html>
- The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund. (2023, September 20). *Creating your own Land Acknowledgement*. Ohsweken, Ontario, Canada.
- University of Saskatchewan. (n.d.). *Land Acknowledgements*. Retrieved from University of Saskatchewan: https://teaching.usask.ca/curriculum/indigenous_voices/land-acknowledgements/module.php