



A guide to acknowledging First Peoples and traditional land:

Land acknowledgements for staff and volunteers

Indigenous Advisory Committee

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Overview

Do you host meetings, or are working with volunteers and committees who host meetings? This resource is for you! The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and to answer questions for Engineers Canada staff for conducting land acknowledgements at the beginning of meetings, public events, and conferences.

This guideline will be your hub for understanding the value of conducting land acknowledgements, as well as tips, templates, and protocols for how to do a land acknowledgement at your meetings. It will be regularly updated by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager.

What is a land acknowledgement?

The land acknowledgements we hear today are based on an old tradition or protocol carried out by Indigenous communities in Canada. It is intended as a way for guests to show their respect for and pay homage to the Indigenous community with which they are visiting and engaging with.

“It recognizes the strength and wisdom of the place that has given rise to the people who are of that land and it invokes the spirit of that place to support your good intentions.” (S. Calvez., R. Roberts, 2020)

Why do we do land acknowledgements?

Land acknowledgements are a practice, but they are also part of a larger process that we are undertaking, as individuals and as an organization, towards reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The reality is that Indigenous people are underrepresented within the engineering profession and at the majority of the meetings and events we attend, so we have to be careful to not appropriate the traditional land acknowledgement practice in an empty and disconnected way. Engineers Canada supports the practices of land acknowledgements in order to:

- Raise awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life, for ourselves and meeting participants.
- Acknowledge our presence on the land as visitors and as a part of colonial history.
- Recognize the history of colonialism and harms done by settlers to Indigenous communities, including to acknowledge the detrimental impacts that the engineering profession has had on Indigenous communities through discriminatory practices and disregard for Indigenous rights, traditions and knowledge; where decision-making that directly impacts Indigenous communities has ignored the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be stewards of their own land; where there has been a lack of free, prior and informed consent from Indigenous communities with regards to natural resource projects.

- Complement self reflection and cultural competency of staff and volunteers.

Land acknowledgements are not meant to:

- threaten or alienate non-Indigenous or Indigenous people
- speak for or represent Indigenous communities
- appropriate Indigenous ideas and knowledge
- be the only action we take towards truth and reconciliation. (see Resource section)

How do we do land acknowledgements?

The aim is to practice land acknowledgements in a meaningful way. To achieve this goal we have linked this guide to the provision of Indigenous awareness training for staff (4 Seasons of Reconciliation 2020), as well as a resource list for further learning (see Resources section).

Who are the First Peoples of this area?

Do your research to find out if the land you are gathering on is Treaty Territory (numbered treaties), Unceded Territory (not legally signed away to the Crown or to Canada), or part of Inuit and Métis homelands. Find the names of local First Nations communities who have lived there, and review the official formats we have provided for in-person and online meetings.

Pronunciation

There are hundreds of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups in Canada, and many territorial names and titles that settlers are not used to saying. Do not be afraid to ask questions and find out how to pronounce the local First Nation in your acknowledgement. If you are not sure how to pronounce a Nation's name, there are a number of ways to learn, including:

- Respectfully asking someone from that nation or from a local organization such as a Friendship Center or Indigenous Student Center.
- Check the nation's website; they may have a phonetic pronunciation on their "About" page, an audio-recording of their name, or videos that include people saying the nation's name.
- Call the nation after hours and listen to their answering machine recording.

Your positionality

Speaking from the heart about colonialism and your personal path on reconciliation is challenging. A first step is to speak to what you know: your own positionality, your settler background, your relationship (or lack thereof) with Indigenous people in Canada.

"By recognizing the intimate relationship between the place and people, you are demonstrating that you understand what is important and that you are trustworthy. To do this, you must use your own voice and provide the Land Acknowledgement from your heart." (S. Calvez., R. Roberts, 2020)

In-person meetings

OTTAWA: “As a visitor on this land, I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people. To do so recognizes Indigenous Peoples long-standing presence in this territory.

Further, this recognition and respect for Indigenous Peoples and their lands is a key towards reconciliation.

Thank you.”

Personalization

Making the land acknowledgement your own is the next step. Relate your experience and the meeting itself to the Indigenous people of the land. Here are some examples:

“As a settler myself, I am committed to... [describe your commitment to actively working against colonialism, towards reconciliation].”

“As a visitor on this land, coming from [describe your background], I strive to deepen my own understanding of the local Indigenous communities.... Reframe my responsibilities to land and community.”

“I come with respect for this land that I am on today, and for the people who have and do reside here.”

“The reason for our meeting today is to discuss a project that involves natural resources and directly impacts Indigenous communities. We acknowledge the need for meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities.”

“We acknowledge the contributions of [name Indigenous community] to the project/work we are involved in today.”

Online meetings

Land acknowledgements need to be part of all gatherings, including virtual meetings. Depending on the location of your participants, you may acknowledge all Indigenous groups, or research the First Peoples of the land you are on.

Here is the approved land acknowledgement you can use and personalize:

“I would like to begin by acknowledging the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that we are on today. While we meet today on a virtual platform, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the importance of the lands, which we each call home. We do this to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility in improving relationships between nations and to improving our own understanding of local Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

From coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people that call this land home.

Please join me in a moment of reflection to acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and to consider how we are and can each, in our own way, try to move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration”

Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory

Canadian Association of University Teachers

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

Are you planning to do a Land Acknowledgement?

Debbie Reese for American Indians in Children's Literature

March 9, 2019

<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2019/03/are-you-planning-to-do-land.html>

'I regret it': Hayden King on writing Ryerson University's territorial acknowledgement

Unreserved, CBC

January 20, 2019

<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>

How an acknowledgement of 'unceded Algonquin territory' became ubiquitous

Ottawa Citizen

January 9, 2019

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/how-an-acknowledgment-of-unceded-algonquin-territory-became-ubiquitous/>

Territory Acknowledgement Panel Talk

Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, University of British Columbia

October 18, 2016

<https://youtu.be/lzqe2fh4Zdc>

Making Coast Salish Territorial Acknowledgements Matter

Coast Salish Cultural Network

November 25, 2016

<https://youtu.be/-Tei5tGoQ4s>

Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements

Chelsea Vowel

September 23, 2016

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

What is the significance of acknowledging the Indigenous land we stand on?

Ramna Shahzad, CBC

July 15, 2017

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/territorial-acknowledgements-indigenous-1.4175136>

Know the Land: Territories Campaign

Laurier Students' Public Interest Research Group (LSPIRG)

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

Gabriel Dumont Institute- Métis Culture

<https://gdins.org/metis-culture/>

4 Seasons of Reconciliation Education

A series of bilingual online resources which promote a renewed relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canadians, through transformative and engaging learning towards anti-racism education.

<https://www.reconciliationeducation.ca/>