



SAIL·VOILE CANADA

Land, Waterway or Territorial
Acknowledgement Guide

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Purpose and Intentions of Land, Waterway or Territory Acknowledgements:

A Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgement is a traditional means of honouring and recognizing the land and peoples of a territory.

Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgements are not a new practice – they have existed long before the arrival of settler people, in the form of verbal introductions (i.e. the naming of clans) and non-verbal recognition (i.e. through things like traditional clothing and designs) and were a way for Indigenous people to demonstrate where they are from, traditional values, roles and more.

“These introductions weren’t labelled as land acknowledgements—just how we carried and presented ourselves when gathering for governance and ceremony. Sometimes, a verbal announcement wasn’t even necessary, as clan and territorial signifiers were present by way of dress, types of hides, tattoos and art weaved into all forms of aesthetics. Today, some Indigenous peoples might introduce themselves in their language and claim the land they are from, along with their name.”

- Sarah Roque, Filmmaker

More recently, Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgements have been adopted by settler communities as a step towards [Truth and Reconciliation](#).

Within this practice, you can learn about the original people, the land, and settler responsibilities. At its core, land/territory acknowledgements are rooted in connecting to a specific space and affirming intentions to share and care for the land on which we live, work and play.

“It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought you to reside on the land and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation.”- Northwestern University

Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgements are also an affirmation of the dark history of genocide and colonialism here in Canada.

Through Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgements, we recognize the atrocities that have been perpetrated against Indigenous peoples nationwide.

These include broken treaties, Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, dog slaughters in the North, Eskimo tags, bans on sacred ceremonies, displacement and exclusion of people based on blood quantum, to name just a few examples.

Sail Canada's Commitment to Using Land, Waterway and Territory Acknowledgements:

Long before sailing clubs and schools were established and sailors gathered to learn, race, and socialize, these lands, waterways and territories were cared for by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people since time immemorial. Sail Canada is committed to expressing our gratitude and appreciation to be able to use these lands, waterways and territories across Canada and encourage our members to do the same.

We have worked closely with our partners, INclusion INCorporated, to support you, our members, in recognizing the importance of truth and reconciliation and how the use of Land, Waterway, and Territory Acknowledgments can bring awareness to the presence of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people and communities and their land rights every day.

Within this *Land, Waterway and Territorial Acknowledgement Guide*, you will learn about the importance of Land, Waterway and Territory Acknowledgements, ways to develop a statement that is specific and meaningful to you and your area, as well as examples of land, waterway and territory acknowledgements for particular locations across Canada.

We ask that you share your Land, Waterway, and/or Territory Acknowledgment with Sail Canada and other organizations within your community when creating it. By doing so, we can share examples and inspire others to develop and use their own Land, Waterway, and/or Territory Acknowledgment.

Why Do We Acknowledge the Land, Waterway or Territory?

A Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgement challenges individuals and groups of people to listen, unlearn and call in the history of colonization. It takes up space to honour the original occupants of a place.

When original occupants and nations of the Land, Waterway or Territory are acknowledged, it affirms their role in caring for and sharing the land, challenges practices of erasure and assimilation, asserts Indigenous rights and highlights acts of oppression and trauma still felt today.

When Should We Acknowledge the Land, Waterway or Territory?

Some examples of when a Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgement would be appropriate:

- At the beginning of an event or gathering where people from different places are coming together.
- To honour the opening of a new space, recognize relationships and set respectful intentions; and/or
- Formal meetings, special events, or meetings to form new relationships.

Who Should Facilitate a Land, Waterway or Territory Acknowledgement?

The host of a meeting, event or gathering should be prepared to facilitate a Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgement.

For more important events, providing you have the lead time, wise practices indicate that somebody from the territory should be invited to participate in an opening (not just land or territorial acknowledgement statement).

This could be an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Chief – remember to follow all local protocols (see [Connecting with Elders and Knowledge Keepers](#)).

What is the Structure of a Land Acknowledgement?

- Names of the nations and Indigenous people whose traditional Land, Waterway or Territory you are gathering on;
- Treaties, if any apply, or note the land as “unceded territory”;
 - *Note: Some treaties did not cede land, including the Peace and Friendship treaties in the Maritimes and Gaspé regions*
- Statement or action of giving thanks to the nations and lands;
- Personal connective statement to the Land, Waterway or Territory you are on; and
- Connective statement to the event's purpose, gathering or topic at hand.

Creating Personal Connective Statements:

By including a personal connective statement within a Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgement, you can demonstrate care and understanding in some of the following ways:

- Trust that you have taken the steps toward expanding your learning
- Intention of action and allyship toward Indigenous peoples

- Awareness of the space you occupy and the privilege you hold
- Commitment to weaving stronger inclusion practices into your personal and professional life
- Confidence in sharing and empowering others to demonstrate care and understanding

Preparing a personal connective statement is a self-reflection exercise. It takes time and challenges us to think about the past, present and future. To help you out in this exercise, we have sourced the following reflective questions from various online resources and research for consideration:

- Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? Who am I?
- What is your relationship to the Land, Waterway or Territory? How did you or your family come to be here?
- Where are you physically situated? Where is your home? Where is your work? Do you know the Indigenous group whose traditional lands you are situated on?
- How is your cultural identity celebrated, represented and honoured in your community? How can Indigenous cultural identities and traditions be positively reflected?
- Why are you preparing this Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgement? How does it relate to the event/meeting you are hosting?
- In your position, what intentions do you have to disrupt and dismantle colonialism beyond this Land, Waterway or Territory acknowledgement?

Things to Think About:

- Avoid using the wording ‘acknowledge’ in your statement—this might seem odd, but some see it as tokenizing, inauthentic, or condescending (see examples under [Templates](#)).
- Recognize communities in the **present** tense – Indigenous people live in thriving Nations that continue to fight for their rights within Canada.
- Acknowledge the land you are currently standing on rather than where you have travelled from
- **Avoid using a generic land acknowledgement unless you are hosting or leading an event that is nationwide** - this is a form of pan-Indigenizing, and specifics are essential to recognizing the land, waterway and/or territory you are gathering on (see examples under [Templates](#))
- Be informal and human - these are not about perfection but about acknowledging relationships and building connections.
- North of 60 – people do not always follow acknowledgement protocol as it is seen as a “southern thing” - do some additional research when travelling and hosting in the North
- Please do not rely on Indigenous individuals in the room to automatically assume this responsibility; it can be taken as tokenistic or traumatic for some folks.

Connecting with Elders and Knowledge Keepers:

Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers play an important role in sharing and protecting Indigenous ways of knowing. Creating meaningful collaborations with local Elders and Knowledge Keepers is an essential part of honouring and recognizing the land and peoples of a territory.

Below is a resource to explore how to have meaningful collaborations with Elders and Knowledge Keepers shared from [*Considerations for Meaningful Collaboration: Highlights from a Conversation with Indigenous Elders \(2023\)*](#):

Who is an Elder?

- The term, Elder, for Indigenous peoples may not have always been the traditional term Indigenous peoples used. Other terms that may have been and currently are used include “the old people” or “older people” or “senator” or “knowledge keeper”.
- An Elder is generally an older person who has extensive Indigenous knowledge and is knowledgeable about ceremonies.

How does one become an Elder?

- An Elder is a person who has been invited to become one by their community. Elders are known community members within Nations who share their traditional knowledge within the community/territories.
- Within Métis nations, an Elder may be voted in by their respective councils to become a Senator.

Roles of Indigenous Elders:

- Provide guidance and understanding on the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous individuals and peoples.
- Reconcile relationships in an inclusive and trusting manner when engaging with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- Share Indigenous knowledge, nations history and knowledge about ceremonies.
- Provide Indigenous ways of engagement, such as relationship building and reciprocity with non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples about Indigenous issues.

How to engage with an Elder:

1. Prior to the invitation

- Understand that engagement with Indigenous Elders is based on respect, inclusivity and relationship building.
- In working towards truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, it is important to have an awareness of colonial history which suppressed and ignored Indigenous voices for so long.
- Learn more about the treaties of the land from which you are inviting an Elder and learn about the communities they represent.

- **Prior to request for Elder participation in events or organization, relationship building should take place. This can be done by setting up an informal meeting with the Elder well ahead of the function. At this meeting, describe the event and the Elder’s role for the event. Also, ask the Elder what they require for the event (i.e., extra time for Indigenous protocols).**
- In some communities, Knowledge Keepers take on some work of sharing their culture, and you can consider reaching out to them for support first.

2. Invitation:

- After a request is made, allow for time for the Elder to decide.
- At an initial meeting, ask the Elder what their own personal protocol regarding an agreement to participate is. Example: the offering of tobacco, tea, etc. Note that a traditional offering is not considered an honorarium.
- Ask if they require any assistance or special considerations on the day of the event, ensuring that comfort levels are respected.
- Review agenda with the Elder and ask for their input (e.g., opening ceremony, ongoing participation, etc).

3. Honoraria:

- Honoraria should acknowledge and respect the expertise that an Elder will bring to the event. This should align with honoraria that would be offered to academic and professional speakers.

4. During the Event:

- Check in with Elders prior to event to ensure that they have what they need (e.g. water, food, note paper, etc).
- Provide space and time for Elders to share their thoughts.
- Build in a debrief time at the end of the event to review Elder’s experience during the event.

5. Post-Collaboration and Sustaining the Relationship with an Elder:

- Offer Elders a gift in appreciation.
- Follow-up to share surveys, audience thoughts on event or evaluation of event.
- Inquire if Elders will be available for and are interested in future collaboration.
- A few days after the event, reconnect with the Elder as a follow up to thank them for participation and ask if they have any additional thoughts about the experience.

*Jacobs, N., Thomson, G., LeDrew, N., Smallboy, L. (2023). **Considerations for Meaningful Collaboration: Highlights from a Conversation with Indigenous Elders.** Learning Network and Knowledge Hub, Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children, Western University.*

Here is a list of additional resources to explore:

[Working With Elders \(First Peoples Cultural Council\)](#)

[Engaging with Elders: A Co-Created Story \(Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism, Fun and Native Counselling Services of Alberta\)](#)

Templates

We encourage you to use these examples as a starting point – but personalize them according to your relationships, histories, experiences and needs.

Written Sail Canada Template (for use in presentations, resources, etc.):

The [land/waterway/territory] that Sail Canada works upon are the [land/waterways/territory] of [nation or nations]. [Treaty acknowledgement or recognition of unceded territory].

All people who live and work on this land and waters are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Oral Sail Canada Template (for use in opening meetings, oral presentations, etc.):

Unceded (No treaty):

The [land/waterway/territory] we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the unceded territory of [nation or nations].

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

[connective or reflective statement on the purpose of the event]

Held in Treaty

The [land/waterway/territory] we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the [land/waterway/territory] of [nation or nations]. All people living on this land are tied together by [Treaty Name or Number], which guides the reciprocal relationships between Nations, people, lands and waters.

We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

[connective or reflective statement on the purpose of the event]

Sail Canada Email Signature Template (for use in email signatures):

As Sail Canada is based in Kingston, Ontario, the following signature is rooted in the general geographic location – if you are located somewhere else, adapt your signature to your specific location.

I give many thanks to the original caretakers of the territory I work on, the traditional homeland of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat. This territory is covered by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant and, more recently Treaty 57. Kingston is now the meeting place and home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island.

Sail Canada Land Acknowledgment for Nationwide Events:

We acknowledge that we live, work, play and meet, on the territories of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, now called Canada. We recognize the importance of honouring the past, acknowledging the present, and working towards a future that embraces reconciliation and respect for Indigenous Peoples.

We are each responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island.

Directory of Major Canadian Cities

Calgary

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy of the Siksika, Piikani and Kainai First Nations, Tsuut’ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations. It is the ancestral home of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

All the people living on this land are tied together by Treaty 7, which was intended to guide the reciprocal relationship between Nations, peoples, and land. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Siksika	[Sik-sik-GAH]	Calgary Foundation (2019). Land Acknowledgement
Piikani	[Pee-gun-ee]	Calgary Foundation (2019). Land Acknowledgement
Kainai	[Gah-na]	Calgary Foundation (2019). Land Acknowledgement
Tsuut’ina	[SOO-tih-nah]	Calgary Foundation (2019). Land Acknowledgement

Edmonton

The land and waterways we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of Cree, Nakota, Dene, Saulteaux, and Blackfoot peoples, as well as an ancestral homeland of the Métis.

All the people living on this land are tied together by Treaty 6, which was intended to guide the reciprocal relationship between Nations, peoples, and land. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Nakota	[Nah-kot-ah]	Alberta Teachers Association (2023). Treaty 6 Land Acknowledgement .
Dene	[Deh-neyh]	Alberta Teachers Association (2023). Treaty 6 Land Acknowledgement .
Saulteaux	[So-to]	Alberta Teachers Association (2023). Treaty 6 Land Acknowledgement .

Halifax

The land and waterways we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples, who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Mi'kma'ki	[meeg-maa-gi]	Halifax Regional Municipality (2021). Learn how to say Mi'kmaw History Month in Mi'kmaw.

Montreal

The land and waterways we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples, who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Kanien'kehá:ka	[Ga-niyen-ge-HAA-ga]	Concordia University (2021). Concordia Territorial Acknowledgment.

Ottawa

The land and waterways we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples, who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Algonquin	[Al-gon-kwin]	Algonquins of Pikwakaaganagan First Nations (2021). The Algonquins of Ontario are "Real" Algonquins.
Anishinaabe	[ah-nish-in-ah-bay]	Toronto Star (2018). I'm Canadian but Anishinaabe First.

Quebec City

The land and waterways that our office is on have been, and continue to be, the traditional unceded territory of the Huron-Wendat, Wabanaki, Innu, and Wolastoqey peoples.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples, who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Huron Wendat	[hu-Ron-wawn-DA(t)]	OurStories ETextbook (2018). John Steckley, Wendat Language Scholar.
Wabanaki	[WAH-bana-kee]	VisitMaine.Com (2016). The Wabanaki Language of Mount Desert Island with George Neptune.
Innu	[IN-new]	CBC Newfoundland and Labrador (2023). Return to Davis Inlet.
Wolastoqey	[WOOL-ah-sto-gway]	CBC News (2020). Revitalizing the Wolastoqey Language.

Toronto

The land and waterways that our office is on have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Anishinaabeg, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

All the people living on this land are tied together by Treaty 13, which was intended to guide the reciprocal relationship between Nations, peoples, land and waters. Prior to colonization, the peoples of this land agreed in the Dish With One Spoon wampum to peaceably share and care for these lands and waters. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Haudenosaunee	[hoh-DEE-noh-SHoh-nee]	Nysmuseum (2013). Haudenosaunee or Iroquois?
Wendat	[wawn-DA(t)]	OurStories ETextbook (2018). John Steckley, Wendat Language Scholar.
Anishinaabeg	[ah-nish-in-ah-bay]	Toronto Star (2018). I'm Canadian but Anishinaabe First.

Vancouver

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional, unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish).

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples, who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam)	[MUSS-kwee-um]	UBC Land Acknowledgement with Marny Point, MET Alumna - YouTube (~0:27)
səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh)	[tSLAY-wah-tooth]	Tsleil-Waututh Nation "People of the Inlet" - YouTube (~1:02)
Anishinaabeg Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish)	[SKWA-mish]	Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw - The Squamish Nation - The Spirit of Squamish - YouTube (~0:18)

Victoria

The land and waterways that we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territories of the Lək̓wəŋən peoples known today as Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the WSÁNEĆ peoples known today as WJOLEŁP (Tsartlip), BOKEĆEN (Pauquachin), SʔÁUTW (Tsawout), WSIKEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nations.

All people who live and work on this land are responsible for holding good relations with the local First Peoples, who continue to fight for their rights as sovereign Nations. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Lək̓wəŋən	[lek-wun-gen]	Greater Victoria School District (2021). Welcome to the Territory in Lekwugen and English
Songhees	[song-eez]	Greater Victoria School District (2021). Welcome to the Territory in Lekwugen and English
Esquimalt	[es-kwai-malt]	University of Victoria (2021). Territory Land Acknowledgment – University of Victoria.
WSÁNEĆ	[Wh-say-nech]	University of Victoria Native Students Association (2020). How to pronounce WSÁNEĆ in the SENĆOŦEN language

WJÓŁŁP (Tsartlip)	[sart-lip]	Tsartlip First Nation (2021). Province Returns Traditional Territory to Tsartlip First Nation.
BOKÉČEN (Pauquachin)	[paw-kwi-chin]	Island Health (2021). Community Wellness Grants: Pauquachin First Nation Pulling Together.
SʔÁUTW (Tsawout)	[say-out]	Tsawout First Nation (2020). Tsawout Lands Advisory – Ecostar Award.
WŚIKEM (Tseycum)	[say-come]	BC Public Service (2018). Tseycum Reconciliation Implementation Team.
MÁLEXEL (Malahat)	[ma-luh-hat]	ShawTVSouthVi (2018). Malahat Nation.

Winnipeg

The land and waterways we are meeting on today have been, and continue to be, the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples. This land is the ancestral heartland of the Métis. The waters of Winnipeg originate in Shoal Lake 40 First Nation Territory.

All the people living on this land are tied together by Treaty 1, which was intended to guide the reciprocal relationship between Nations, peoples, and land. We honour the stewardship of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit that call this land home today. We strive to stand in solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and Nations across Turtle Island and invite all of you to do the same.

Nation	Pronunciation	Resource
Anishinaabeg	[ah-nish-in-ah-bay]	Anishinabek Nation (2021). Who are the Anishinabek?
Oji-Cree	O-gee Cree	MFNERC – First Nations Language & Culture (2020). Greetings – Ojibwe Cree.
Dakota	Da-koht-ah	Circles of Reconciliation (2021). Circles of Reconciliation – Dakota Greeting.
Dene	[Deh-neyh]	National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education (2021). Dene Language Lesson.