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CRAFTING A RESPECTFUL TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WORKSHEET

This introduction is reproduced from, "Know the Land," published by [LAURIER STUDENTS' PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP](#)

What is a Land Acknowledgment?

A Land Acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

Why do we recognize the land?

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgments 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. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol.

A land acknowledgment is not something you "just do" before an event. Rather it is a reflection process in which you build mindfulness and intention walking into whatever gathering you are having. It should be rooted in those whose land you are honored to stand on and should guide how you move forward in both conversations and actions.

Moving beyond acknowledgement:

Although it is important to acknowledge the land, it is only a first step. As treaty signers, we are responsible and accountable for the violence that Indigenous people face. Allyship is a continuous process; it is not a designation that one can earn and hold forever. It is also not a label one can give themselves, but one you earn from your actions and commitment to standing in solidarity. Allies must continually engage in self-reflection, and must consistently work at being an ally (through learning, acting in a de-colonial manner, and sustaining relationships with Indigenous Peoples, etc.)

Crafting the acknowledgment:

Territory: Identify Indigenous communities or nations who assert their rights, historical, or contemporary presence within the area of interest. See the resources below to get started.



- Sometimes, several communities, nations, or peoples may share overlapping territory and maintain time-honored relationships with the land.
- Identify any relevant treaties within the territory, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments.
- This step will help us identify whether the land we are on is unceded territory.


People: It's important to properly recognize the peoples you identify, even if a particular nation no longer lives there. See the resources below to get started.

- Try to determine how the peoples or communities refer to themselves. Learn how to properly pronounce the names of the peoples you identify.
- Phonetic spellings, YouTube videos, or people in your network may be helpful.

Intent: Thinking about the purpose and intent behind your territory acknowledgment will give it a lot more meaning and help you find the right words.

- Relate the acknowledgment to your professional role, personal interests, or activity for which you are crafting it.
- Recognize Indigenous Peoples' stewardship of the territory's lands and waters which you now enjoy and benefit from, both personally and professionally.



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- Reflect upon the spirit, intent and meaning of the treaties you've identified.
- Express your commitment to respectful relationship building, including the efforts you intend to make to be a respectful neighbor or partner.

Resources

- Native Land: <https://native-land.ca/>
- US Federally Recognized Tribes: <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ois/tribal-leaders-directory/>
- Aboriginal and Treaty Rights Information System (ATRIS): https://sidait-atris.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/atris_online/home-accueil.aspx

Example Acknowledgement for Sustainable Forestry Initiatives DC and Ottawa Office:

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative's diverse team of staff and consultants live and work on the ancestral territories of many Indigenous nations, including from our offices on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin people in what is now Ottawa, ON, and of the Nacotchtank and Piscataway peoples in present day Washington D.C.

We are committed to building forest-focused collaborations that recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights, traditional knowledge, relationships with the land, enduring leadership in forest stewardship, and responsibilities to future generations.

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