

HOW TO DEVELOP A MEANINGFUL LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT



What is a Land Acknowledgment?

A traditional or treaty Land Acknowledgment is a statement recognizing the historical and ongoing presence of Indigenous peoples in a specific place. It is a sign of recognition and respect and shows awareness of the relationship Indigenous people have with the land.

Land Acknowledgments build from a tradition among many Indigenous peoples to acknowledge the land and community connections to it in gatherings and ceremonies. It is also a good opportunity to give thanks to the land and express gratitude. Indigenous people give thanks to the land, the animals, the Creator, and each other. Land Acknowledgments are a great opportunity to participate and honour that practice.

How do you make a Land Acknowledgment authentic?

An informed Acknowledgment is authentic, accurate, respectful, and spoken with sincerity. It is not a platitude. The exercise of doing the research to find out on whose land a meeting or event is taking place is an opportunity to be open to the past and make a commitment to contribute to a better future which is the essence of reconciliation.

When do you do a Land Acknowledgment?

Acknowledgments are often offered at the beginning of a meeting or gathering and provide an opportunity to demonstrate goodwill and respect for Indigenous peoples. They also encourage reflection of the historical, present-day, and future relationships between Indigenous peoples and the people of Ontario as well as the significance of the land and its importance to their culture, ceremonies, and traditions.



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If you are attending or planning a meeting with an Indigenous community or organization, you can ask the meeting coordinator for help regarding the proper protocol regarding the Acknowledgment. You can also check their website for the protocol guidelines or ask colleagues who have worked with the community or organization.

The following tips will help guide you through the development a land Acknowledgment:

- The first step is to determine the type of land the meeting will held be on – traditional or treaty. Refer to the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs Treaty Map for more information.
- Decide who will be doing the Acknowledgment. If comfortable doing so, that person may want to share information about their connections to the land (e.g. where you come from).

- Acknowledgments may include reference to neighboring communities (e.g., Six Nations of the Grand River), broader Indigenous cultures/nations (e.g., Anishinaabe), and/or Treaty area (e.g., Treaty #3).
- Determine if there are local First Nation, Métis, Inuit or urban Indigenous communities to acknowledge.
- Know who will be attending the meeting or gathering as this can impact the land Acknowledgment.
- When in doubt on who to include in an Acknowledgment, be inclusive!
- Adding you own personal reflection to a land Acknowledgment can help your acknowledgment be authentic and meaningful. Reflect on the following questions: *How does the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the land inform the work that I do? Where does my family come from? How did I come to live here? What are some activities that I like to do on the land? Who do I do these activities with? What does be on the land mean to me? How has the land shaped my life?*

