



TRANSFORMATIVE TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT GUIDE

WHAT IS A TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT?

Territory acknowledgements are traditional Indigenous gathering protocols that honour and recognize the Indigenous peoples who have deep historical and significant ties to the lands where the gathering is taking place.

The territory protocol is an ancient cultural practice of Indigenous Nations across Turtle Island (North America) and is essential in demonstrating our commitment to **reconciliation** by reversing the forced erasure of Indigenous peoples by colonial Canada. At Len Pierre Consulting (LPC), we have a standard acknowledgement that all LPC team

members are encouraged to use when introducing themselves or when chairing meetings. This standard is either a reflective acknowledgement or a transformative acknowledgement.

There is a healthy skepticism among Indigenous individuals that Territory Acknowledgements can be “performative” or “superficial” which is valid. To avoid this performative pitfall, we encourage LPC team members and all our working friends to use the ‘Progressive Transformative Territory Acknowledgement Scale’ (see the detailed table on the following page).



PROGRESSIVE TRANSFORMATIVE TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SCALE

| Standard Acknowledgement | Reflective Acknowledgement | Transformative Acknowledgement |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginner • Institutionally approved script • Read until memorized/ comfortable • Example: I would like to acknowledge the unceded and traditional homelands of the Coast Salish People and Nlaka'pamux Nations on which Fraser Health provides services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate • Can be personally scripted • Use 'I' statements to demonstrate your learning and commitment to decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenous Cultural Safety • Example: I would like to recognize I am participating today from Katzie First Nation Territory in what is known colonially as Pitt Meadows. I have learned that the word 'Katzie' means land of moss and has been called so since time immemorial. I am an uninvited settler on these territories. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced • Encouraged to speak from the heart • Acknowledge concepts like colonialism, anti-racism, reconciliation, and settler power/ privilege and institutional oppression • Example: Before I acknowledge the territories on which I am participating today, I would first like to recognize the on-going colonialism and racism against Indigenous peoples that is not mentioned in the tv, news or media, as a third-generation settler I feel it is all our responsibility to shed light on these aspects when we do the territory acknowledgement... |

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT GUIDELINES:

1. If you are using a PowerPoint slide deck, it is helpful to include a placeholder for each of the opening formalities: Prayer, Protocol, and Intention Setting if those are proportionate to your meeting or presentation. It is okay to script these if you are new to using these protocols.
2. Asking Indigenous peoples to open is appropriate where you have a relationship with the individual or local community. If a meeting participant is identified as an Indigenous Leader, Elder, or Knowledge Keeper, you are also welcomed to ask them if they might be willing to open with a prayer.
3. Indigenous peoples can open with a prayer or welcome to the territory. A welcome to the territory is most often reserved for special and formal occasions like conferences, Annual General Meetings, ceremonies, and special events.
4. **It is not appropriate to ask an Indigenous person to do the Territory Acknowledgement** as this should always be done by the host/chair/ MC or most senior organizational leader of the gathering as a cultural protocol.
5. All non-Indigenous staff are encouraged to practice the Territory Acknowledgement Protocol. Do not rely solely on Indigenous team members to open with prayer and protocol, but instead aim to establish a culture where all team members feel encouraged to offer opening remarks as part of a collective reflective practice for **reconciliation** and Indigenous Cultural Safety.
6. Refer to your immediate supervisor for questions on Territory Acknowledgements before you refer to an Indigenous team member. Where supervisors feel they are limited in their own scope of understanding, they can refer to the most appropriate cultural/protocol advisor.
7. Territory Acknowledgements can feel a little awkward when you first begin practicing them. You will find that the more often you practice them the more comfortable you will become. Feel free to check-in with fellow team mates on feedback for Territory Acknowledgements, language, syntax, tone, and delivery.

WHAT IS AN OPENING PRAYER?

An opening prayer is a cultural protocol in many Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island to open meetings and gather in a good way. We open meetings and gatherings in prayer to:

- Recognize the ones who have come before us (our ancestors), and ground ourselves in the fact that the work we will do together today will affect the people who come after us (future generations)
- To recognize that we are equal in the meeting, we are all human beings, and we all have good and bad days, and we need to care for one another before the work comes
- To humble ourselves by recognizing we are all spiritual beings belonging to the Great Spirit
- To leave negative energy and thoughts at the door before we work together
- To respect one another
- To treat one another holistically

WHAT IS INTENTION SETTING?

Intention Setting is a contemporary meeting formality to establish an equitable and a culturally safe environment for participants to come together and exchange knowledge and information in a healthy and constructive way. This is especially encouraged when meeting agenda items have concepts such as racism, discrimination, prejudice, power and privilege, white supremacy, colonialism, health equity, and Indigenous specific trauma.

These concepts can have the implication to create division among meeting participants if not addressed at the beginning with transparency and intention setting. Meeting hosts/chairs are encouraged to use intention setting within formal presentations to help participants prepare for the information emotionally, socially, and culturally.



TRANSFORMATIVE TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT EXAMPLE

In keeping with Indigenous culture and to build respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, we acknowledge that our office is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, the keepers of this land reaching from the centre of Coast Salish territory on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, to the Fraser River, since time immemorial.

As settlers, it's important to recognize that although we call this place home, the Snuneymuxw First Nation never ceded their lands to the Crown. Instead, we arrived here, and across Turtle Island, uninvited and imposed, participated in, and benefited from the colonial system. Our challenge as settlers, whether recently arrived or born here, is to recognize and work actively to decolonize these systems.

The devastating and lasting impacts of colonization have done much to erase the culture, language, tradition, economy, and world views of Indigenous peoples. We will listen, educate ourselves on

decolonization, and uplift and celebrate the Indigenous peoples of this land and, upon invitation to do so, support them in the pursuit of self-determination, sovereignty, and justice.

An integral part of our mission and vision has been to publish books for a world of change, in a way that has a minimal impact on our environment, to help build a just and ecologically sustainable society. For this work to remain authentic and meaningful, we acknowledge our settler privilege and understand the impact it has on the land and Indigenous peoples.

We also acknowledge that while our main business address is located on the land of the Snuneymuxw, we have staff settled on the land of: Southern Anishinaabe (Ojibwa), Western Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, Anishinabewaki, Michif Piyii (Métis), K'ómoks First Nation, Coast Salish, sc̓əwaθenaʔ təməxʷ (Tsawwassen), Quw'utsun, Á,LEŊENEÇ ŁTE (WSÁNEĆ), Stz'uminus, Hul'q'umi'num'.

Whose land are you on? <https://native-land.ca/>

– *New Society Publishers*
Nanaimo, Vancouver Island BC

RESOURCES

| Title: | Source: | Link: |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| 'I regret it': Hayden King on writing Ryerson University's territorial acknowledgment | CBC Radio | "I Regret It": Hayden King on Ryerson's Territorial Acknowledgement" |
| Baroness von Sketch Show | CBC Comedy | https://youtu.be/xlG17C19nYo |
| First Peoples' Map of B.C. | First Peoples' Cultural Council | https://maps.fpcc.ca/languages |
| Indigenous Voices - Land Acknowledgement | Sheridan Source | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HtG7j19na4\ |
| What is a Land Acknowledgment? | Xwi7xwa - Distance Research | UBC Land Acknowledgment Guide |
| Writing a Territory Acknowledgement Guide | Naomi Kennedy & Brianna Leon | Territory Acknowledgement Guide |