



<b>UBC School of Nursing Guidance Document</b>	<b>Approval Date:</b> December 15, 2020
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<b>Title:</b> Land Acknowledgement <sup>1</sup> Best Practices for Faculty, Staff and Students	
<b>Responsible Executive:</b> Indigenous Cultural Safety Strategic Initiatives Committee	
<b>Endorsement:</b> UBC School of Nursing Indigenous Advisory Committee	

### ***What is land acknowledgment?***

Acknowledging Indigenous lands, rights, and peoples is a practice to inform where universities and institutions are situated. It is a starting point to understanding the long presence and histories of Indigenous peoples as well as our historical, social, and physical locations. Land acknowledgements have become a recognized practice at universities across Canada, but they vary by context and place<sup>1</sup>. There are common ways to acknowledge territories at UBC Vancouver; however, individuals who are making this acknowledgement should consider extending and personalizing this given acknowledgement statement by integrating it into the context, in which they are speaking or teaching.

### ***Is a land acknowledgment the same as a territorial welcome?***

No, acknowledging the land upon which one lives, works, teaches, etc. means naming the history of the territory and recognize that as non-Indigenous peoples we are occupying lands that are the ancestral territories of Indigenous Peoples. A territorial welcome is *provided by* the peoples and host Nation(s) of the land being acknowledged. At UBC-Vancouver Elder Larry Grant provides a territorial welcome: *“I raise my hands in welcome to all of you here at UBC, on the traditional, ancestral, unceded lands of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm-speaking Musqueam people.”*  
(<https://students.ubc.ca/ubclife/welcome-musqueam-territory>)

### ***Why are land acknowledgements important?***

Territory acknowledgements are a step towards building better understandings and relations with Indigenous peoples and communities. It is also an opportunity to make meaningful connections to the land. Acknowledging traditional<sup>2</sup> ancestral, and unceded<sup>3</sup> lands is a way to invite people gathered together - particularly those who are not Indigenous - to listen and acknowledge what being uninvited to the territory means, understand Indigenous-settler

<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘land’ and ‘territory’ are often used interchangeably. For the purpose of this document, we are using the term ‘land acknowledgement’ to mean the statement that indicates recognition of traditional lands, and ‘territory’ to be associated with ‘territorial welcome’ that is offered by a member of the named territory.

<sup>2</sup> According to the [UBC Indigenous Peoples Language Guidelines \(2016\)](#), traditional territory refers to the acknowledgement of lands that were traditionally occupied by First Nations. This also includes, ancestral, where land was handed down to subsequent generations. Unceded refers to land not turned over to the Crown by treaty or some other agreement.

<sup>3</sup> Ninety-five percent of British Columbia, including Vancouver, is on unceded traditional First Nations territory. **Unceded** means that First Nations people never ceded or signed away their lands to the Crown or to Canada. A **traditional territory** is the geographic area identified by a First Nation as the land they and/or their ancestors traditionally occupied and used  
(<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/acknowledging-traditional-territories/>)



relations, and how non-Indigenous people benefit from being on unceded (stolen) and occupied lands and the resources that the lands offer.

As territory acknowledgements become part of common practice within institutions, there is a risk of not keeping the depth of meaning; it is critical to highlight their purpose and their significance for learning. In [Why We Acknowledge Musqueam Territory](#), Dr. Linc Kesler states that acknowledging Musqueam is recognizing the long history and presence of the Musqueam people for thousands of years before UBC Point Grey came to be. As the university grew, Musqueam history was overshadowed by the colonial culture and Musqueam were blocked from access to their own traditional land and resources. Starting off class or any event hosted at the Point Grey campus with a territory acknowledgement is a significant way to disrupt this problematic pattern and show respect for Musqueam as well as other Indigenous communities where we live, work, learn and play. On-line contexts and meetings in other territories provide opportunities to learn about and acknowledge the diverse territories on which people are at the time. Such acknowledgments serve as a commitment to engage in ongoing relationships with all Indigenous people and to continue learning from them.

### ***How can I develop a land acknowledgement practice?***

Acknowledging Indigenous lands in a thoughtful and respectful way requires understanding historical and ongoing colonialism in Canada as the basis for learning the reason for and *impact* of land acknowledgements<sup>4,5</sup>. Faculty, staff & students can consider these guiding questions and use the answers to shape how they word their territory acknowledgments:

- How do you understand your relationship to the land you are acknowledging? How does your history and social positionality<sup>6</sup> influence your relationships with students, teachers, research partners and staff and the focus of your meetings, research or course content?
- What are the objectives of your class, event and/or meeting that can or may relate to engaging with the land and Indigenous peoples? How can you connect this to your teaching, research, learning practice and/or meeting goals?
- What personal meaning might be added in closing?

### ***When? How?***

Indigenous land acknowledgment is a respectful protocol for beginning a course, meeting, class, public event, lecture or other event. While primarily stated at the start of an event, course, class, etc., some may include circling back to acknowledge the land in closing. Regardless of when, the intent is to start the coming together of people *in a good and respectful way*, to bring awareness of Indigenous Peoples' land rights in everyday spaces. A few points to consider:

- While opening a course with a land acknowledgement is common, consider doing to for each class

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<sup>4</sup> Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements. (2016) By âpihtawikosisân. <http://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://thetalon.ca/an-introduction-to-settler-colonialism-at-ubc-part-three/>

<sup>6</sup> Positionality is the social and political context that creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status. Positionality also describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of and outlook on the world.



- Develop a meeting protocol that starts with land acknowledgement to model acts of truth and reconciliation
- Invite others (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people) in your spaces and classes to provide a land acknowledgement through modeling a spirit of humility and learning.
- Land acknowledgement can also include stating *who we are, where you come from and your connection* to the land. School of Nursing Elder Roberta Price references the importance of land acknowledgement protocol that includes identity. For example, an Indigenous nurse on our Advisory Circle would say: My name is Dawn Tisdale I am an Indigenous woman of mixed European and Mi'kmaq ancestry from .... and I am a guest on ..... . OR My name is Helen Brown I am a settler descendent of mixed European ancestry living on ... and today I am a visitor on the ancestral, traditional, unceded and occupied territory/lands of the ....Peoples.

### ***What about virtual meetings and classes?***

For virtual meetings and classes, pre-recorded land acknowledgements are appropriate. Another option is each person having each person take a virtual silent moment to locate and learn about the Indigenous land they are joining from and acknowledge the territory and being visitor on the land, using the following invitation:

*"While we are all joining from different traditional, ancestral, unceded and occupied Indigenous Lands, we would like to take a moment for each of you to learn/remember the lands upon which you live and join us from today. Please go to <https://native-land.ca> to learn/remember upon the lands you are joining us from and take a moment to acknowledge the territory and thank the Nation(s) for allowing visitation to their traditional lands*

### ***How can I learn to pronounce Indigenous land, territories, place names and Nations?***

<https://www.first-nations.info/pronunciation-guide-nations-british-columbia.html>

### ***How can I acknowledge the lands upon which UBC is located in my email signature?***

The following are options to consider:

- UBC provides a brand generator for signatures (<https://brand.ubc.ca/e-mail-signature-generator/>) and faculty and staff can also personalize their signatures, such as in the following examples:
- A personalized acknowledgement can include teachings from Indigenous Elders referencing the importance of land acknowledgment to the commitment to truth and reconciliation); for example, as used by Dawn Tisdale, an Indigenous nurse:

*I am a guest on the land on which I work, live and play and give thanks and acknowledgment to the unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Sto:lō and Səlilwataʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.*

*"As Canadians, we share a responsibility to look after each other and acknowledge the pain and suffering that our diverse societies have endured—a pain that has been handed down to the next generations. We need to right those wrongs, heal*



*together, and create a new future that honours the unique gifts of our children and grandchildren. How do we do this? Through sharing our personal stories, legends and traditional teachings, we found that we are interconnected through the same mind and spirit. Our traditional teachings speak to acts such as holding one another up, walking together, balance, healing and unity. Our stories show how these teachings can heal their pain and restore dignity. We discovered that in all of our cultural traditions, there are teachings about reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, healing and balance. We invite you to search in your own traditions and beliefs, and those of your ancestors, to find these core values that create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth.” Statement of Reconciliation by Indigenous Elders gathered on Musqueam territory (2012)*

- A personalized acknowledgement can use the traditional Indigenous names of the territories and peoples of the unceded, traditional, and ancestral land as in the example below:

**Helen Brown, RN, PhD (she/her)**  
Associate Professor | School of Nursing

*We acknowledge the land on which we work is the unceded and occupied traditional territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh)*

- Hyperlinks can be added to specific Nation and Territorial information to acknowledge unceded, traditional, and ancestral land you:

**Katriona Stewart LLB, MA ([She, Her, Hers](#))**  
Program Development Consultant, Academic Services  
Extended Learning  
The University of British Columbia | Vancouver Campus  
[xʷməθkʷəy̓əm](#) Traditional Territory

### ***Additional Considerations***

- Typically, land acknowledgments made by non-Indigenous people last about 2-3 minutes; they include factual information about the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories upon which we currently stand, teach, or meet, and relevant comments about the event, meeting or class context, with personal meanings and reflections to close.
- Stating territory acknowledgements are not enough; they must be followed with actions and initiatives for deeper learning about how settlers and their descendants occupy Indigenous lands. Otherwise, the acknowledgement may be tokenized rather than being a meaningful step towards better relations with Indigenous peoples and communities, as Khelsilem warns in the blog post [Liberated Yet? Khelsilem’s Tips for Acknowledging Territory 1.0](#).
- The frequency of (i.e. first class of a course or every class in a course) and who does the acknowledgement depends on the specific context and ought to be negotiated by those involved; each acknowledgement can be unique and should not be prescriptive. Reading from notes is helpful if you are learning and that helps you be accurate and comfortable.
- In courses, teachers are responsible for initiating conversation about how acknowledgements will be done; this may include inviting a guest or Elder to begin to join classes for this specific purpose.
- Using online welcomes to and acknowledgement of territories recorded by Elder is an acceptable and respectful practice (see: Elder Larry Grant, Leona Sparrow)

### ***UBC School of Nursing Resources***

[Musqueam and UBC - Aboriginal Portal \(aboriginal.ubc.ca\)](#): Musqueam elder sʔəyəʔəq (Larry Grant)

[Link to territorial maps]



<https://maps.fpcc.ca/>

### ***Land Acknowledgement for Canvas & Syllabi***

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MUSQUEAM FIRST NATION PEOPLE AND LAND

“UBC’s Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, occupied and unceded territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm First Nation. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.” (Retrieved <http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/community-youth/musqueam-and-ubc/>). UBC School of Nursing acknowledges past history and the present relationships with Musqueam people and the land as a way to honour and show respect to the Musqueam who have inhabited this land for many thousands of years, and to signal our commitment to reconciliation in light of the past and ongoing harms inflicted through colonization of Indigenous people and lands.

To learn more about the Musqueam people, land and culture, go to <http://www.musqueam.bc.ca/our-story> ʔəy tə šx<sup>w</sup>q<sup>w</sup>eləwən ct k<sup>w</sup> s səyemstəx<sup>w</sup>s tə x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm ʔiʔ tə ʔa təməx<sup>w</sup>s. We honour the Musqueam people and their land.

#### **UBC CTLT Indigenous Initiatives: Teaching Resources**

<https://indigenousinitiatives.ctlt.ubc.ca/research-resources/>

#### ***Learning Resources***

[Acknowledging Our Shared Territory](#): “Acknowledging Our Shared Territory is a short film featuring local Indigenous leaders that delves more deeply into the subject of Territory Acknowledgements. [Ames - Access Media]

[On land acknowledgments, some Indigenous advocates are ambivalent](#): “Canada’s growing embrace of Indigenous land acknowledgements appears to have left some First Nations advocates ambivalent about whether they are a form of reconciliation—or institutional hypocrisy,” reports the Canadian Press. This ambivalence is captured well by the comments of Dr. Lynn

Gehl, an Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe from the Ottawa River Valley and Naomi Metallic, a *Dalhousie University law professor and Chancellor ‘s Chair in Aboriginal Law and Policy*.” [Vancouver Sun]

[Indigenous Foundations](#): The Indigenous Foundations website was developed to support students in their studies, and to provide instructors, researchers, and the broader public with a place to begin exploring topics that relate to Aboriginal peoples, cultures, and histories.

[Native-land.ca](#): A note from the author: Native-land.ca is not an organization (yet) and is run by Victor G Temprano, whose company, Mapster, funds the website. This is not an academic or professional survey of Indigenous territories, and the maps are constantly being refined from user input. These are meant more for the sake of helping people get interested and engaged. This map must be used critically. Maps potentially function as colonial artifacts and represent a very particular way of seeing the world - a way primarily concerned with ownership, exclusivity, and power relations.



[CTLT Indigenous Initiatives: Classroom Climate Series Territory Acknowledgement](#): This blog article was co-created by CTLT's Marketing and Communications team and Indigenous Initiatives that features interviews with UBC faculty members who are actively discussing territory acknowledgements within their units and research. It also features a session in partnership with UBC Learning Circle on Territory Acknowledgements in Teaching and Learning.

[UBC Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines](#): This guide has been produced to help UBC communicators navigate the terminology and meanings associated with this subject in order to produce the best—and most respectful— results, with the recognition that, as time passes, the terminology is subject to change and this guide will need to be refreshed.

[The Talon: An Introduction to Settler Colonialism: Part Three](#): A three-part series on Settler Colonialism at UBC co-authored by UBC students, Justin Wiebe and Kay Ho.

[Beyond Territory Acknowledgements](#): Chelsea Vowel critically looks at the practice of territory acknowledgements and ways institutions have embedded this practice into their day-to-day operations. In addition, the article provides an extensive bibliography of other sources to draw on.