

VISION, RELATIONSHIPS, KNOWLEDGE, ACTION



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has become an increasingly popular practice to open meetings and events with a land acknowledgement. It is important for you and your agency to understand why we do this, what should be included, and where to find the information you need.

The purpose of Land Acknowledgements, sometimes referred to as territorial acknowledgements, is to dispel the Doctrine of Discovery (https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/18-01-22-D_mantling-the-Doc-trine-of-Discovery-EN.pdf) that says there was nothing of value here before contact, and to affirm the right and responsibility of Indigenous peoples to this land. Essentially, land acknowledgements are about telling the truth about our collective history.

When deciding when to do a land acknowledgement, it helps to think of it as part of your identity. When you are introducing yourself, to new people or at the beginning of a meeting or event, you should incorporate a land acknowledgement. Also, it is important at the beginning of large gatherings to include an acknowledgement of where you are. However, if you are having the same team meeting with the same people, every single week, it may not be necessary to do a land acknowledgement every time. Maybe once a month, or once a quarter, so you and your colleagues remind yourselves of where you are, but don't hear it so often that you stop listening and thinking.

There are 5 basic ingredients to a Land Acknowledgment:

- Who were the original stewards of the land you occupy?
- Is the territory ceded (covered by a treaty or agreement) or unceded (never having been formally surrendered)? What treaties or covenants cover the land?
- An acknowledgement that the land was kept healthy and strong for thousands of years, due to the stewardship of those Original Peoples.
- An acknowledgment that the life we have in Canada today is the result of an inequitable taking of land and resources from those Original Peoples.
- That you will use your privilege to address those historic wrongs.

To determine whose land you are on and the treaties that cover that land please use: <https://native-land.ca/> and <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ab-original-treaties>.

The most important ingredient to Land Acknowledgements is sincerity. This is an opportunity to learn more about Indigenous People:

- How to pronounce their traditional name?
- How had they cared for the land?
- Where are they today?

An example of a Land Acknowledgement is listed below:

"Today, I am privileged to work, live and play on the traditional territories of the Anishinabek, Haudenosaunee and Wendat peoples. This territory is included in the Dish with One Spoon Wampum, the Coldwater Treaties, and in the 1850 Robinson-Huron Treaty. As a Canadian, I understand that the standard of living we enjoy here is a result of thousands of years of stewardship by the original inhabitants and the inequitable taking of the land from them. I acknowledge that in order to have reconciliation, we must first understand truth; I commit to move forward in an effort to achieve both."

The Indigenous Health Circle in partnership with Ontario Health Central has developed and vetted the following land acknowledgement:

I/We would like to acknowledge that the land which we are

gathered on today is the traditional territory of the Anishinabek Nation; specifically, the Chippewa Tri-Council comprised of Beausoleil First Nation, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, and The Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, and more recently the Mississaugas of the Credit River First Nation.

I/We also acknowledge the communities of Moose Deer Point First Nation, the Wahta Mohawks Territory, and the Métis Councils of Georgian Bay, Moon River, and Barrie South Simcoe in this region.

The Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee Confederacy have also walked on this territory over time. For thousands of years, those Nations lived in balance with the land and protected all sacred life within Creation. The Original Peoples lived a life of stewardship, rather than exploitation.

Ontario today encompasses unceded territories as well as territories covered by 46 treaties and other agreements and is home to many Indigenous Nations from across Turtle Island, including the Inuit and the Métis. These treaties and other covenants, including the One Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, are agreements to peaceably share and care for the land and its resources. Other Indigenous Nations and newcomers were invited into these covenants in the spirit of respect, peace, and friendship.

We are all Treaty people.

On September 30th each year we mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Every day we are mindful of broken covenants and we strive to make this right. We commit to collaboration based on the foundational assumption that Indigenous Peoples have the power, strength, and competency to develop culturally specific strategies for their communities. We are dedicated to honouring Indigenous self-determination, history, and culture, and are committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation and respect with all First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.



DIVERSITY

One of the hardest things in trying to create culturally appropriate services for Indigenous People in Canada is the vast diversity within our population. There is no one way to offer services that will address the different perspectives Indigenous people carry today. It can be confusing for non-Indigenous partners to understand why something will

work in one community, or with one client, and then be inadequate with others. Some things to consider about diversity are:

- Nation - prior to contact, there were between 50-60 different nations in what we now call Canada, each with quite different cultures, languages, and perspectives.
- Traditional/non-Traditional - many Indigenous people are working hard to a) retain and protect Indigenous teachings and b) incorporate those teachings into their lives in a meaningful way. There are also many Indigenous people that choose not to participate in Indigenous teachings and traditional ways of life. The reasons for both retaining and choosing not to participate in the retaining of languages and culture vary from individual to individual.
- On reserve/Off reserve - it is dangerous to assume everyone who identifies as Indigenous has connections with First Nations or Urban Indigenous Communities. The Indian Act, Indian Residential Schools, the 60s Scoop, and Indian Day Schools are just some of the government policies that fractured the connection to community for many Indigenous people.
- Urban/Isolated - someone growing up in a First Nation community close to an urban centre will be used to interacting with people from outside their community. In more isolated communities, they have no ability to create relationships with outside agencies or other communities. Racism often colours interactions between Indigenous people and Canadians - often stemming from historic events such as broken treaties, forced relocations, land loss, and traumatic relationships. In many towns adjacent to Indigenous communities, relationships are reflective of quite different values, lack of acceptance and understanding, lower economic and social status, and the long-term impacts of restrictive legislation.

These are just a few of the many ways Indigenous peoples are unique and diverse. It is ok to not know everything about everyone; just be prepared to learn.



TERMINOLOGY

Knowing the correct terminology to use when discussing Indigenous Peoples and issues can be difficult. For generations, Indigenous people were not allowed to define themselves, but were labelled Indians by the federal

government. Today, you will find many different terms used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people:

- Indian
- Native
- Aboriginal
- First Nation, Métis, Inuit
- Indigenous

Indian is no longer widely accepted as it is the term forced on First Nation peoples by the government and is associated with the terrible history of assimilation. It cannot yet be removed from the language, as it is still the legal definition of one group of Indigenous Peoples.

Native is considered vague as it can be interpreted to mean anyone born in Canada, regardless of their heritage.

Aboriginal is the term used in the Canadian Constitution and is meant to encompass Indians, Inuit and Métis Peoples. These groups, however, are diverse from one another and each require their own relationship with the Government. The term Pan-Aboriginal has come to describe policies that have no chance for success because they do not include a distinction based approach.

First Nation, Métis and Inuit are terms that reference very specific communities and Nations, all of which fall under the heading "Indigenous". Indigenous people are recognized as being from this place now called Canada, but that have unique histories, perspectives and needs.

Unless you know a person's preference, you will have to start somewhere. Pick one word or term, be educated on why you are picking that choice, and then be prepared to be corrected if the individual you are speaking with prefers a different term. In all cases, listen to what is said by the person as they define themselves and respect that choice.

There are other ways we can improve our terminology when speaking about Indigenous people or issues. There are many phrases that have been commonly used for decades that do not reflect the truth about Indigenous peoples. Expressions like "Indigenous people survived for a long time before Europeans came here" minimizes our presence on the land and is disrespectful to our traditional cultures. "Indigenous people thrived here" is a better option. It can also be offensive to say this land and its peoples were "discovered" when we had been here for thousands of years. Using these outdated terms puts the emphasis on Europeans and not on the Indigenous peoples of what we now call Canada. We should also avoid saying "our Indigenous Peoples", as that is paternalistic and colonial in nature; we are not owned but are sovereign nations.



ADVOCACY VS. ALLYSHIP

Many people say they are allies, but few spend time considering what that means. They may confuse advocacy with allyship. Advocacy is using your power or privilege to support a marginalized community that you yourself are not part of. An example of this is a doctor who calls an insurance company on behalf of a patient to make sure they have all the pertinent information to determine if a patient qualifies for benefits. The doctor in this case is using their expertise to secure a favourable outcome for their patient. Allyship is using your power and privilege to make room for Indigenous people to speak for themselves. An example of this would be a doctor who was asked to speak on Indigenous health issues at a large conference, but instead has an Indigenous healer speak. The doctor is a true ally because they are supporting the voice of Indigenous people from behind, not in front.

Indigenous people in what we now call Canada need both advocates and allies. Fighting generations of oppression needs all the help it can get. But working towards allyship is always going to have the most positive impact on our people, our communities, and our nations. Remember, ally is not a label you can give yourself; it has to come from the community you are supporting. They get to decide if your actions qualify you as an ally.





SELF-IDENTIFICATION

This term refers to the process of asking people if they wish to self-identify as Indigenous when entering any kind of service. You may get asked this by the clerk at the Emergency Room, when registering your child for school or even becoming a foster parent.

Indigenous people have been chronically underserved by health, education, and social services for decades, and to address that, data needs to be collected. It is important for leaders to know where Indigenous people are accessing services, what services are they looking for, etc. There is also an opportunity, once identified, that Indigenous people can be offered culturally specific supports or services. Both of these goals can only be achieved if we know where Indigenous people are entering into care.

Usually the question is phrased as "Do you wish to self-identify as Indigenous", though terms other than Indigenous are also acceptable. It is phrased as such because it may be that for any number of reasons, Indigenous people may not feel safe to identify themselves in any given situation. By asking if they wish to self-identify, we give them the option of identifying or not, without denying their identity.

Because it is impossible to tell one's ethnicity from their appearance, people doing intake into services should ask everyone if they wish to self-identify. Those that do respond positively, may then be given the opportunity to further define themselves as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit.



Figure 1 Using easy to see visuals in addition to verbally asked questions can help send the message that voluntary self-ID is a standard procedure and a helpful way to access Indigenous specific supports and resources at your organization



LIFE-LONG LEARNING

It is important to realize that cultural competency, being competent to recognize and support someone else's culture, is a lifelong journey. Continue to look for more opportunities to learn about Indigenous peoples.

Here are some possible sources:

In person; nothing is as valuable as lived experiences. Listen to your Indigenous friends and colleagues. Participate in activities like pow wows. Call the local First Nation and urban Indigenous communities in your region like Friendship Centres, Métis locals, and Native Women's Groups to see what activities you would be welcome to join. It may be time for you to learn how to bead! Take as many cultural competency training courses as you can find. Do not worry if you think you have heard it all before; every facilitator will bring different perspectives to the work and can add to your comprehension. Take the time to understand why Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers refer to all Canadians as Treaty People. Read books. There are hundreds of talented Indigenous authors who write both fiction and non-fiction that can help build your understanding. Look for information about laws like the Indian Act and about treaties. There are any number of sources of rich learning for you. Movies and podcasts are great educational opportunities as well.



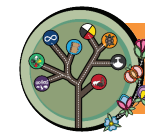
CREATING A SAFE WORKPLACE

For many Indigenous people, their own workplaces may not feel safe or comfortable. There are steps any employer can take to create more welcoming work environments for Indigenous staff:

- Ensure diversity and inclusion are part of the workplace culture and are discussed at all levels.
- HR policies need to clearly identify workplace expectations, acceptable standards of behaviour, and processes to address conflict. Consequences also need to be clearly identified in case of on-going or escalating conflict.
- Provide sufficient learning opportunities for all staff on Indigenous cultural competency.
- Provide access to competent, appropriate learning opportunities.
- Provide access to additional materials like books, magazines, and movies to staff.
- Invite Indigenous teachers and Elders to interact with staff when they have questions.
- Provide designated staff to support Indigenous employees in navigating through the workplace and to provide non-Indigenous staff a place to ask questions without assuming their co-workers have the time or inclination to teach them.
- Endeavour to include Indigenous culture into corporate policy. For example, bereavement leave may need to be adjusted to accommodate ceremonies.
- Recognize the dates that are important to Indigenous people like National Indigenous Peoples Day, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and Red Dress Day to honour murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, across the organization.

Make sure staff are educated about the basics of diversity and inclusion so that all people can feel welcome. Once that is accomplished, make sure educational opportunities are offered for staff to learn about the true history of colonization and the impacts on Indigenous People in Canada. While encouraging employees to listen to their coworkers, be careful not to place anyone in the position of "teacher". It is not the job of any employee to have to educate their workplace about their culture or their history. Employers can certainly invite Indigenous staff to sit on diversity committees, and you can ask their opinion on educational opportunities. Just remember they were hired to do a specific job, and they should not feel pressured to have to take on the extra burden of being a representative of their culture or all Indigenous people.

It is also imperative that Human Resources staff are adequately trained to address conflict in the office. The last thing an Indigenous worker wants to hear when reporting racist comments from a colleague is "He probably didn't mean it". Comments like that put the responsibility solely on the victim of the situation and does nothing to increase awareness. Every conflict is an opportunity for further learning, but never at the expense of an individual.



ANTI-RACISM

It is time that we, as a society, address the systemic racism that has been going on for centuries. Indigenous peoples have had to fight against The Doctrine of Discovery (because Indians were not Christian, they were not human) and Terra Nullius (because no humans lived here, the land was unoccupied) since contact with European races. The education system in Canada has been based, historically, not on fact, but on the writings of the first European colonizers, who did not understand the cultures they were meeting. This misrepresentation of fact, and the continuing lack of Indigenous content in curriculums today, feeds the ignorance that promotes racism.

Today, Indigenous people, and all People of Colour, face racism daily in our region, our province and our country. That much of this racism is unintentional, or that it is a result not of philosophy but ignorance, does not in any way reduce the negative effects it has on the lives of people trying to find balance in a world that has historically minimized them.

To address the racism systemic in our society today, we must:

- Take steps that are intentional, determined and incorporated at all levels of our relationships
- Listen to those who are the victims of racism, as nothing can be accomplished without representation from those with lived experience
- Ensure that our education systems and curriculums are based on truth and not perception
- Work relationally

- Look openly and honestly at ourselves, our systems and our political structures. We cannot be afraid of what we see if we want to change

Other system improvements:

Include policies that ensure Indigenous inclusion in decision making. Identify portions of budgets or funding allocations that can be provided to Indigenous governed organizations to do the work. Ensure non-Indigenous organizations that are applying for funding provide proof that they have engaged Indigenous communities

Principles of Engagement with Indigenous Communities and Organizations

These principles, created by the Indigenous Health Circle of Simcoe County are intended to support successful engagement and relationship building with Indigenous leaders, communities, and organizations. They are central to authentic engagement, aligned with Indigenous worldview, and provide a starting point for a framework to guide relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organizations.

Principle One: Appropriate and Meaningful Consultation

Consultations must begin at the outset of a process in order to facilitate full and adequate partnership, not engaged in as an after-thought. Consultations with Indigenous communities and organizations must respect the diversity of opinions, histories, and decision-making processes present 'at the table'.

Principle Two: True and Equal Partners

Indigenous people are the experts regarding their own needs and solutions, as well as in the circumstances which historically and currently create health, social, and economic inequities. It is essential that Indigenous leadership is engaged as true and equal partners in the redesign of services to ensure they will meet the diverse needs of the Indigenous population. The Indigenous perspective on partnership includes building multi-lateral relationships based on respectful dialogue and cooperation; decisions are not made unilaterally.

Principle Three: Right to Self-Governance

By virtue of their sovereignty and under Canadian Law, Indigenous peoples have the right to self-governance. This right to self-governance must be respected in any engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations, guided by Indigenous leadership.

Principle Four: Indigenous Wellness in Indigenous Hands

Indigenous governed health and social services would see Indigenous organizations and communities positioned to plan, manage, and deliver their own services. By ensuring that Indigenous peoples are leaders in health, community, and social services, rather than passive beneficiaries, emphasis is placed on finding Indigenous solutions to Indigenous concerns. It is important to note that Indigenous-governed organizations are led entirely by Indigenous leaders and boards of directors in which the members are Indigenous themselves, and where governance and operations are fully determined by Indigenous people. Indigenous representation on a board does not mean the board is Indigenous-governed.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Which is correct, Indigenous or Aboriginal? Terminology can be very personal. Listen to what the Indigenous people you are interacting with use, and then use that with them. You cannot know, when meeting someone, which term they prefer, and which they may find offensive. Using the section on "Terminology", chose your preferred term and start there. If you are corrected by someone, saying they prefer a different term, make sure you thank them for taking the time to educate you.

Why do we do Land Acknowledgements? Most of us were taught a distorted version of history. The real story of the creation of what is now called Canada is based on broken promises and treaties with Indigenous Nations. Land Acknowledgements are the first step to correcting our ignorance of history. Think of a land acknowledgement as part of your identity; when you introduce yourself with your name, your job, your role, you should also introduce the land you work on, and where that privilege originated.

What are the 94 Calls to Action? During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's statement gathering process, Residential School survivors told the Commissioners what steps that they thought were necessary for us to heal from, and never repeat, the horrors of those schools. Read them and look for any opportunity to address them in both your personal and professional life (http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf).

What is cultural appropriation? Cultural appropriation can be the intentional claiming of ancestry or membership in a culture not their own. Individuals practice cultural appropriation with the expectation of profit or status within a culture they see as convenient to their needs. Some non-Indigenous people have become experts on the history, traditions, and ceremonies or claim to be descendants of Indigenous heroes and in some way make money from it. Challenges to false claims are becoming the norm to discourage cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation is also placing yourself as an expert on, or profiting from, a culture not your own. Participation is not appropriation; you can safely wear beaded earrings, or dance at pow wow. Just do not teach people about a culture if it is not yours.

What is Orange Shirt Day? It was recently declared that September 30th is the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, a new Federal holiday. For years it has been a day to honour Residential School Survivors and to remember those who did not survive the schools. Orange shirts represent the personal clothing that children in residential schools were not permitted to wear. Survivors have spoken of children who died of diseases such as tuberculosis or influenza, child abuse, neglect and deprivation, and were buried in cemeteries adjacent to the Residential Schools. Some parents were not informed of the death of their child and children in the school were discouraged from mourning the loss. Residential School survivors believed a national day of remembrance was necessary to heal.

What is National Indigenous Peoples Day? National Indigenous Peoples Day is a day recognizing and celebrating the cultures and contributions of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. June 21st was chosen in the 1970's by the Canadian Association in Support of Native People as a day to bring awareness and attention to the contributions of Native people as governments of the time tended to see Native People as "Canada's Indian Problem."

How can I learn more about Indigenous Peoples in the region?

Visit the First Nation communities in your area; there are many beautiful places to visit. It is a good idea to call the Band Office first to see where visitors are allowed. You can also reach out to the urban Indigenous communities through Friendship Centres, Métis Local Councils, and Native Women's Groups. Many Indigenous communities will welcome an offer to volunteer, so you can give back while creating healthier relationships.

How can I be part of reconciliation efforts?

Reconciliation is not a single action or event. It is important to establish relationships which have meaning and purpose in our lives. If you are committed to create change, there are many areas which need support: anti-oppression, anti-racism, poverty, homelessness, environmental issues, and clean water rights. Reconciliation processes may lead you to become involved with people committed to the same issues. As with any relationship, bring kindness of actions, honesty of intent, generosity of spirit, and strength of your values to relationship building. Is there a crucial debate in Parliament which will impact Indigenous people or the environment, or is someone asking for your vote? Make sure government representatives know what importance you put on Indigenous issues, and what you want to see them do in government on your behalf. Reconciliation is not a single action or speech but rather a growth of knowledge and change in attitude which will inform future views and choices. Some of the issues of today, will determine the lives of our descendants and they need our thought, consideration, and action.

I've heard people say: "Let's have a powwow." Is it offensive?

Few things will demonstrate your lack of education on Indigenous issues as the thoughtless use of colloquialisms. Many expressions used in popular communication carry connotations that may offend some, if not all, of the people you will meet. Here are five colloquialisms that should be avoided at all costs:

1. Indian giver
2. Circle the wagons
3. Low man on the totem pole
4. Too many Chiefs, not enough Indians
5. Indian Summer

If you want to learn more, Bob Joseph at Indigenous Corporate Training has great resources on their website at ictinc.ca

