

TOWARDS MEANINGFUL TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Beginning with a territorial acknowledgement can be a great way to live out a decolonized practice. In order for it to not be performance, a meaningful acknowledgment asks for an investment of time to be in relationship to it. This relationship asks us to consider linking the acknowledgement to the meeting or event to what it means to be on unceded land and our relationship to the ways we live on the land and our relationship to the traditional caretakers of the land. Ideally, when possible, threading the acknowledgement through or tying back to it in some way increases the meaning.

If it makes you uncomfortable, that's a sign you are growing. It's normal to feel some discomfort. If it feels like too much discomfort, then sit with it, and perhaps reach out to a trusted person. If you are not comfortable with giving an acknowledgement, then it might be best to pass on performing a public acknowledgement where you are just saying the words and naming territories. Let your relationship to this act be real.

The following are guidelines, not a checklist. Focusing on one question can be more than enough. You may find you generate more questions from being engaged with the land acknowledgment in this way.

EXPLORE:

- Whose land are you on? Whose land is the meeting taking place on?
- <https://www.whose.land/en/> or <https://native-land.ca/>
- Text 1-855-917-5263 to find out whose land you are on. Text the place "Vancouver" and you will get a response. Do your best to pronounce words in Indigenous languages. Learning language takes practice – practice saying the words and you will get better.

CONTEMPLATE:

- What is the meeting / gathering about? Is there a theme that you can connect to the territory, to the act of giving an acknowledgement?
- What does it mean to you to be on unceded / stolen land?
- What is your relationship to the land? How do you view the land? Is there a resource? Property? Is it kin?
- What is your relationship to decolonization, how does that inform your work?
- Where are your ancestors from? Can you locate yourself in relationship to your ancestors?
- What is the occasion – is there a theme? How might you tie it to the land acknowledgement, your understanding of decolonization.

RESOURCES:

Pronunciation: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/a_guide_to_pronunciation_of_bc_first_nations_-_oct_29_2018.pdf?bcgovtm=buffer

Halg'eméylem Dictionary:

<https://www.firstvoices.com/explore/FV/sections/Data/Salish/Halkomelem/Halg'em%C3%A9ylem/learn/words>

In Plain Sight: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/613/2020/11/In-Plain-Sight-Full-Report.pdf>

SOURCES:

<https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationinstructors/chapter/understanding-territorial-acknowledgement-as-a-respectful-relationship/>

<https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>