



Guide to Indigenous Territorial Acknowledgements

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Audience

This guide is meant to provide guidance on Indigenous territorial acknowledgements for members representing or doing work on behalf of Doctors of BC. This includes members serving on committees, working groups, the JCCs, the RA, and the Board.

Purpose of Territorial Acknowledgements

Acknowledging the traditional territory of the host Nation has been a custom and sign of respect among many First Nations peoples since before colonization and is a protocol that continues today. Recently, this protocol has been adopted by a wide range of organizations in Canada and BC including universities, businesses, governments, and religious organizations. Often the territorial acknowledgement is done at the beginning of meetings, conferences, courses, or presentations. The purpose of territorial acknowledgements in this context is:

- for non-Indigenous Canadians to acknowledge that they live and carry out their lives on territory that First Nations have inhabited and had a relationship with since time immemorial,
- to insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and territorial rights, and
- to raise awareness of the unique history in BC where, with the exception of the Douglas Treaties and Treaty 8, the majority of the First Nations land was never subject to a treaty with the Crown.

Doctors of BC's Suggested Wording for Territorial Acknowledgements

Those giving a territorial acknowledgement at designated gatherings, meetings, or events are encouraged to use the example wording below as an outline for how they would give an acknowledgement if they are speaking on behalf of Doctors of BC.

Those giving the acknowledgement are encouraged to add context or meaning (through consideration of the below reflection questions) on top of the example text to make it more personal and authentic.

Reflection Questions

When preparing the acknowledgement, consider the following questions to make it more meaningful:

- What does it mean for me personally to give this acknowledgement?
- What does it mean for the organization or profession I represent (most likely Doctors of BC) to give this acknowledgement?
- How does this acknowledgement fit within the context of the meeting, event, or gathering I am attending? (What connections can be made between the work happening at the meeting, event, or gathering and your acknowledgement of the territory or reconciliation more broadly?)
- How should our awareness of the First Nations territory we are on influence how we go about the work or activities of the meeting, event, or gathering, and/or the work or activities we do throughout our lives?
- What have you learned about the Indigenous communities you're acknowledging? Can you share that in your acknowledgement?

Example wording for meetings, events, or gatherings at Doctors of BC or in Vancouver

(We/I) would like to begin this (meeting/event/gathering) by acknowledging that the land on which Doctors of BC operates and supports our physician members from around the province is the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples including the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations whose historical relationship with the land continues today. For Doctors of BC, acknowledging that we are on the traditional territories of First Nations communities is an expression of cultural humility – that we are privileged to use and share this land – and involves recognizing our duty and desire to provide culturally safe care to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in BC.

Example wording for meetings, events, or gatherings held outside of Vancouver

If the land you are giving the acknowledgement on is not on the territory of the Coast Salish peoples (the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations) then you will need to modify the acknowledgement to reflect the specific First Nations' land that you are on. You can use [this map](#) from the BC Assembly of First Nations to help identify the land you are on.

(We/I) would like to begin this (meeting/event/gathering) by acknowledging that the land on which this meeting is being held is the traditional territories of the (specific First Nation or Nations) whose historical relationship with the land continues today. For Doctors of BC, acknowledging that we are on the traditional territories of First Nations communities is an expression of cultural humility – that we are privileged to use and share this land – and involves recognizing our duty and desire to provide culturally safe care to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in BC.

Suggested Application of Territorial Acknowledgement

- Territorial acknowledgements should be done at larger or high profile gatherings, meetings, and events including RA, the AGM, conferences hosted by Doctors of BC, meetings with Indigenous communities or stakeholders, or at gatherings, events, or meetings where territorial acknowledgements are expected or common practice and Doctors of BC is opening the gathering, meeting, or event.

- For regular committee or working group meetings, ad-hoc meetings, or informal gatherings and events, it is up to the committee, the chair, the event organizers, and/or the speaker to include a territorial acknowledgement or not. If they choose to do so, they are encouraged to follow the direction provided in this guide with the option to include appropriate modifications to make the territorial acknowledgement more meaningful or relevant to them or the audience they are addressing.
- For virtual meetings, the territorial acknowledgement can be based on where the person giving it is from, where Doctors of BC operates from, or each person at the meeting can recognize the First Nations land they are attending the meeting from. While it may be appropriate to invite those on the virtual meeting to do their own territorial acknowledgement, such an obligation should not be imposed on attendees.

Guidelines for Giving a Territorial Acknowledgement

- Territorial acknowledgements should take place at the very beginning of a meeting, event, or gathering and should not be treated as an afterthought or procedural formality. To make the territorial acknowledgement more meaningful, give thought to the reflection questions above.
- Time should be taken to determine which First Nations' land the meeting is taking place on, or the First Nations' land the person giving the acknowledgement lives on. For meetings at Doctors of BC or in Vancouver, this would be the traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples including the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.
- Ensure that when giving the acknowledgement that the First Nation(s) names are pronounced correctly. This can be done by finding the pronunciation on the First Nation's website or voicemail, or consulting [a pronunciation guide](#) and then practicing to ensure it is correct.
- Ensure that the acknowledgement is limited to acknowledging the land, not welcoming guests to the land because it is not our land to welcome people to and this would be considered a faux pas. This doesn't mean guests can't be welcomed to the event, but we wouldn't invite them to the specific First Nations land that the event, meeting, or gathering is taking place on.
- For larger scale meetings, events, or gatherings, Indigenous culture could be incorporated even further by including members of local First Nations in the opening, planning, or design of the event. If this occurs, members of the local First Nations should be consulted about how to appropriately incorporate their culture in the event and to ensure that Elders' or cultural representatives' needs are understood and accommodated at the event. Finally, Elders and/or First Nations cultural representatives should be compensated financially for their participation in the same way that any consultant or special speaker would be for other events we organize. To coordinate this, please feel free to consult with the Doctors of BC staff person(s) supporting your meeting, event, or gathering.

References

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5. BC Treaty Commission. Aboriginal Rights. <http://www.bctreaty.ca/aboriginal-rights>
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15. First Voices. <https://www.firstvoices.com/home>