

The Land Acknowledgement

Objectives of this Guidance Document:

City of Toronto staff and partners, can use this document to guide their practice and actions, around the Land Acknowledgement. This is considered a first step, done to acknowledge and honour the First Peoples that have lived here for thousands of years, and the enduring presence of Indigenous Persons in the area for time immemorial.

When a land acknowledgement is being given, City of Toronto staff and partners will pause, be present, reflect, and consider how to impact change in their work. This can include conscious thought on our place here, these lands, and how colonization and the oppression of Indigenous persons has privileged some over others.

Indigenous people typically give thanks, appreciation, and respect for all in creation, including their ancestors, communities, other beings, clans, allied nations, and "mother earth" at the start of gatherings, ceremonies, and events. For settler Canadians moving toward implementing this teaching, it is also about public Acknowledgement of this respect towards and recognition of Indigenous peoples, practices, and ways of knowing.

Outcomes from Using this Document:

With the close of 2019 and into early 2020, City of Toronto staff and partners will:

- Hear a Land Acknowledgement 2 to 5 times in a month.
- City staff and partners will reflect on their relationship to these lands.
- Gain a better understanding of the treaties that cover Toronto.
- Have a greater understanding of the phrase "we are all treaty people".
- Understand the importance of honouring and giving respect to First Peoples, here with us today and their ancestors.
- Have a better sense of ways and practices to create good relationships and connections with various Indigenous communities.

City of Toronto's Land Acknowledgement

In the lead up to the launch of the 2018 Toronto For All campaign which was specific to the Indigenous community, the City of Toronto connected and partnered with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council and the Aboriginal Affairs Committee. Their work included consulting with urban Indigenous communities, organizations, and local Indigenous communities including the Mississaugas of the Credit. Based on these discussions, history, and treaties, the City of Toronto's land Acknowledgement has evolved and may evolve further.

Land Acknowledgement for Toronto

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Land Acknowledgement for Scarborough (lands east of Woodbine Avenue)

The land I am standing on today is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. I also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Pronunciation:

Anishnabeg	Awe – Nish – Nah - Beck
Haudenosaunee	Hoe – De – Nah – Show - Nee
Chippewa	Chip – A - Wah
Wendat	When - Dat
Inuit	Δ (ee) ɔ (nu) Δ ^c (eet)
Métis	May - Tee

Importance of Land Acknowledgements

Where did land Acknowledgements come from? Giving thanks, respect and honoring the land and ancestors was and continues to be a common practice within Indigenous communities. The process of showing appreciation and giving thanks has a long history on these lands.

As a member of Canadian society, we are all treaty people. Treaties are binding agreements to guide the relationships, with the settlement of "Canada". Treaties are the legal basis for acquiring land by settlers and they allowed for the settlement of Canada¹. Treaties or agreements were the way of most Indigenous persons for thousands of years. Often this included exchanges of gifts and significant ceremony and spoken word and understanding of agreements. When settlers began to arrive, in order to maintain diplomatic relations, they needed to adopt and take up the culture, values, and practices of the people already living in what is now known as Canada.

"For the Nishnaabeg, relating to one's immediate family, the land, the members of their clan, and their relations in the non-human world in a good way was the foundation of

¹ King, Thomas. 2013. *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native Peoples in North America*. Toronto: Ontario Penguin Random House Canada

good governance in a collective sense. Promoting Bimaadiziwin² in the affairs of the nation begins with practicing Bimaadiziwin in one's everyday life"³.

The Toronto Public Service can incorporate Indigenous perspectives and ways of thinking, treating each individual with respect, while being mindful of the connections on this land⁴. This will help ensure productive and positive relationships.

Land Acknowledgements are a small yet significant way to show respect and acknowledge the presence of Indigenous peoples past and present.

Ten Actions and Practices to Get You Started

The following section and "ten actions" are meant to build your practice and support you and your divisions work with Land Acknowledgements. Take these actions when you are preparing for and giving a Land Acknowledgement. These are based on the most frequently asked questions of staff and partners.

1. Take a moment to reflect on how you came to call Toronto and Canada home. Take time to think about how you/your family came to share in the life and prosperity of this land. Prior to giving your land Acknowledgement, you may want to start with a statement like, "Jane, second generation settler, of German descent..." If you were born in Canada or the U.S. consider searching the treaty and territorial Nations where you grew up. For example, "Donald, white settler, from Manitoulin Island and the Robinson Huron Treaty territory which includes the Ojibwa, Odawa, and Pottawatomi Nations, moved to this territory 15 years ago..."
2. Clear the room/space of distractions. This also gives those in the room a moment to come together and listen to your words. Ask people to put their phones on vibrate, and to mind the door for any late comers. This will help ensure those at the meeting or event are grounded, present and comfortable.
3. Take time to say the land Acknowledgement out loud. Practicing the Land Acknowledgement is especially important with some of the pronunciations that can be tricky if not previously spoken.
4. There are many times when saying a Land Acknowledgement is appropriate. While you don't have to say a Land Acknowledgement at every meeting, they can and should be conducted on a regular basis at both formal and informal meetings. For example at community meetings, City events, team meetings, etc.

² Living a life that supports all in creation, in a good way.

³ Simpson, Leanne. 2008. "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships." *Wicazo Sa Review* 23 (2): 29-42

⁴ King, Cecil O. 2013 *Balancing Two Worlds: Jean-Baptiste Assiginack and the Odawa Nation 1768-1866*. Saskatoon: Saskatoon Fastprint

5. Allocate time and presence on your agendas for the Land Acknowledgement and take it upon yourself to do it. Breathe, pause and take your time while saying the Land Acknowledgement. This also allows time for people to think more deeply.
6. Do not always ask your Indigenous colleagues and partners to do it. This is a practice best done by non-Indigenous people.
7. We all need to do Land Acknowledgements. The Mayor, Council, City Manager, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, have been clear that we are all to take part in this act of respect and first step towards reconciliation.
8. There is not a right or wrong way to providing a Land Acknowledgement. Try not to worry if you don't say it quite right. Showing vulnerability and a level of discomfort is an indicator of learning and good intentions and will be appreciated and understood by those you are meeting/gathering with.
9. Stand or sit while offering the Land Acknowledgement. Some events will necessitate standing; sitting will make sense at other events or meetings. Ensure you have announced that you are giving the land Acknowledgement, confirming those present are comfortable, present and able to connect with your words. Sitting or standing is good, as long as those present can connect with your words and reflect.
10. Research Treaty 13 and the Williams Treaties. Along with reading about these treaties, look at some of the other agreements and treaties for this area, The Dish with One Spoon, the War of 1812, and the Doctrine of Discovery. These formed the legal basis on which land was taken for the settlement of "Canada".

Nations and Communities Named in the Land Acknowledgement

Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

It is important to understand the history of Toronto and the surrounding area, especially from Indigenous perspectives. One of our treaty partners, the Mississaugas of the Credit, has a wealth of information on their [website](#), including a video that describes some of the history. Within their site you will find links for various treaty documents, community profiles, and comprehensive history information.

Wendat

The Huron-Wendat nations, with colonization, and the movement of nations to the South of Lake Ontario moving north, were pushed out of this area, and some ended up joining other nations within what would become Ontario. Their community in Canada, now sits, just north of what is now Quebec City. Please visit their [website](#) for some the history and current community initiatives and structure. There were other Wyandot nations, which ended up settling in what is now Kansas, and Oklahoma, United States.

Haudenosaunee

Commonly referred to as the Iroquois Confederacy or the League of Five Nations, the Haudenosaunee of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy translates to People of the long house. Originally, the confederacy was comprised of five nations: The Seneca, Cayuga,

Oneida, Onondaga and Mohawk. The Tuscarora joined later in the early 18th century to form what is now known as Six Nations. Historically, the Haudenosaunee inhabited territory that extended from the Genesee River in the west, through the Finger Lakes regions to the Hudson River in the east. For more information on the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, please visit their [website](#).

Métis

Beginning in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Métis communities emerged and developed across the Northwest within the Métis Nation Homeland, which refers to the three Prairie Provinces. Additionally, the Homeland has expanded to include parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the Northern United States. For more information on the Toronto's Métis community, please visit the Toronto and York Region Métis Council [website](#).

Inuit

The majority of Inuit live in 53 communities spread across Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland encompassing 35 percent of Canada's landmass and 50 percent of its coastline. Please visit the Toronto Inuit Association [website](#) for more resources and information on the thriving Inuit community in Toronto. It is a great source for upcoming events and opportunities to connect with their organization.

Treaty 13

The treaty that speaks most to the land the city of Toronto occupies is [Treaty 13](#). The Crown needed to consolidate its settlements along the north shore of Lake Ontario to Niagara. After many years of back and forth, the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit settled the "purchase" of lands that included one of the Crown's primary settlements, York. This purchase still guaranteed right of the Mississaugas to harvest on and access to the Etobicoke Creek. In 2010 the Government of Canada settled two Mississaugas of the Credit claims, and redressed some parts of the treaties that were broken.

Williams Treaties

[The Williams Treaties First Nations](#) include the Mississaugas of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Scugog Island and the Chippewas of Beausoleil, Georgina Island, and Rama. These seven First Nations are signatories to various 18th and 19th century treaties that covered lands in different parts of south central Ontario. In 1923, the Chippewas and Mississaugas signed the Williams Treaties and together, over 90 years later, the Williams Treaties First Nations have joined to ensure their rights to and the relationship with the land is respected. In 2018 the Williams Treaties First Nations settled a longstanding dispute with the Crown about the making, terms, interpretation and implementation of the 1923 Williams Treaties.

Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission⁵ report and recommendations provides a succinct and clear factual history and human narrative of the cultural genocide and other genocides that was and still are experienced by Indigenous communities.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission started the work of connecting with survivors and their families in 2007. This was a monumental process of getting to the truth of what went on at government mandated residential (and day) schools where Indigenous children were taken from their families and forced to attend. Many children never made it home and were subjected to the most extreme forms of abuse at the hands of school and government officials.

The Commission emphasized that reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, Acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, reparation for the causes, and action to change behaviour. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that future generations can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these shared lands.

The release of the findings included 94 Calls to Action that are identified practices, policies and structural changes that need to be taken to redress the previous and ongoing impacts of colonization.

This work must be done on individual, community, governmental, and other structural levels. Reconciliation is about repairing and remediating old relationships, developing new connections, and ensuring that these are nurtured on an ongoing basis, from a place of truth and respect⁶.

While truth and reconciliation will take time and significant effort, some suggestions on where to begin include:

- Thoughtfully deliver and listen to Land Acknowledgements
- Read the report "[Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525)"
- Learn, attend events and opportunities to engage with Indigenous communities
- Listen and engage in self-reflection
- Challenge yourself and your family, friends and colleagues to come up with some concrete ways of responding to the TRC's Calls to Action

⁵ <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>

⁶ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.17269/s41997-018-0111-0>

Examples of Other Land Acknowledgements

French Land Acknowledgements

Reconnaissance des territoires traditionnels (Toronto)

Nous reconnaissons que la terre sur laquelle nous nous réunissons est le territoire traditionnel de nombreuses nations, notamment les Mississaugas du Cr dit, les Anishnabeg, les Chippewa, les Haudenosaunee et les Wendats, et abrite maintenant de nombreux peuples diversifi s des Premières nations, des Inuits et des M tis. Nous reconnaissons  galement que Toronto est couvert par le Trait  13 avec les Mississaugas du Cr dit.

Reconnaissance des territoires traditionnels (Scarborough)

La terre sur laquelle je me trouve aujourd'hui est le territoire traditionnel de nombreuses nations, notamment les Mississaugas du Cr dit, les Anishnabeg, les Chippewa, les Haudenosaunee et les Wendats. Elle abrite maintenant de nombreux peuples des Premières nations, des Inuits et des M tis. Je reconnais  galement que Toronto est r gie par le Trait  13 sign  avec les Mississaugas du Cr dit et par les trait s Williams sign s avec plusieurs bandes de Mississaugas et de Chippewa.

Land Acknowledgement Given at a City of Toronto Food Policy Event

Welcome Everyone. Today we begin our coming together with a statement for you to reflect on the unique connections and relationships Indigenous persons and their ancestors have had with this place for thousands of years. This comes from the important understanding that we are all related and connected, including our connections to animate and inanimate beings, who sustain us through providing all that we need for life. Food Systems include all of the land, air, water, soil and culturally important plant, animal and fungi species that have sustained Indigenous peoples over thousands of years. In contrast to the industrial, linear food systems we have today, traditional Indigenous food systems cultivated, harvested, prepared and preserved foods within boundaries that respect the planet.

Today, we honour the Indigenous community and the work they have done and continue doing for food, planet and health. We acknowledge the Seed Keepers in the Six Nations and Tyendinaga who have started to cultivate strains of corn, not seen in a hundred years. James Whetung from Curve Lake First Nation, who despite significant opposition from cottagers, has continued to seed and harvest wild rice in the Tri-Lake area and our friends at Nish Dish who were instrumental in creating Ojibikaan, an Indigenous Cultural Network that offers land, food and culture based programming in Toronto.

The land I am standing on today is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and M tis peoples. I also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

FoodShare

FoodShare acknowledges that the sacred land in which we operate is situated upon the traditional territories of the Wendat, Haudenosaunee, the Anishinabeg, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit. This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Anishinabeg and Haudenosaunee allied nations to peaceably share and care for the lands around the Great Lakes.

FoodShare recognizes the many Nations of Indigenous People, who presently live on this land, those who have spent time here and the ancestors who have hunted and gathered on this land known as Turtle Island. FoodShare recognizes and supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, applying both to our work.

FoodShare's work is guided by principles of Food Justice, this includes receiving ongoing guidance from an Indigenous Advisory Circle on our work and on collaborations with Indigenous groups working towards Indigenous food sovereignty and increasing Indigenous food access. We invite you to take a moment to be present and to have a conscious moment of reflection to think about how you can support the process of reconciliation.

Additional Resources

- The [City of Toronto's Indigenous Affairs website](#) has links and resources.
- The [Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council](#) and new [Indigenous portal](#) link to Indigenous initiatives, research, policy, events, and other work in and around Toronto.
- The [Toronto For All website](#) for initiatives and learning supports specific to the Indigenous community as well as other communities.
- The [City of Toronto's Toronto For All Learning Program website](#) for relevant information and training.
- The Ontario government has information and resources on [treaties](#).
- [Native Land](#) has information on treaty or territorial nations throughout Canada and the United States.
- The [Next 150](#) has a detailed list of actions and practices you can take right now to add to your understanding of Indigenous communities, and support initiatives across the country.
- [Beyond 94](#) is a CBC initiative that measures the progress of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.
- Various articles written on Land Acknowledgements, for example:
 - <https://locallove.ca/issues/what-are-land-acknowledgements-and-why-do-they-matter/>
 - <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/canadas-impossible-Acknowledgement>
 - <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/territorial-acknowledgements-indigenous-1.4175136>

- <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/redrawing-the-lines-1.4973363/i-regret-it-hayden-king-on-writing-ryerson-university-s-territorial-acknowledgement-1.4973371>