LAND AND TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
“HOW TO”

November 2020

Our club’s Indigenous Awareness Committee has put together this memo to help club members understand Indigenous Land and Territorial Acknowledgements, and to aid people in creating their own acknowledgement.

The Internet is full of examples to review and we recommend you find and create a statement that resonates with you. Our committee acknowledges that this memo is very brief and should be used in connection with personal research.

For the purposes of this document, we will use the term “Land Acknowledgement” and “Territorial Acknowledgement” interchangeably because in practice today, one usually includes elements of the other.

- **What is a Land Acknowledgement?**
  It is a statement that brings to mind the connection of land to human wellbeing, a reminder that we are a part of nature, dependent upon the earth for survival, and stating our gratitude for all that nature provides us.

- **What is a Territorial Acknowledgement?**
  It is a statement that recognizes and respects original nations and their relationships to particular areas of land that they have been connected with for thousands of years.

THE ‘WHY’ OF LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Creating a Land Acknowledgement does require an understanding of **WHY** it is important, and then **WHO** and **WHAT** we are acknowledging.

Land Acknowledgements are offered as an act of reconciliation between settlers in Canada and Indigenous peoples. They signal the need to build mindfulness of our present relationship with the land and with First Peoples and are an effort to respectfully move forward in both conversations and actions.

It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought us to reside on this land and our place in that history. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol.
To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory we reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

Land Acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context. Colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation.

Using a Land Acknowledgement is a way that people insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. This is often done at the beginning of ceremonies, lectures, or any public event. It can be a subtle way to recognize the history of colonialism and a need for change in settler colonial societies.

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Often, fear of saying something wrong or incomplete limits people from speaking from the heart and therefore relying on a standard acknowledgement which then becomes rote. It’s also important to note that there isn’t “one right” way of wording an acknowledgment.

Start with self-reflection.

- Why am I doing this Land Acknowledgment?
  (If you’re hoping to inspire others to take action to support Indigenous communities, you’re on the right track. If you’re delivering a Land Acknowledgment out of guilt or because everyone else is doing it, more self-reflection is in order.)

- What is my end goal?
  (What do you hope listeners will do or feel after hearing the acknowledgment?)

- When will it have the largest impact?
  (Think about your timing and audience, specifically.)

Do your homework. Put in the time necessary to research the following topics:

- The Indigenous people to whom the land belongs.
- The history of the land and any related treaties.
- Names of living Indigenous people from these communities.
- Indigenous place names and language.
- Correct pronunciation for the names of the Tribes, places, and individuals that you’re including.

Pronunciation:
  - Anishnabeg: (ah-nish-naw-bek)
  - Attawandaron: (at-tah-wahn-da-ron
  - Métis: (may-tee)
Recognize with gratitude the stewardship of the lands provided by the Indigenous occupants. Acknowledge Indigenous guidance that provided that stewardship such as A Dish With One Spoon, especially as we battle climate change and destruction today.

**A Dish With One Spoon,** also known as **One Dish One Spoon,** is a law used by **Indigenous peoples of the Americas** since at least 1142 BC to describe an agreement for sharing hunting territory among two or more nations. People are all eating out of the single dish, that is, all hunting in the shared territory. One spoon signifies that all Peoples sharing the territory are expected to limit the game they take to leave enough for others, and for the continued abundance and viability of the hunting grounds into the future.

The Dish With One Spoon has been incorporated into many Land Acknowledgements for organizations and institutions in the **Toronto** area, including the **Council of Ontario Universities** and ministries of the Toronto Conference of the **United Church of Canada.**

Today, some see the treaty as a covenant that applies to all those living in **Southern Ontario,** including Indigenous Peoples not party to the original treaty, as well as settlers and newcomers.†

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR GUELPH**

Archaeological evidence indicates Indigenous Peoples were present in the area now known as Guelph as early as 11,000 years ago.

Up until the 15th century, the Attawandaron people – also known as Neutral – lived, farmed, and hunted in the Guelph area before their settlements moved closer to present-day Hamilton. At one point, the population of the Attawandaron was approximately 30,000. The population steadily declined as many died in epidemics of diseases brought from Europe, while others were driven out of the area during wars, or were absorbed into what is today Six Nations.

After 1690, the Mississauga People entered the area and in 1784 negotiated the sale of a large tract of land, including the location of present-day Guelph, to the British for £1,180. This transfer of land is covered by an Upper Canada Treaty No. 3 (Between The Lakes), 1792.

Today, Guelph is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people who have moved to the area from across **Turtle Island** (North America continent).
Guelph is part of the Between The Lakes Purchase in 1792 – large area in purple.

EXAMPLES OF LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CITY OF GUELPH
The Guelph City Council offers the following Territorial Acknowledgement at the beginning of each Council meeting.

As we gather, we are reminded that Guelph is situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis people today.

As a City we have a responsibility for the stewardship of the land on which we live and work.

Today we acknowledge the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinaabek Peoples on whose traditional territory we are meeting.
**Explanation of statement**

1. The first sentence provides the context that the history does not start at the point of European contact. It begins long before and includes the Anishinaabe, Attawandaron, Haudenosaunee and Métis peoples, and continues to the present day.
2. The second sentence refers to the role and responsibility of the City as present day steward of our public lands and natural resources.
3. The third sentence recognizes that today the people of Guelph reside on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinaabek Peoples, from whom this land was purchased by the British in 1784, as Upper Canada Treaty No. 3, 1792.

**ROTARY CLUB OF GUELPH INDIGENOUS AWARENESS COMMITTEE**

Developed by Rick LeFeuvre, this Land Acknowledgement is read aloud at Indigenous Awareness Committee meetings, and is frequently used at the start of Rotary Club of Guelph weekly meetings.

*As we gather, we are reminded that Guelph is situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich indigenous history and has been home to a variety of peoples over the millennia. Today, this area has become home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.*

*As a community, we have a responsibility for the stewardship of the land on which we live and work.*

*Today, we acknowledge the historic Mississaugas of the Credit, the First Nation people who were the treaty signatories of the territory on which we are meeting.*

**EXAMPLE OF A PERSONAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Dianne Dance, chair of our RCOG Indigenous Awareness Committee, uses the following. “This a combination of many that I have come across. My goal is to be mindful of Indigenous people that live and work today and historically on the very land that I live and work on today. To acknowledge their inherent unity with and understanding of the land. I wanted to show my unity with the Indigenous peoples of Guelph today. This is a living statement that should change as I grow.”

*As we gather, we are reminded that Guelph is situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich indigenous history and has been home to a variety of peoples over the millennia.*

*As settlers, we are grateful for the opportunity to meet here and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land – for thousands of years.*
We acknowledge the historic Mississaugas of the Credit, the First Nation people who were the treaty signatories of the territory on which we are meeting. Treaty #3 known as Treaty Between the Lakes – 1792 remains today.

Today, this area has become home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people with whom we share this land, their achievements and their contributions to our shared community.

As a community, we have a responsibility for the stewardship of the land on which we live and work. We are reminded of the One Dish One Spoon Indigenous law that ensures there will be enough substance for all of the earth’s creatures.

We offer this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada.

OTHER EXAMPLES

Halton Region:

As we gather today on these treaty lands, we have the responsibility to honour and respect the four directions, land, waters, plants, animals, ancestors that walked before us, and all the wonderful elements of creation that exist.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for sharing their traditional territory with us.

Waterloo Region:

We acknowledge the enduring presence of the Indigenous people with whom we share this land today, their achievements and their contributions to our community. We offer this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada.

Kairos Canada:

We begin by acknowledging the traditional territory upon which we gather this morning/afternoon/evening. For many thousands of years, the (name the nation or nations) have sought to walk gently on this land. They offered assistance to the first European travellers to this territory and shared their knowledge for survival in what was at times a harsh climate. We seek a new relationship with the Original Peoples of this land, one based in honour and deep respect.