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## Beyond territorial acknowledgments

Posted on September 23, 2016 by

âpihtawikosisân

Earlier this year, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) released a [Territorial Acknowledgment Guide](#).<sup>[1]</sup> The territorial acknowledgements found in this guide vary from fairly short:

**University of British Columbia, Okanagan (Kelowna, BC)** – We [I] would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.

To much more detailed:

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**Osgoode Hall Law School (Toronto, ON) – We [I]** would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Métis, and most recently, the territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. **[I have to interject here...Toronto is NOT within the traditional territory of the Métis.]** The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

This territory is also covered by the Upper Canada Treaties.

Today, the meeting place of Toronto (from the Haudenosaunee word Tkaronto) is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work/present in this territory.

As stated on their website:

“The purpose of the guide is to encourage all academic staff association representatives and members to acknowledge the First Peoples on whose traditional territories we live and work” says CAUT president, James Compton. “Acknowledging territory shows recognition of and respect for Aboriginal Peoples, which is key to reconciliation.”[2]

I want to unpack that statement in a moment. Territorial acknowledgments have become fairly common in urban, progressive spaces in Canada. I am not certain when the

## ON TWITTER

âpihtawikosisân  
Retweeted



**James Wilt**

@james\_m\_wilt

Replying to @james\_m\_wilt

the left has made its plan very clear: tax the rich, fund the transition. this plan (aka the Green New Deal) doesn't make Gerson or the affluent white readers of Maclean's feel very good, so there's no mention of it. they can then claim that nobody has a plan! love the discourse.

1h

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first territorial acknowledgment was included in an event, but I have been hearing them now for over 15 years, so they are somewhat established this side of the medicine line.

When I think about territorial acknowledgments, a few things come to mind that I'd like to explore. First, what is the purpose of these acknowledgments? Both what those making the territorial acknowledgments say they intend, as well as what Indigenous peoples think may be the purpose. Second, what can we learn about the way these acknowledgments are delivered? Are there best practices? Third, in what spaces do these acknowledgements happen and more importantly, where are they not found? Finally, what can exist beyond territorial acknowledgements?

## Purpose

"Acknowledging territory shows recognition of and respect for Aboriginal Peoples, which is key to reconciliation." – CAUT

"A territorial acknowledgment is important as part of our churches living into right relations with Indigenous peoples. For churches that ran residential schools, it is part of living out our apologies for that reality and its ongoing legacy. It is a statement of respect and a statement that provokes further thought and reflection. It is a way to counteract the ideologies operating in the Doctrine of Discovery by naming that the land was not empty when Europeans first arrived on Turtle Island. It can be an opportunity to acknowledge the spirituality of Indigenous peoples that was not respected by churches and was used to justify colonialism, including the residential schools." –

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### KAIROS[3]

“When working on or within the **traditional territory** of a **First Nation** there is **protocol** to follow. It can be customary between one First Nation and another to acknowledge the host First Nation Peoples and their traditional territory at the outset of any meeting...it follows then, that if you want to [work] with a First Nation, one of the best ways is to show respect to the Nation by following traditional territory protocol.”[4]

In the first two quotes, it is clear that the intended purpose of territorial acknowledgments is recognition as a form of reconciliation. Kairos goes a bit deeper in the intention to also acknowledge the violent relationships between churches who ran residential schools, and Indigenous peoples, so what is being “recognized” is not merely Indigenous presence.

Nonetheless it seems to me that when territorial acknowledgments first began, they were fairly powerful statements of presence, somewhat shocking, perhaps even unwelcome in settler spaces. They provoked discomfort and centered Indigenous priority on these lands.

The third quote by Bob Joseph suggests that territorial acknowledgments can also be a way of honouring traditional Indigenous protocol. I disagree that these acknowledgements can accomplish such a thing, as such statements of thanks to hosts barely even scratch the surface of such traditional protocols. In fact, I think it is dangerous to even suggest that territorial acknowledgments alone satisfy protocol in any way unless concrete actions accompany the words spoken. I will return to this when I discuss moving beyond

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acknowledgments.

Another purpose of territorial acknowledgements, related to emphasizing continuous Indigenous presence, is the way in which many spaces feel unsafe for Indigenous peoples. For example, at the University of McGill, asking for territorial acknowledgment was part of a wider attempt by student groups to “[create] a more welcoming environment for Indigenous students. The proposal called for McGill to publicly acknowledge on its website and in email signatures that McGill is built on traditionally Kanien’kehá:ka land.”[5] I personally experienced McGill as an incredibly alienating and invisibilizing environment, and that institution certainly has a lot of work to do in terms of acknowledging Indigenous presence (and Indigenous students) compared to other some universities. As a newer practice in such environments, territorial acknowledgments continue to have the power to disrupt and discomfit settler colonialism.

It should also be emphasized that these territorial acknowledgments flow from the work of Indigenous peoples themselves, who are resisting invisibilization. When they are crafted, they are usually done so in consultation with local Indigenous peoples. However, it is also interesting to geographically track the criticisms of territorial acknowledgements, as a way of tracing their lineage. The strongest Indigenous critiques of these acknowledgments tend to come from the west coast, suggesting they have been happening there the longest, whereas in places like Montreal, territorial acknowledgments are still being introduced and are legitimately “cutting edge” in that political milieu. That’s not to say that strong Indigenous critique cannot exist absent of a tradition of territorial acknowledgments! We

are almost certainly importing the practice into the United States, and it will not necessarily be welcomed there by Indigenous peoples for reasons unrelated to the rendering of such statements meaningless through repetition.

I believe territorial acknowledgments can have numerous purposes, and in fact can be repurposed, so merely examining the stated intentions of these invocations is insufficient. What may start out as radical push-back against the denial of Indigenous priority and continued presence, may end up repurposed as “box-ticking” inclusion without commitment to any sort of real change. In fact, I believe this is the inevitable progression, a situation of familiarity breeding contempt (or at least apathy).

## Practice

The way in which territorial acknowledgments are delivered must matter. Are they formulaic recitations that barely penetrate the consciousness of the speaker and those listening? Are they something that must be ‘gotten through’ before the meeting or speech can begin? Can we escape dilution through repetition?

“...at a conference: a speaker acknowledged that we were on the traditional territory of the Musqueam peoples – and that was it. Yes, there was an acknowledgement, and yes, that is better than no acknowledgment at all. However, the speaker failed to situate themselves – by that I mean, they did not locate themselves as a guest who is actively working against colonialism. In failing to do so, the speaker revealed their complacency in ongoing settler colonialism.”

“Oftentimes, when non-Indigenous organizers make a territory acknowledgment, it is done hastily (*we acknowledge that we are gathered on unceded coastal territory*), and then discarded (*now on with the show!*).”[6]

What do territorial acknowledgments mean for people who have heard them ad nauseam? (I mean, how carefully do frequent flyers listen to safety presentations during their flight?)

On the other hand, rituals and repetition are not necessarily bad things. Establishing a practice of acknowledgment can be part of wider attempts to address settler colonialism and build better relationships with Indigenous peoples. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has just begun announcing a daily territorial acknowledgment across all 588 schools (ironically delivered after students are asked to stand for O Canada). [7] As a TDSB vice-principal puts it “the important thing is we don’t just read the acknowledgment and check it off on a list, and say, ‘OK, we’re doing our job... what our next step is, is working with students and staff to make sure we understand what it really means, and help support that learning.” (It’d be great if the TDSB could deal with its anti-Blackness at the same time.)

Khelsilem offers some suggestions for territorial acknowledgement practice that take us beyond merely “do it”. His first suggestion addresses an issue that often bothers me; the widespread misunderstanding that the bulk of land was legally given over to the Canadian state through treaty. For acknowledgments that identify territories as “unceded”:

“Unceded” is language to use with the Crown/Settler State. There is a misconception that BC is mostly

*unceded* due to a lack of treaties – which implies those in areas with treaties are what? Ceded territories?... Elevate Indigenous polity...Use the brief moment of acknowledgement to elevate Indigenous society, governance, and jurisdiction.”[8]

Khelsilem also brings up the importance of being aware of the fact territorial acknowledgments are not always cut and dry, particularly when there are competing Indigenous claims to a specific area.

“In Vancouver, for example, many are told that “Vancouver is Musqueam territory!!!! The Squamish only moved in here in the 1850’s”. That’s one perspective. And by going with and elevating that single perspective, you’re inserting yourself into the process that the local Indigenous communities are going through to address historical grievances (mostly caused by the imposition of colonial boundaries and dispossession).”[9]

Simply because there is a standardized guide available should not mean that people do not have to continue to ask questions and work on these acknowledgements. In fact, as Jennifer Matsunaga puts it, “I worry about the work that has been done *for us*, here. I take issue with the institutional standardization and expectation of these acknowledgments. It is important for people to do their own searching and learning.”[10] Merely mouthing the names of local Indigenous nations does not automatically confer understanding. Best practices must evolve over time through deeper engagement with the purpose and impact of territorial acknowledgments.

## Spaces



I have been talking about territorial acknowledgements as though they are ubiquitous, when in fact they are very limited to specific kinds of spaces. Again, more common in western Canada than in the east or north, territorial acknowledgments tend to happen in urban institutional and activist settings (an interesting juxtaposition). They also tend to be limited to those institutions and groups with leftist politics.

It is interesting to note where territorial acknowledgments are absent; namely rural spaces. Rural counties throughout Canada, where there is arguably the most tangible Indigenous presence, do not tend to open council meetings or publish notices acknowledging the traditional territories on which they reside. Within the boundaries of these counties, you will generally find more than one First Nation, but because of Constitutional division of powers, First Nations are 'holes' in county governance.

Yet these would be the spaces in which territorial acknowledgments have the potential to be the most powerful; the settler rural/First Nations divide is huge and plays out in deeply problematic (and all too often violent) ways. Private property ownership in rural counties is settler colonialism writ large, yet overshadowed by the overwhelming pull of large urban centres. Relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in rural and remote areas tend to be strained, when not entirely non-existent. The issue of "whose territory are we farming/ranching/cottaging" on becomes much more uncomfortable and immediate than "on whose territory is this shwank hotel, where we are having our union AGA". That level of removal from the land allows territorial acknowledgments to occur in a more theoretical way.

Rural Canada personifies 'the two solitudes' of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in a way that is difficult to understand from urban settings. These two solitudes exist on lands that supply the bulk of resources extracted to support the urban south, meaning they also experience the effects of resource extraction in ways urban residents do not. When gravel aggregate is strip mined, when fracking exploration is undertaken, when large scale pig feedlots are proposed, rural Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are living with the direct consequences including clouds of silica dust, damage to aquifers, smell, noise, run-off, and increased presence of shift workers unaffiliated with local communities (and the violence that brings). Rather than being a situation that unifies Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples however, each community is accustomed to working in isolation from the other.

The decision by counties to allow such developments only rarely takes into account local First Nations, and only when legislation demands it (i.e. when development occurs adjacent to a reserve). What I am trying to get at here is that ignoring First Nations presence in rural areas is normalized, deeply ingrained, and central to rural settler governance. Urban centres take up relatively little physical space in this country; it is easy to even unconsciously justify that space and the density of the population compared to say, owning 160 acres of land on which one family lives. I do not think that territorial acknowledgement in these areas could exist as merely theoretical frameworks as they can in more urban settings because ANY acknowledgment implicates the land in an inescapable way.

This brings me back to the question of...why are people acknowledging territory in the first place? When mostly

urban institutions and circles are making these acknowledgments, who are they thinking of? Urban Indigenous populations? Rural and remote First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities? Is there a feeling of reaching out to or desiring partnerships with these communities? What of the non-Indigenous communities also found in rural and remote spaces? Are they implicated in urban-based territorial acknowledgments, or are they as ignored by their urban counterparts as they in turn ignore local Indigenous communities?

I have a lot more to say on this, but for now, I want to note that I think rural/Indigenous alliances have the potential to be the most transformative relationships in this country, even as they remain the least likely to occur.

## Into the beyond

If we think of territorial acknowledgments as sites of potential disruption, they can be transformative acts that to some extent undo Indigenous erasure. I believe this is true as long as these acknowledgments discomfit both those speaking and hearing the words. The fact of Indigenous presence should force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands. I would like to see territorial acknowledgments happening in spaces where they are currently absent, particularly in rural and remote areas and within the governance structures of settlers.

However as we are already seeing, territorial acknowledgments can become stripped of their disruptive power through repetition. The purpose cannot merely be to inform an ignorant public that Indigenous peoples exist, and that Canada has a history of colonialism.

I wanted to come back to Bob Joseph's suggestion that territorial acknowledgments are a part of Indigenous protocol. I think if we understand that to be true, at least to some extent, then we must also understand that the protocols he invokes are much deeper than verbal acknowledgments. This can perhaps guide us into the 'beyond'; the space beyond acknowledgment. Stopping at territorial acknowledgments is unacceptable.

Often, territorial acknowledgments characterize non-Indigenous peoples as 'guests'. Are guests only those people who are invited? Or they anyone who finds themselves within the physical territory of their hosts? Why guests and not invaders? To what extent was permission actually sought to be in these territories, and conduct the affairs that Indigenous nations are thanked for 'hosting'? What if an Indigenous person stood up and revoked that assumed permission?

I think we need to start imagining a constellation of relationships that must be entered into beyond territorial acknowledgments. Great, that's awesome you know you're on (for example) Treaty 6 territory. That's great you acknowledge that perhaps the Indigenous view of that treaty, that the land was not surrendered, is correct.

Perhaps you understand the tension of your presence as illegitimate, but don't know how to deal with it beyond naming it. Maybe now it is time to start learning about your obligations as a guest in this territory. What are the Indigenous protocols involved in being a guest, what are your responsibilities? What responsibilities do your hosts have towards you, and are you making space for those responsibilities to be exercised? To what extent are your events benefiting your hosts?

I'm not saying Indigenous people want to be at your AGA,

or your university lecture, or your Dean's meeting (maybe they do though). What I am saying is that all Indigenous nations have specific expectations of guests, and of hosts, and so far non-Indigenous peoples have not been very good at finding out what those are. I think this needs to be the next step. It requires having actual conversations with Indigenous communities, saying things like "we want to be better guests, how do we do that according to your laws and hey by the way, what ARE your laws" and being prepared to hear the answers, even those that are uncomfortable like "give us the land back". I mean damn... maybe your huge ass union needs to fork over some of the land its executives have squirreled away on their massive salaries as a gesture of good guesting. That could be a real thing that could happen.

Moving beyond territorial acknowledgments means asking hard questions about what needs to be done once we're 'aware of Indigenous presence'. It requires that we remain uncomfortable, and it means making concrete, disruptive change. How can you be in good relationship with Indigenous peoples, with non-human beings, with the land and water? No ideas? Well, it's a good thing Indigenous peoples are still here, because our legal orders address all of those questions. So why aren't you asking us?

[1] "CAUT – Acknowledging Traditional Territory – List—Territorial-Acknowledgement-by-Province.pdf."

[2] "Territorial Acknowledgment Guide."

[3] "Territorial Acknowledgment as an Act of Reconciliation."

[4] Joseph, "First Nation Protocol on Traditional Territory."

[5] “Decolonize McGill | The McGill Daily.”

[6] K, “An Introduction to Settler Colonialism at UBC.”

[7] “Why Toronto Public Schools Now Pay ‘Very Necessary’ Daily Tribute to Indigenous Territories.”

[8] “Khelsilem’s Tips for Acknowledging Territory 1.0.”

[9] Ibid.

[10] Matsunaga, “Thinking Outloud about the Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory.”

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“Territorial Acknowledgment Guide.” Accessed September 21, 2016. <http://www.caut.ca/news/2016/05/27/territorial-acknowledgement-guide>.

“Why Toronto Public Schools Now Pay ‘Very Necessary’ Daily Tribute to Indigenous Territories.” *CBC News*. Accessed September 22, 2016.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/tdsb-indigenous-land-1.3773050>.

## 50 thoughts on “Beyond territorial acknowledgments”



**Rachel says:**

September 23, 2016 at 4:19 pm

A very thoughtful piece – the TDSB piece is an interest piece of news that I read through the other day, and I really liked one of the students comments that “If people don’t really recognize them, and know what’s going on, they’re going to feel they’re not a part of the country, and a part of the school, and they’re different.” – this isn’t something I’ve heard even addressed by a 13 year old in SW Ontario, and it a much needed change from years of

talking about Indigenous peoples as if they have been gone for centuries. But I fully agree that it's always important to discuss the purpose and need to continue pushing the line forward. (Thank you also for discussing the matter of unceded territory! I was wondering about that...)

Reply



**Rudolph Wratten says:**

September 23, 2016 at 7:52 pm

True, but this does not address all natives, nor will it.

In Mexico, actual native clothing is sold as a matter of course.

Buying a huge Aztec headdress is walking into a store, getting measured, design picked or a custom designed, and payment.

This is much like buying a Sombrero.

The big problem is they do not work in an automobile!

In Mexico, dressed like a native is almost expected.

Go to Cuba, and the Cubans want you to dress like a Cuban!

Germany, dress like a German!

France, the funny hat is available everywhere!

But, there is nothing to denoted to rank, or authority.

Run around with police paraphernalia, and see how well that is tolerated.

I was explained what the features mean.

As per the rules, if you have ever flown, you may



have the wings.  
Built a fire, flames are in order.  
Ever ridden a horse.  
Etc.  
Yes, there are rules, but they are  
accomplishments.  
Ever use a telephone?  
The lightning bolts is fair game.  
I can read, and write.  
I picked 20 or so more important ones.

[Reply](#)



**âpihtawikosisân says:**

September 24, 2016 at 12:07 am

What are you even talking about?

[Reply](#)



**Rudolph Wratten says:**

September 24, 2016 at 12:39 am

What I am talking about is, at least in  
Canada, and in the US, indigenous people are  
recognized.

In Mexico, this is so commercialized it is seen  
only as a tourist attraction.

This is only a business.

I can buy whatever I want, no one  
understanding any significant heritage.

There are no real tribal lands.

The Zócalo is more a bazaar.

Thank you.

[Reply](#)

**âpihtawikosisân says:**

September 24, 2016 at 12:01 pm

Um, Indigenous communities in Mexico exist. The fact they are invisibilized and commercialized (which arguably is also the case in the US) does not change this. Territorial acknowledgements in Mexico certainly would have great potential to disrupt that invisibilization.

**S-kw'etu'? says:**

September 24, 2016 at 12:03 pm

I think this person is attempting to share his belief that his beliefs are the reality that defines us. This person assumes all like it when he shows up and mocks our cultures in a very boorish manner.

That or he is a very poor troll who has no actual point or message.

It is in my own opinion an excellent example of the expected outcomes of colonialism or what is now being referred to as white privilege, or giving a person unequal advantages to others which makes them believe they are superior to others despite not technically having any skills or abilities.

Of course we all know that it is being assumed we are all too stupid to comprehend this individuals comments and they are likely very convinced they blew

everyones minds with their epic cleverness.

Pretty funny, thank you for the article and for allowing this comment. It helps to have a good laugh to break the tension.

[Reply](#)



**Frederick Peitzsche says:**

September 23, 2016 at 8:19 pm

“According to Ontario premier Howard Ferguson, speaking on the future of the Williams Treaties, “... every tribe that could possibly have a claim on the ‘white man’s’ government had been taken care of.” Ultimately, the Williams Treaties secured the surrender of the last substantial portion of land in southern Ontario that had not been given up to the government. The conclusion of the 1923 Williams Treaties marked the cession of nearly all the remaining Aboriginal lands to the Crown – only two small parcels of lands remain unceded – they also mark the end of the long standing treaty process initiated in 1763”

Well now, how much is left?.

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [Canadian History Roundup – Week of September 18, 2016 | Unwritten Histories](#)



**inkspill1@bell.net says:**

September 27, 2016 at 7:40 pm

We do our Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands, at our TDSB school, BEFORE the anthem. I have also let Indigenous students sit during the anthem if that is their wish.

[Reply](#)



**âpihtawikosisân says:**

September 28, 2016 at 8:25 am

That helps, I think. I thought it was really odd to force kids to stand and recognize Canada's legitimacy, then follow up with an assertion of Indigenous presence. I hope this order is used throughout the TDSB.

[Reply](#)



**Michael Maranda says:**

September 28, 2016 at 1:25 pm

This is the order in my son's school in Toronto. No idea if standing during the anthem is enforced.

They have been doing a territorial acknowledgement for at least two to three years already.

[Reply](#)



**Kate Dawson says:**

October 16, 2016 at 10:50 pm

Thank you for sharing your voice via this article. I

offer an acknowledgment in a variety of settings, and your insights and questions have helped me to address challenges I have encountered in the process. I believe it is important to start where you are, but once started, the process must continue to matter, to be challenged, to be spoken from the heart. Knowing is not enough, actions must follow, for the acknowledgment to avoid ringing hollow. Thank you again.

[Reply](#)



**jmurray01 says:**

October 22, 2016 at 6:56 pm

Thank you very much for this read. As part of my work researching sustainability in the education system, we have acknowledged the territorial lands. At first, in our ignorance, we lumped it all together as “First Nations and/or Metis territory on which we are meeting today” and then we (we’re non-Indigenous researchers by the way) fixed this mistake to acknowledge the actual nation of the land that we were meeting. And sometimes we make mistakes because it can be hard to find out which nation owned the land prior to colonization, and sometimes there are current conversations about who it belongs to, so sometimes we still make mistakes. My question right now is that through repetition I am starting to feel uncomfortable that my acknowledgment is tokenistic and I don’t want it to be. I recently had someone challenge me on my mentioning the

traditional ownership, and then he justified it as, “oh this is something you have to do for your research thing”. And I said, well, we just like to start with acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, and he waved me off and we continued the interview. At one point, comments were made about diversity not existing and that as a big melting pot where people come from doesn’t matter. My Indigenous friend was very upset by this comment, she heard it as racist and maybe the ‘invisibilization’ that was previously mentioned... I heard the comment as a disregard for differences, as seeing everyone as people, not by the colour of their skin, but as people first and foremost. And I wonder what others think about this?

I have to go back and speak in front of a larger group with this same individual, and I will again mention the traditional ownership, this time prepared with more knowledge thanks to this article. What would be great for me is to see some examples of how to talk about this to young children, and how to recognize the territory with greater meaning with young children, during brief (5 minute) interactions.

Thank you again for this article, I’ll be sharing it widely!

[Reply](#)



**Mathew Arthur says:**

October 26, 2016 at 2:38 pm

Thank you for this incredibly important reminder

that acknowledgements made by trespassers on these lands also come with responsibilities to Indigenous nations/peoples and their territories and to the plant and animal nations, waters, geologic beings, and landforms that are present with us on the land. Here in Vancouver (and especially at UBC) acknowledgements are business as usual—it seems even scholars involved in the justification of extractivist projects are keen to tick the acknowledgement checkbox. As a trespasser, I think what really has me thinking, here, is the possibility for territorial acknowledgement to act as a site for articulating the responsibilities of settler-Indigenous relations: namely that to acknowledge land and territory as a trespasser is to also acknowledge that solidarity with Indigenous peoples demands an active and ongoing process of supporting the ability of Indigenous peoples to fulfill their traditional and spiritual responsibilities to land.

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [Beyond territorial acknowledgments | âpihtawikosisân | Histories of Dreams and Catastrophe](#)



**Jesse Orr says:**

March 27, 2017 at 8:56 pm

Thank you for writing this âpihtawikosiân! I want to do better land acknowledgements in Montreal, or Tiohtiake, and you've reinforced that I must find out more about what it means to be a guest (... trespasser? Montrealer? invader?) on this land. I'm

in that place of feeling stuck as I don't want to do nothing because I can't do it perfectly, but I don't know exactly where to go or who to ask about Kanienkehaka protocols. Also I have a sick feeling about being another bothersome ignorant settler... white fragile ego much!? lol, uhg. BUT. that doesn't mean I shouldn't find my way! I will take what you said about legal orders as a good place to go. Thanks again, I was very happy to find this piece of writing!

[Reply](#)



**Jesse Orr says:**

March 27, 2017 at 9:27 pm

P.S. here's something from the McGill website:  
"McGill University sits on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka people. The island called "Montreal" is known as Tiotia:ke in the language of the Kanien'kehá:ka, and it has historically been a meeting place for other Indigenous nations, including the Algonquin people." My spelling of these place names comes from Wahiakeron Gilbert, the elder and teacher in Kanawake, who I recall didn't think the accents and punctuation were important, but "Kanien'kehá:ka" does seem to be standard.

Also, for people's info, McGill offers a contact:  
"For more information on how your club/organization can recognize the traditional territory, contact Allan Vicaire by e-mail or at 514-398-3711"  
and a link to an really interesting set of resources



from another Akwesasne :

<http://wampumchronicles.com/>

<https://www.mcgill.ca/edu4all/other-equity-resources/traditional-territories>

[Reply](#)



**âpihtawikosisân says:**

March 28, 2017 at 10:18 am

Allan is an awesome resource, and thank you for taking the extra step to find some answers to your question, I really appreciate that. I get asked to do a lot of labour for folks, but the fact is a lot of this info is out there if you look for it, so this helps!

[Reply](#)



**Billie Milholland says:**

March 30, 2017 at 10:46 am

Thank you so much for this!! I work for a watershed group (North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance – North Saskatchewan River watershed in Alberta – mostly Treaty 6 Territory) where the notion of acknowledging our presence on Treaty Land is poorly understood. Our board of directors is largely made up of men from rural municipalities and rural interests. As you have pointed out, rural areas are less likely to acknowledge traditional territories and this is certainly true with us. I have been trying to change this for several years, with little success,

and I had pretty much given up. Your good words in this blog have motivated me to try again. It also inspires me to open this discussion with the 10 other Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) in this province.

[Reply](#)



**âpihtawikosisân says:**

March 30, 2017 at 12:55 pm

Also, forming alliances with rural Indigenous communities on the issue of water is so vital. When I began fighting a proposed gravel pit slated to be built right next to Lake Isle, which feeds into Lac Ste Anne, I discovered none of the local non-Indigenous residents had contacted any of the First Nations in the area for support. And it was someone at a local First Nation who helped me understand the legal situation best, because she deals with these issues all the time. Watershed Alliances seriously need to branch out and form relationships with Indigenous peoples; we all need clean water. The separation that exists allows unhealthy development to go unchecked and poorly opposed.

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [Giving Thanks: Gratitude and Feminist Work](#)

Pingback: [Congress 2017 – The Next 150, On Indigenous Lands: A Settler Colonial Reconciliatory Facade | danielle dissertates](#)

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Pingback: [CHA 2017: Reflections | Unwritten Histories](#)

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Pingback: [June Environmental Issues Discussion:](#)

[Indigenous Perspectives - Women's Centre of](#)

[Calgary](#)[Women's Centre of Calgary](#)

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Pingback: [Why I am new to territorial acknowledge? | The](#)

[Volcanology Chronicles](#)

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**Brenda Melnychuk says:**

November 16, 2017 at 12:37 pm

When speaking in any public gathering I try my best to always acknowledge the territory in which we are gathering and I always try to talk to someone to learn the pronunciation beforehand. I also state where I am coming from as a white settler that has taught Indigenous children in northern Saskatchewan and British Columbia. I acknowledge Truth and Reconciliation and that I have always worked to help support the ability of Indigenous people to fulfill their traditional and spiritual responsibilities to the land. I have retired from the public school system but I have not retired from reaching out and helping in the community with outdoor learning and sustainability. The Adams River Salmon Society and the Salute to the Sockeye is a community event that has everyone working together. The state of the fisheries is an ongoing concern. Education has always been of utmost importance in my mind and it will continue to be where I focus my attention.

[Reply](#)

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**jyasinchuk says:**

November 18, 2017 at 10:17 am

I just wanted to say thank you for this thoughtful and introspective piece. As part of a rural BC school district that now encourages all gatherings to begin with the adopted acknowledgment, I cannot help but recognize that we are becoming 'stuck' in the same space, and falling into the same 'traps' that you so brilliantly elucidate.

[Reply](#)**Liseli Haines says:**

November 18, 2017 at 8:16 pm

I really appreciate this conversation. I have been giving acknowledgements for about a year in various locations. I have researched the information and can usually find an indigenous elder or scholar who can give feedback on my acknowledgement.

It has been a great experience. I don't want it to become rote. And the relationships I have created around the acknowledgements have been wonderful and important. So now I can work on the next steps.

[Reply](#)**Trish Everett-Kabut says:**

January 17, 2018 at 6:38 pm

I appreciate this article so much. As a white American (soon to be Canadian) living in Vancouver for 7 years now, I first experienced these acknowledgements at UBC during my PhD, then at CUPE union conventions (which always had a local elder do a speech and welcome, often the same elder time and again doing the same speech). The whole thing was baffling at first, then felt progressive and provocative, then became rote and a tick box just as you suggest. BUT if these acknowledgements weren't as commonplace at UBC as they are (and they're EVERYWHERE- speeches, meetings, classes, student club events, performances, etc) I can't say that I would have learned much about the Musqueam people, nor the Squamish, nor any of the other groups where CUPE events were held across Canada.

Now I am a university lecturer speaking to students from all over the world about Canadian theatre history (the cannon of which is pretty much devoid of First Nations performance until Tomson Highway and Monique Mojica). I am hoping to talk to my students about these acknowledgements this week in light of our physical location at UBC and in the context of the heavily colonial readings we're doing (Theatre of Neptune in New France, Canada's "first" play). My assumption is my students will also have been exposed to many acknowledgements, but I wonder how many of them have actually thought critically about the practice or what it means. Your article will help us frame that conversation.

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [What is the environment and where is the justice? – Shades of Green](#)

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Pingback: [Shades of Green podcast, episode 1: What is the environment and where is the justice? – Nova Scotia Advocate](#)

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Pingback: [Territory Acknowledgement – Allison's Blog](#)

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Pingback: [Land Acknowledgement | Conor Woolley](#)

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**Anne Neebish says:**

May 24, 2018 at 8:19 am

As an Indigenous women working in government I struggle to make sure routine does not lead to apathy. Additionally I advocate for self-learning when it comes to Indigenous information. This information shouldn't be spoon fed, you must engage with things, form questions and actively seek the answers. I struggled for years to connect with my culture, it isn't fair to put it in a briefing note.

This article was brilliantly written and sparked a deep conversation in how we will move forward in acknowledgements.

I hope that this leads to more engagement and consultation with communities as we move forward. I personally think it's important for them to help us determine what we should acknowledge, what terminology to use, and make an effort to learn some of the language. Best practices can only take you so far.

[Reply](#)

**Lina says:**

May 31, 2018 at 5:55 pm

A friend of mine who is writing a local history book contacted the Mississaugas of the New Credit (<http://mncfn.ca/>) to ask the protocol for using the statement “Toronto is situated on the traditional territory....” in an opening paragraph in order to lay a foundation of knowledge for readers. But the response back was that because the area written about was not an organization or building, that the statement could not be used. Just as well because as I search on the internet it seems a few statements are not 100% correct, according to people’s feedback. And once these statements are verbally said, unless one knows history, whose to argue the validity?

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [Where do you stand? – Large Coffee With Four Cremes](#)

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Pingback: [Land Acknowledgement – Curricular Pods](#)

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Pingback: [Indigenous Language Resources • The Capilano Review](#)

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Pingback: [Reflections | Curricular Pods](#)

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Pingback: [Native Lands: An Interactive Map Reveals the Indigenous Lands On which Modern Nations Were Built - Harmony Studios](#)

**Daphne Ben David says:**

August 15, 2018 at 6:04 pm

The second pingback link (Land Acknowledgement – Curricular Pods) is broken – here is what I found on the website that I think you were linking to:

<https://curricularpods.wordpress.com/2018/07/05/about/>

Thank you for writing this article âpihtawikosisân, and for your work in continuously replying to comments (no pressure to reply to this one!).

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [Editors' Choice: Doing the work – Editing Wikipedia as an act of reconciliation](#)

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Pingback: [Land Acknowledgements: Undoing History? – Decolonization and the University: Notes for the Accomplice](#)

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Pingback: [Anti-racism 101 | Dowsing for Divinity](#)



**Gary Kenny says:**

November 2, 2018 at 9:45 am

Thank you for this thoughtful piece. We “own” a farm in West Grey County in southern Ontario located within the Saugeen watershed, and have been using a territorial acknowledgement – including in e-mail signatures and at the opening of events that are hosted here – for three years. (I am also a former staff person for Kairos which is quoted in your article.) The acknowledgment we use is a fairly standard form of acknowledgment and reads as below. I consulted with an Ojibway friend and colleague in its drafting. You are right –



such acknowledgments can be disruptive in a rural setting like ours.

Thankfully, I was always aware of the seriousness of making such an acknowledgement and that it could only be a beginning. I viewed it in the context of “reconciliatory justice” which I understand as a process, a journey (a rocky path at times!), that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are currently living out. As part of the commitment we understood we made through the initiation of the territorial acknowledgement, we have been working to organize courses and workshops on Indigenous history, culture and contemporary issues led/facilitated by local Indigenous historians and teachers and hosting some of the workshops here at the farm. We are involved in other efforts as well to put meat on the bones of the territorial acknowledgement. Still, I found myself constructively pushed and stretched by your article, and I am grateful for that.

Gary Kenny

River Croft Farm

We acknowledge that River Croft Farm is situated on the traditional land of the Three Fire Confederacy of the Ojibway, Potawatomi and Odawa people.

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [Beetles Project Integrating Territorial Acknowledgements Into Outdoor Science Programs - Beetles Project](#)

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**Brenda Grey says:**

November 24, 2018 at 4:42 pm

This opened my mind to see the depth and the meaning of listening to Indigenous peoples in to what their needs and wants are in regards to territorial acknowledgement.

[Reply](#)

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Pingback: [Caring for Kin: Confronting Global Disruptive Change, 22-23 August, 2018 – groundwork](#)

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**Jake Denton says:**

February 26, 2019 at 3:56 pm

If you make an acknowledgement that the land you're on belongs to indigenous people then why haven't you given them ownership and then leased it from them. Its a massive virtue signal that makes absolutely no sense, do immigrants need to pledge to their new country that they acknowledge their land doesn't belong to them? I have to listen to these acknowledgements weekly and laugh every time. If you're serious about it, donate your property to an aboriginal group with a 99 year lease clause otherwise cut the shit.

[Reply](#)**âpihtawikosisân says:**

February 27, 2019 at 10:44 am

Lease, na, they can just go ahead and hand it over



Reply

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