

# AMA Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgements



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# Why Share a Land Acknowledgement?

Acknowledging the traditional lands of Indigenous Peoples allows us to honour those who have lived and worked on this land historically and express gratitude to those who continue to reside here today. It's a tradition that dates back many centuries but is increasingly becoming a protocol incorporated by many organizations, including the Alberta Medical Association, as a start to any event that brings people together. We consider it not only a sign of respect and reverence for the people who came before us, but an essential step toward reconciliation.

Land acknowledgements are often done at the beginning of meetings, conferences, courses or presentations. In this context, the AMA's land acknowledgement reminds us of the long-standing, rich history of the land, and our gratitude to be able to work and live here. It also allows us to acknowledge our place on lands that First Nations peoples have inhabited and nurtured since ancient times while raising awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights today.

## Updating the Alberta Medical Association's Land Acknowledgement Statement

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada issued several calls to action to help recognize and rectify some of the wrongs committed to the Canadian Indigenous population in the past and which continue to affect Indigenous peoples today. The AMA developed the [AMA Policy Statement on Indigenous Health](#) to support the calls to action on health from the TRC's final report. The policy aligns well with the AMA's mandate of being leaders in the health care system. The policy was approved by the AMA Board of Directors in July 2017 as a means to support the TRC calls to action on health, and for the AMA as an organization to support improvements in accessing quality care for Indigenous populations. Download the [AMA Policy Statement on Indigenous Health](#).

The AMA formed the Indigenous Health working group to determine how to best address the TRC calls to action. This working group included Indigenous physicians, Indigenous members of the public and physicians with experience working with Indigenous populations. The Indigenous Health Committee (IHC) was then established to promote and operationalize the recommendations in the AMA Policy Statement on Indigenous Health. [Learn more about the Indigenous Health Committee](#).

Recently, the IHC undertook a review of the AMA's existing land acknowledgement statement, which reads:

*"The Alberta Medical Association acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6, 7 and 8 territories; traditional lands of diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Métis, Nakoda Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Inuit, Blackfoot Confederacy, the Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Stoney Nakoda and many others whose histories, languages and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community. We respect the histories, languages and cultures of First Nations, Metis, Inuit and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community."*

While the words included in the statement continue to hold true, IHC felt it was important to update the statement to reflect the current environment and our deepening understanding of the importance of reconciliation and moving toward wholistic health for all the relations who host us. Members of IHC noted that land acknowledgement statements must evolve and grow, much like the lands on which we live together. This updated statement focuses on the common teaching among Indigenous Peoples that the land is not inanimate and not an object:

*“The land is alive and it is a relation. Indigenous Peoples are often taught that we are born from the land and our lives are in the land. The land grows up and around us – and embraces us as a family member. So in this sense, land acknowledgements are so much more than just about land and place, but about people and spaces. It is in this spirit that we – the AMA – offer a land acknowledgement where each and every one of us works with Indigenous Peoples, their families and their communities toward their wellness.”*

## **Adding Personal Context and Meaning**

When giving a land acknowledgement, the goal is not simply to read a prepared statement at gatherings, meetings or events. Instead, people are encouraged to add personal context or meaning to the suggested wording and to invite listeners to do the same. If Indigenous leaders are present, consider inviting them to provide a welcome to the territory but only if arranged in advance.

Speakers should consider what the acknowledgement means to both them and the organization, and how it connects with the event or meeting. How does the land acknowledgement influence the work of the organization? Is it demonstrated in tangible ways? Speakers should, whenever possible and appropriate, share what they have learned about the Indigenous communities we are acknowledging and how we can move toward meaningful reconciliation.

Doctors of BC offers some helpful reflection questions to help guide this personalization.

[www.doctorsofbc.ca/sites/default/files/guide to indigenous land acknowledgements 0.pdf](http://www.doctorsofbc.ca/sites/default/files/guide%20to%20indigenous%20land%20acknowledgements%200.pdf)

# Guide to Pronunciations

Pronouncing the names of the various Indigenous Peoples can be daunting, but it is important to attempt to pronounce names as correctly as possible. It is important to recognize the pronunciations will vary from region to region, and even within different families, but [this recording from the Alberta Teachers' Association](#) offers a useful guide.

This guide to phonetic pronunciations of First Nations communities across Alberta (in both English and French) from the Alberta Teachers' Association is also useful.

English		French	
Name	English pronunciation	Name	French pronunciation
Amskapi Piikani	<b>Ahm</b> -skah-pee Pee- <b>gun</b> -nee	Amskapi Piikani	Âm-skâ-pi Pi- <b>gâ</b> -ni
Anishinaabe	<b>Ah</b> -nish- <b>nah</b> -bey	Anishinaabe	Â-niche- <b>nâ</b> -bé
Bearspaw	<b>Bears</b> -paw	Bearspaw	<b>Bèrz</b> -pâ
Chiniki	<b>Chin</b> -ih-kee	Chiniki	<b>Tchin</b> -i-ki
Denesųłiné	<b>De</b> -ne- <b>soo</b> -leh- <b>nay</b>	Denesųłiné	<b>Dé</b> -né- <b>sou</b> -li- <b>né</b>
Dene Tha'	<b>De</b> -ne-tha	Dene Tha'	<b>Dé</b> -né-ta
Dane-zaa	<b>De</b> -ne-za	Dane-zaa	<b>Dé</b> -né-za
Esikisimu Nunangat	<b>Ee</b> -see-kee-see-mu Nu-na- <b>nat</b>	Esikisimu Nunangat	I-si- <b>ki</b> -si-mou Nou-na- <b>nat</b>
Goodstoney	Good-stone-ee	Goodstoney	Goude-stô-ni
Haudenosaunee	Hoh- <b>de</b> -noh- <b>shoh</b> -nee	Haudenosaunee	Ô- <b>dé</b> -nô- <b>châ</b> -ni
Îyârhe Nakoda	Ae- <b>yar</b> -hay Na- <b>koh</b> -da	Nakoda Îyârhe	Na- <b>kô</b> -da È- <b>iar</b> -hé
Kainai	<b>Gay</b> -nah	Kainai	<b>Gué</b> -na
Métis Otipemisiwak	May- <b>tee</b> Oh- <b>tih</b> -pem- <b>soo</b> -wuk	Métis Otipemisiwak	Mé- <b>ti</b> Ô- <b>ti</b> -pèm- <b>sou</b> -ouk
Nakota Sioux	Na- <b>koh</b> -da <b>Soo</b>	Sioux Nakota	<b>Sou</b> Na- <b>kô</b> -da
Nehiyaw	Ne- <b>hee</b> -yo	Nehiyaw	Nè- <b>hi</b> -iô
Piikani	Pee- <b>gun</b> -ee	Piikani	Pi- <b>gâ</b> -ni
Siksikaitsitapi	Sik-sik- <b>aye</b> -sit-a- <b>pee</b>	Siksikaitsitapi	Sic-sic- <b>aille</b> -si-ta- <b>pi</b>
Siksika	<b>Sik</b> -sik-a	Siksika	<b>Sic</b> -sic-ka
Tsuut'ina	<b>Soot</b> -inna	Tsuut'ina	<b>Soute</b> -ina

# Dos and Don'ts of Land Acknowledgements

*Contributed by Ashley Marie Turner, Second Year Medical Student at the University of Alberta*

Land acknowledgements can be mistaken as a way to claim ownership of the land. However, it should not be meant that way; it is meant to honour relationships – to the land and to each other. It is important to remember that these things can be uncomfortable for many people, especially when they are learning how to appropriately give a land acknowledgement. But setting your intentions in a good way and starting somewhere is better than nowhere.

The following offers some general guidelines to keep in mind. Many Indigenous groups agree that there may not be one true “best practice” – as each are unique varying from place, Nation, community and relations.

## DO

Start with self-reflection.

- Looking internally into the reason you are giving the land acknowledgement helps to set intentions in a good way.
- What brought you here today? To whom are you speaking and what are you reflecting upon?
- Where are you?
- Why are you doing this? What are your intentions with this acknowledgement?

Be purposeful.

- Land acknowledgements have a place for good reason. They should not be simply listed off to check boxes.
- Recognize that land acknowledgements vary for different purposes, meanings and uses.
- They adjust and adapt over time and space.
- They also may vary from an Indigenous delivery to non-Indigenous delivery.

Educate yourself.

- Educate yourself about the Indigenous Peoples on which land you are acknowledging. There are many diverse and unique groups, and as such, each should be recognized, rather than lumping all groups into broadly “Indigenous Peoples.”
- If you conduct research at the University of Alberta → Treaty 6, 7, 8 and the traditional lands of First Nations (list the individual nations) and Métis (which regions/districts are you on?).
- If you are presenting at the University of Calgary → Treaty 7 and the traditional lands of First Nations (list the individual nations) and Métis (which regions/districts are you on?).

Use appropriate language and terminology.

- Aboriginal/Indian (Incorrect in most contexts) vs. Indigenous.
- Past, present and future tenses → Indigenous Peoples have existed, still exist today and will continue to exist in the future. Speaking of Indigenous Peoples as a past tense can be reductive of our futures.
  - E.g., “traditional,” “ancestral” and “unceded” clarification?

Build relationships

- Build relationships with the Indigenous communities in your area. Ask what is most appropriate in their eyes and from their unique lived experience.

Learn correct pronunciation.

- This includes, but is not limited to, places, people and nations.
- Properly learning how to pronounce names and making a well-intentioned effort conveys respect and good intentions.
- Learning new words and language can be difficult at first! Please see the guide on the previous pages to help assist you through the process.
- Practice to help build confidence!

Realize that land acknowledgements alone are not enough.

- Consider what else you are doing or could do to appropriately support Indigenous Peoples and be allies.
- Land acknowledgements can be a great place to start and open up dialogue into what more should be done.
- Learn from others and adjust accordingly.
- Realize that people make mistakes → but it is possible to fix them next time.
- Intentions set in a good way, go a long way.

## DON'T

Read a land acknowledgement just to list it off or check a box.

- Land acknowledgements need to be meaningful and are not meant to be performative.
- If something is not done in a good way, it may be better to just not have done it at all.

Be extractive.

- Sometimes we see action made with good intentions, but impacts can be further extractive.

Mispronounce names of places, people or nations.

Don't use "Indigenous Peoples" as a blanket term

- There are First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples → and within, there are even many more unique nations/identities. It is important to find what groups are being represented and address them specifically and appropriately.

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## Resources

1. <https://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>
2. <https://guides.library.ubc.ca/distance-research-xwi7xwa/landacknowledgements#:~:text=There%20are%20no%20true%20%22best,be%20intentional%2C%20meaningful%20and%20accurate>
3. Consultation of IMDSA members
4. First Nations Health Authority Territory Acknowledgements Booklet  
<https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Territory-Acknowledgements-Information-Booklet.pdf>
5. Interactive 'Native Land' Indigenous Territory, Language and Treaty map <https://native-land.ca/>