

## **Guidelines for Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement(s) for Future NASSS Conferences**

*Please find below some draft guidelines, based on ideas from our UNDRIP Alignment Committee and research, that may be used in generating Land Acknowledgements for future conferences.*

### 1. Committee Reflections on Guidelines for Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statements from Meeting Minutes:

#### *HOW*

- It was recommended that the Land/Territory acknowledgement follow the suggestions from the local First Nation or Tribe (Sep 19, 2025).
  - E.g., Sean mentioned that he followed Puyallup members' suggestions when he prepared the Seattle land acknowledgment, which ensures the comments were meaningful to the person presenting and not just performative.
- It was stated that it should be ensured that a Land acknowledgement is not just performative act (June 25, 2025).
- It was suggested that a Land acknowledgement should promote reflection in the people writing it and those listening to it (Sep 19, 2025).
- It was shared that the intention of a land acknowledgement is to, first, reflect on Indigenous realities of that area for yourself, and then to present information in a way that prompts those listening to enter into reflections as well (Mar 27, 2025).
- It was recommended that the person writing a Land acknowledgement use the process as a means of unsettling themselves – holding themselves accountable to relevant Calls to Action, to how their research is progressing tied to these issues, and remembering/ensuring that they are not seen as the expert in these matters, and naming how we're contributing to the system and what they are doing to help change things for the better (May 1, 2025).
- It was noted that there are complexities around using names such as Turtle Island, which are not universally used, so to be mindful of this when writing Land acknowledgements (June 25, 2025).

## *WHEN*

- It was noted that the Land acknowledgement should occur before the blessing or welcome (Aug 13, 2025).

## *WHERE*

- It was suggested that considerations be made for doing the Land acknowledgement outdoors, on the physical landscape (Aug 13, 2025).
- The committee agreed that having a North American wide Land acknowledgement on the front page of the NASSS website wouldn't work well (and is not seen elsewhere), but we did discuss having a statement about NASSS' resolution agreeing to align NASSS with UNDRIP and a brief explanation of UNDRIP (Aug 13, 2025).
- It was suggested to have that Land acknowledgement suitable for each conference as the first page of the NASSS conference information on the conference website. One option could be to put an interactive map on the front page of the NASSS website, with the ability to have land acknowledgements tied to various areas; these could be added over the years with additional conference sites (Aug 13, 2025).
- It was recommended that the Land acknowledgement be included in the call for sessions and the call for abstracts (May 22, 2025).
- It was suggested that, for future conferences, the incoming NASSS President be asked if the Land acknowledgement could be included at the top of the letters that confirm acceptance of conference papers (May 22, 2025).

## 2. Research on Guidelines for Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statements:

### **Territorial or Land Acknowledgements as Naming Indigenous Land:**

“Acknowledging the land is the process of deliberately naming that this is Indigenous land and Indigenous people have rights to this land. It provides an opportunity for us to reflect on our relationship with the land and the continuous process of colonization that deeply impacts activist work” (Amnesty International, 2017).

### **Territorial or Land Acknowledgements as Sites of Disruption and Resistance:**

“If we think of territorial acknowledgements as sites of potential disruption, they can be transformative acts that to some extent undo Indigenous erasure.... The fact of Indigenous presence should force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands” (Vowel, 2024).

“As Amnesty International calls upon the Canadian government to uphold its obligations under

the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we must recognize that those rights were stripped and denied using centuries of laws and policies based on legal doctrines such as ‘terra nullius’, which declared this land empty despite the presence of Indigenous peoples. Acknowledging the land becomes a small act of resistance against this continued erasure of Indigenous people and their rights” (Amnesty International, 2017).

### **Territorial or Land Acknowledgements as Elevating Indigenous Governance:**

A Territorial acknowledgement is an opportunity for hosts to “use the brief moment of acknowledgement to elevate Indigenous society, governance, and jurisdiction” (Khelsilem, a Skwxwú7mesh councillor).

### **Territorial or Land Acknowledgements as Relational:**

“A good land acknowledgement recognizes not just the Nation or Nations whose territory you are on, but describes your understanding of the relationships between the Nations, and the relationships between the Nations and settlers. This may have been treaties, wampums or covenants between Nations that governed the land before the arrival of settlers, or that were entered into with settlers. You can also acknowledge your relationship with the land and the local Nations including how you might be working towards supporting the Nations’ sovereignty” (RAVEN, 2024).

### **RAVEN’s (2024) Guide to Writing a Land Acknowledgement:**

“**KNOW WHY YOU’RE DOING IT:** Territorial acknowledgments are expressions of relationship: to each other, to the lands and waters where we are, to our shared history, and to our common future. We can view ourselves as part of the ongoing continuum of stewardship of the land and territory. A land acknowledgement can be a way to counteract the ideology of terra nullius and the Doctrine of Discovery by naming that the land was not empty when Europeans first arrived on Turtle Island. It’s also a way of interrupting colonial erasure and foregrounding the Peoples whose land you are on ahead of the other work you’ve come to do.

“**KNOW WHOSE LAND YOU ARE ON:** While there are many resources for starting points to learn about the land that you are on, relationships are some of the most reliable. Many maps may rely on simplified information, or information gathered by non-Indigenous historians or anthropologists which may not have accurate information. Learning from those further along in the journey of building these relationships, or from the Nations themselves is often more accurate and more fulsome.

“**GROUND IT IN HISTORY:** Share local impacts of colonialism: dispossession from the land, attempted cultural erasure through residential schools, Indian Act policies and the ongoing crisis of MMIWG. Try to learn from the relationships you build to be as local as possible. Be mindful to

also portray Indigenous People's resistance and leadership as it is taking place in the present, where you live.

**“HOW DO YOU MODEL IT?** Model what concrete actions you are taking to engage in reconciliation, suggest ways for others to get involved, or suggest organizations to donate to that are working towards Indigenous sovereignty—and try not to virtue signal by taking up too much space with your personal history.

**“ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR ROLE:** Consider what are the Indigenous protocols involved in being a guest, what are your responsibilities to be exercised? To what extent are your events benefiting local Nations? Indigenous nations have specific expectations of guests, and of hosts: this next step 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.

**“INCLUDE A COMMITMENT:** Moving beyond territorial acknowledgements means asking hard questions about what needs to be done once we're aware of Indigenous presence and ongoing colonialism. This can be especially helpful if you consider it as leading by example. Help other people learn about ways to support local Nations by sharing what you are doing and how they can also get involved” (RAVEN, 2024).

**Amnesty International's (2017) Guide to Writing a Land Acknowledgement:**

**“Name which Indigenous territories you are currently on.**

**“Explain why you are sharing a land acknowledgement.** Explain why you find it important to acknowledge the land.

**“Address the relevance of Indigenous rights.** Take the time to reflect on these systemic connections. If you find it hard to capture the relationship between the issues you are working on in words, you can also speak to how you and your group will continue to support Indigenous rights in your ongoing activist work.

**“Invite an Elder or Indigenous person.** You and your group may know an Elder or Indigenous person from the Territory that your event is taking place on who would be happy to be invited to your event to conduct a Territory Welcome. Unless it is explicitly said not to, it's important to pay folks for their time and work, and the traditional protocol of that Nation might mean offering them a gift i.e. tobacco or sage” (Amnesty International, 2017).

## References

- Amnesty International's (2017) *A Meaningful Land Acknowledgement Example* at [https://amnesty.ca/activism-guide/activism-skills-land-and-territory-acknowledgement/?gad\\_source=1&gbraid=0AAAAAD5luGLo1vvyMHZF0uI7pdEES7\\_mJ&gclid=Cj0KCQjwIMfABhCWARIsADGXdy-BD5\\_Y1qtYZiEjqPmnuzy5C1Bm0fVttlqD\\_IJEW7SDHu6B0rRChYQaApvbEALw\\_wcB](https://amnesty.ca/activism-guide/activism-skills-land-and-territory-acknowledgement/?gad_source=1&gbraid=0AAAAAD5luGLo1vvyMHZF0uI7pdEES7_mJ&gclid=Cj0KCQjwIMfABhCWARIsADGXdy-BD5_Y1qtYZiEjqPmnuzy5C1Bm0fVttlqD_IJEW7SDHu6B0rRChYQaApvbEALw_wcB)
- Chelsea Vowell's (2024) *Revisiting "Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments"* at <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2024/11/revisiting-beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>
- First Nations Health Authority's ( ) *Territory Acknowledgement Information Booklet* at <https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Territory-Acknowledgements-Information-Booklet.pdf>
- Native Governance Center's (2019) *A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement* at <https://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>
- RAVEN Trust's (2024) *Making a Meaningful Land Acknowledgement and Building Relationship* at <https://raventrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Land-Acknowledgement-PDF.pdf>
- Trent University's (2021) *How to Do a Land Acknowledgement* at <https://www.trentu.ca/teaching/how-do-land-acknowledgment>