


Land Acknowledgements

Land acknowledgments have become a widespread practice for many organizations and government in Nova Scotia. They are a way to recognize and honour the past, present, and future contributions of L'nu'k (Mi'kmaq), the Indigenous people of Mi'kma'ki.


Mi'kma'ki is the traditional territory of Mi'kmaq and includes seven districts which are found in what is now known as Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and the Gaspé region in Quebec. Some Mi'kmaq consider Mi'kma'ki extending to Newfoundland and parts of Maine. For thousands of years, Mi'kmaq traveled throughout Mi'kma'ki, and to other territories, carrying with them stories and teachings. Moving throughout the land for trade and resources, as well as establishing relationships with neighbouring nations. Present day mapping and borders didn't exist, there were natural boundaries in the landscape such as rivers, mountains, or watersheds that marked the territory they were in or traveled across.

While a land acknowledgement and territorial welcome may be something new to those who are not Indigenous, Indigenous people have engaged in this



Mi'kmaq, being familiar with treaties and the process of treaty making, in the 18th century entered Peace and Friendship Treaties with the British Crown. These treaties were established on the premises of nation-to-nation relationship building. Today, acknowledging traditional territory is a way of showing respect for and honouring our shared Treaty relationship. It is an important step towards reconciliation and not intended to create any legally binding obligations or recognition of asserted claims.

While we regularly receive a lot of requests to prescribe a land acknowledgement, we believe that exploring the following questions will help



While land acknowledgments are important and appropriate, take care to ensure your land acknowledgement is not a performative piece or a piece that is simply put together to tick a box of required tasks. It's important that the intention of a land acknowledgement is not lost by obscuring it. Sometimes the simplest is the most effective. Always be mindful of your intentions.

- A welcome to territory is something an Indigenous person may do when on their home territory to welcome guests to the territory.
- A land acknowledgement is something that a non-Indigenous person or visiting Indigenous person may do.
- Only Mi'kmaq people should *welcome* others to Mi'kma'ki, their traditional territory.
- All other speakers may choose to

- It is a way to express the motto “We are all Treaty people” and recognize our relationship is based on peace and friendship.
- An acknowledgement is usually the first item at public events, e.g., public workshops, conferences, or ceremonies, or at the start of a speech or formal presentation.
- Once an initial land acknowledgment or territorial welcome is made, it may not be necessary for every subsequent speaker to follow suit.
- Land acknowledgements may not be needed in every situation. For example, they aren’t typically part of regular day-to-day gatherings, meetings, or training.
- Before including an acknowledgement in a print document, it is recommended to seek advice from the Office of L’nu Afairs.
- For large events, a Mi’kmaw Elder (or community member) may be invited to provide an opening and share a welcome, prayer, song and/or smudge.
 - It is acceptable to provide honorariums to Elders and speakers. Honorariums / fees should be discussed in advance.
 - A gift of loose tobacco wrapped in red cloth is customarily offered to an Elder following their welcome as a way of demonstrating respect and honour. If you do not have a contact to help with this, it is best to reach out to the nearest Mi’kmaw community, organization, or the Office of L’nu Afairs.
- For smaller events or presentations, an acknowledgment of traditional territory may be more appropriate.

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- While many historical treaties in Canada involved Indigenous people ceding, releasing, or surrendering their rights to land in return for specific rights outlined within the terms of the negotiated treaty, the Treaties of Peace and Friendship signed by British and Mi'kmaq in the 1700s contain no cede, release, and surrender language, or express surrender of land rights.
- These treaties were negotiated by British colonial officials in a context defined by the end of the Seven Years' War between Britain and France and a mutual desire between Mi'kmaq and British colonial officials to establish peaceful trade relations.
- Mi'kmaq, including in Nova Scotia, take great pride in the distinctiveness of

- To understand our relationship with Mi'kmaq regarding land and the path forward for reconciliation, we need to do more than express words or