

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TERRITORY

Land acknowledgements have become commonplace across Canada – in schools, universities, at sporting events, concerts, conferences, meetings, religious services and other public gatherings. A territorial or land acknowledgment is an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the traditional territory of the Indigenous People who called the land home before the arrival of settlers, and in many cases still do call it home.

Every action taken by colonial governments, by settlers – land grabs, transmission of infectious disease, distribution of alcohol, outright slaughter, the Indian Act, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, etc. – was designed to marginalize, to strip Indigenous Peoples of their languages, culture, identity and their connection to the land and their history.

The acknowledgement of territory shows recognition of and respect for Indigenous Peoples, who have lived on these lands since time immemorial and provides some recognition of our colonial history. These can both be key and essential steps towards reconciliation.

The simplest thing we are doing with an acknowledgement is just acknowledging history is here and happened, that there are still people here, that we have a relationship with them, and that we're not going to erase that and be silent about it.

Territory acknowledgments are just the start to conversations about Indigenous history and the relationship we have between our district and our local Indigenous people, the Sukenaquin and Smelqimx People. An important task we share as educators is to make visible those histories and those ongoing relationships. It reminds us we are accountable to these relationships and to remind us every day, in our school system, of the accountability that everybody has to listen to the concerns of the community and how we can align to our entire community, which includes our Indigenous Peoples.

This information is provided to bring some clarification on land acknowledgments that are addressed at formal gatherings in the Okanagan Similkameen School District and in some schools across the province and country.

