

Land Acknowledgement Toolkit

For AFMC Committees and Networks



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Purpose

This toolkit is designed to support AFMC collaborators, including committee and network Chairs and members in offering intentional, reflective, and relevant land acknowledgements that move beyond performative gestures. It draws upon AFMC’s active commitments to reconciliation, Indigenous health, equity, and social accountability, providing guidance on grounding acknowledgements in action, relevance, and continuous learning.

Why it matters

Land acknowledgements are not checklist items. They are:

- A way to honour Indigenous Peoples' ongoing connection to the land and affirm our commitment to respectful, accountable relationships in medical education.
- A reminder of colonial histories and present-day realities that shape our healthcare systems and academic institutions.
- A call to action to meaningfully align our work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action and AFMC’s commitments to Indigenous health and social accountability.

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If we think of territorial acknowledgements 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 acknowledgements 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.

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– Chelsea Vowel, Métis, Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements

Key Principles for Meaningful Land acknowledgement

A land acknowledgement connects us to place, history, and our responsibilities today. At AFMC, it calls for reflection and accountability in our work. Prepare with care and root it in the principles below.

1 Root it in the purpose of the meeting or work

acknowledgements are most powerful when they are tied directly to the intended impact of the work you're doing.

If you're discussing workforce development, reflect on the barriers Indigenous students and physicians continue to face, and how land, identity, and systemic racism intersect.

Example: Indigenous learners and physicians continue to face systemic barriers in entering and thriving within the healthcare system. The ongoing legacies of colonization and racism mean that access to medical education, practice opportunities, and safe learning environments is unequal.

- In today's discussion on *[insert workforce topic]*, how do these realities show up?
- What barriers are within our scope to address?
- How might we embed equity for Indigenous learners and physicians in the strategies we are shaping?



If your work touches on planetary health or sustainability, consider Indigenous leadership in land stewardship, and the erasure of Indigenous knowledge systems in healthcare responses.

Example: We are on the lands of *[insert Nation(s)]*, whose stewardship has sustained this territory for generations. Too often, Indigenous knowledge has been excluded from health and environmental responses.

- As we work on *[insert sustainability topic]*, where can Indigenous leadership guide us?
- How do we ensure Indigenous knowledge systems are included, not erased, in our plans?
- What role can this group take in building partnerships with Indigenous communities on sustainability?

If you're working on curriculum reform, ask how the histories of dispossession have shaped access to medical education and care.

Example: Medical education itself has often reinforced inequities. As we meet on *[insert Nation(s)]* territory, we recognize how dispossession and assimilation continue to shape who has access to training and care

- In today's work on *[insert curriculum topic]*, where do we see gaps in Indigenous representation or voice?
- How might the histories of this territory shape who has access to education and care?
- What steps can we take to ensure curricula include Indigenous knowledge, histories, and perspectives meaningfully?

acknowledgement is an act of relevance — it says: “We understand that this work exists in a context, and we cannot move forward without naming it.”



2 Situate the land in relationship to your work

Use this moment to contextualize the land you're on in relation to the work you're engaging in.

- What Nation(s) care for this territory?
- What treaties, agreements, or unceded histories exist?
- How has the healthcare system — and medical education — been complicit in the colonization of Indigenous Peoples here?

Connect the dots between geography, policy, and the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples today.



3 Consider AFMC's ongoing commitments

As you prepare your acknowledgement, consider how it connects to AFMC's institutional commitments and ongoing work.

When we acknowledge land in this context, we are also acknowledging the responsibilities our institutions and networks carry — to learn, to act, and to be accountable. **The following documents can be referenced and should be reviewed:**

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- [Report on Indigenous Health Activities](#)
 - [IPAC-AFMC First Nations, Inuit & Métis Health Curriculum Implementation Toolkit](#)
 - [IPAC-AFMC First Nations, Inuit & Métis Health Critical Reflection Tool](#)
 - [IPAC-AFMC First Nations, Inuit, Métis Health Core Competencies Framework for UGME](#)
 - [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: 94 Calls to Action](#)
 - [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)
 - [National Consortium for Indigenous Medical Education](#)



4 Speak from your role — and from relationship

Consider what your role in this committee/network/group or meeting makes possible:

- Are you helping shape curricula, policy, research, partnerships?
- Are you hosting a space where Indigenous partners or knowledge holders are present?
- Are you influencing decision-making that impacts health outcomes?

Then speak to your own (or collective) responsibility, rather than assigning it abstractly to others. A meaningful acknowledgement isn't just about "where you are," but how you're showing up.

Use "I" or "we" intentionally:

- "As someone involved in shaping medical education policy..."
- "As a committee working toward equity in healthcare delivery..."



5 Acknowledge presence, not just history

Land acknowledgements should not only name the past — but also affirm Indigenous presence, sovereignty, and leadership today.

- Use present-tense language: "This is the territory of..." rather than "This was the land of..."
- Acknowledge the Nation(s)' active stewardship and continued contributions to health, knowledge, and community well-being.
- If applicable, name ongoing partnerships or Indigenous-led initiatives connected to your work.

6 Acknowledge complexity, not just identity

A land acknowledgement is not about "getting it perfect." It's about:

- Being in relationship with complexity,
- Acknowledging what you're learning and unlearning,
- Speaking with care, clarity, and openness.



7 Move from acknowledgement to action

Conclude with a commitment tied to your work. This makes the acknowledgement not only a moment of reflection but also a call to responsibility.

Examples:

- “As we discuss faculty development today, we commit to centering Indigenous pedagogies in our resources.”
- “In our work on accreditation, we acknowledge our role in embedding cultural safety across learning environments.”
- “As a network focused on distributed medical education, we affirm our responsibility to respect and engage with the Nations on whose territories our programs operate.”

This framing grounds your words in what you’re actually doing — and what you still need to do.

Note:

Always verify the correct Nations and spelling via resources such as [Native-Land.ca](https://www.native-land.ca/) or local Indigenous organizations.



Tips for Chairs and Members

- Encourage members to offer land acknowledgements from their own territories.
- Consider rotating acknowledgements among members to highlight different territories and voices.
- Avoid reading generic scripts—invite reflection, and encourage learning.
- If hosting an event, include Indigenous voices and protocols whenever possible.

Resources for Reflection and Learning

- [TRC Calls to Action](#)
- [Native-Land.ca](https://www.native-land.ca/) – for identifying traditional territories
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
- [Indigenous ally toolkit](#) from the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network



Final Note: A Living Practice

Land acknowledgements are not static. They evolve with your understanding, your context, and your commitment. Use this toolkit as a guide—but let your acknowledgement come from your own voice and growing awareness.

Commonly used terms pertaining to Land Acknowledgements:

Traditional: recognizes lands traditionally used and/or occupied by First Nations, Inuit or Métis people throughout various regions of the country.

Ancestral: recognizes land that is handed down from generation to generation.

Unceded: refers to land that was not ceded to the Crown. You can also choose to use the term “unsurrendered.”

Uninvited guest/trespasser: many of us live on these territories without invitation from the ancestral (and current on land that was never surrendered) owners of these lands.

Settler: being a settler means that you are non-Indigenous and that you or your ancestors came and settled in a land that had been inhabited by Indigenous people. The term is not derogatory.