

# Land Acknowledgments

## A Guide



### WHAT IS A LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT?

A land acknowledgment is an act of reconciliation that involves giving a statement at the start of an event or meeting to recognize the indigenous inhabitants of the land. To acknowledge is one way to show respect to Indigenous peoples and their enduring connection with their traditional territories and its histories.

### WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

We are guests on the territory where we currently have the privilege to study, live and work. It is important to acknowledge the original inhabitants of this land and the history they share with this land as a step towards reconciliation.

### DISH WITH ONE SPOON WAMPUM AGREEMENT

McMaster University stands on land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. Wampum belts are beads bound onto strings which narrate Haudenosaunee history, tradition and laws. The “Dish With One Spoon” wampum was created to bind the nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to the Great Law of Peace. The “Dish” represents the shared land, while “One Spoon” reinforces the idea of sharing and peace.

### HOW CAN YOU PLAY A ROLE?

At McMaster University, we are committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. We hope to foster a cohort of students and graduates who are aware and serious about reconciliation. As such, we encourage you, as leaders in the community, to adopt land acknowledgments at the beginning of your meetings or events, irrespective of the size. While giving acknowledgment is a step towards reconciliation, it is important to recognize that it is only one small step towards equity and inclusion.

### TIPS WHEN GIVING ACKNOWLEDGMENT

1. In order to do the acknowledgment appropriately, it should not be rushed. This means not neglecting it in the case an event is running late to start. The acknowledgment should be prioritized and the person delivering it should be given time, as well as the respectful attention of the audience.
2. It is not a checklist item on an event agenda but rather an opportunity for a conversation if the audience is receptive. Hence, it may be a good idea depending on the context to open up the floor after the acknowledgment for questions or comments.
3. As to who should deliver the land acknowledgment, it is appropriate for an event organizer or the chair of a meeting to do so.
4. A land acknowledgment should be done in all cases, regardless of the size of a meeting or event and independent of the presence of Indigenous people at the event.

### TO OFFER A LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT, YOU CAN SAY:

#### ***McMaster's Official Statement***

McMaster University recognizes and acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.

#### ***Other Examples***

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1. We [I] take this time to recognize that we are currently on the traditional territory shared between the Haudenosaunee confederacy and the Anishinabe nations, which was acknowledged in the Dish with One Spoon Wampum belt. That wampum uses the symbolism of a dish to represent the territory, and one spoon to represent that the people are to share the resources of the land and only take what they need.
2. We would like to begin by acknowledging that we meet on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.
3. We [I] would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishanaabe.
4. We [I] would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe nations. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.
5. We will begin by giving honour and thanks to the Haudenosaunee and Anishanaabe nations as the traditional inhabitants of the lands where McMaster stands. To say that is to acknowledge a debt to those who were here before us and to recognize our responsibility, as guests, to respect and honour the intimate relationship Indigenous peoples have to this land.
6. We acknowledge the traditional territories upon which we gather; McMaster University is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement”. For many thousands of years, the first people sought to walk gently on this land, offering their assistance to the first European travelers and sharing their knowledge for survival in what was at times a harsh climate. We seek a new relationship with the original peoples of this land, one based in honour and deep respect. May we be guided by love and right action as we transform of our personal and institutional relationships with our indigenous friends and neighbours.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

- Introduction to Land Acknowledgments: [http://alumni.mcmaster.ca/s/1439/images/editor\\_documents/original\\_introduction\\_to\\_land\\_acknowledgements\\_doc-2.pdf?sessionid=4e5ec019-48c0-4d83-aa33-cef15ef3fc76&cc=1](http://alumni.mcmaster.ca/s/1439/images/editor_documents/original_introduction_to_land_acknowledgements_doc-2.pdf?sessionid=4e5ec019-48c0-4d83-aa33-cef15ef3fc76&cc=1)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)
- Haudenosaunee Confederacy: <http://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/index.html>
- Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments: <http://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>
- Valedictorian Kaitlin Debicki Fall 2017 Convocation Speech: <https://youtu.be/qtsc29qzKpQ>
- Dish with One Spoon: <http://www.indiantime.net/story/2010/08/05/cultural-corner/the-dish-with-one-spoon/7510.html>