

We acknowledge with gratitude and respect that Central Presbyterian Church is located on the traditional territories of the Anishnaabek and Haudenosaunee peoples. This land is protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to share and care for the lands, air, and waters around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We recognize that we must learn about the rich history of this land to better understand our role as residents, neighbours, partners and caretakers. We are all treaty people.

Land Acknowledgment Guide

What is a Land Acknowledgement?¹

In many formal settings across this country, using a land acknowledgment has become a common practice. It involves giving a statement at the beginning of a gathering or event to acknowledge and thank the Indigenous Peoples of the territory upon which the gathering is taking place. As well as giving thanks for the land, it may also acknowledge treaties that cover the area. We acknowledge our settler roles as allies to support our agreed upon treaty obligations.

Why Acknowledge the Traditional Territory?¹

In 2019, responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #46, the General Assembly of the PCC took the important step of repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery. This was a meaningful action the church took toward right relations—by repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery that assumed this land was empty (terra nullius) when European explorers, traders, and settlers first arrived. The repudiation supports our calls to pay respect to Indigenous peoples who have traditionally called this continent home for thousands of years. Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery is another way to continue to live out The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s Confession to Aboriginal peoples (1994). We acknowledge the spirituality of Indigenous peoples that was not respected by churches and was used to justify colonialism, including the residential schools.

Why are we all treaty people?

“Treaties are legally binding agreements that still stand today. With Peace and Friendship treaties, early settlers and traders were assured Peace and Friendship with the Indigenous Nations. Once settlers began to arrive in the thousands and communities and towns were developing, treaties became a way to remove Indigenous peoples to reservations in exchange for their lands to be given to settlers. Indigenous people did/do not see land as something to be owned but rather as a living, breathing entity. It’s “Our Mother Earth”. Sharing the land is what Indigenous peoples' worldview understood when making and signing treaties. Meaningful action the church can take to become Indigenous allies is to help Indigenous peoples to make sure the government lives up to its Treaty obligations. We are all Treaty People.” - Sheila Maracle, Mohawk Language Teacher, HWDSB; Indigenous Support Advisor, DSBN²

“Many people think of treaty rights as ‘special’ indigenous rights however, all people living in Canada are treaty people with their own set of rights and responsibilities. Treaties are a foundational part of Canadian society. Every road, house, building or business that exists today in a treaty area was made possible because of a treaty. The existence of treaties is proof that the first settlers, of what is now Canada, respected First Nations as sovereign people and negotiated Nation to Nation. By understanding the colonial history of Canada, we can renew our relationships with each other and move towards meaningful reconciliation.” <https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/abed101/we-are-all-treaty-people/>

How may a Land Acknowledgement be presented?¹

Acknowledgments may be printed, spoken, projected or posted on a website. Some churches include the recognition on their outside sign or on a special plaque at the entrance to the building. For in-person or online gatherings, it is spoken at the very beginning, before conducting the business at hand, by anyone organizing the event.

Helpful Definitions

Aboriginal and Indigenous³ people are First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Anishnaabeg/Anishnaabek (plural)⁴ The Ojibwe, Chippewa, Odawa, Potawatomi, Algonquin, Saulteaux, Nipissing and Mississauga First Nations <https://www.anishinabek.ca/>

Between the Lakes Purchase (1792)⁵ Also known as Treaty No. 3. A document signed by the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Crown. Major population centres found within the boundaries of this treaty include Hamilton, Cambridge, Waterloo, Guelph, Brantford, and St. Catharines. The present location of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Reserve is next to Hagersville, ON. <http://mnfc.ca>.

Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant⁶ A concept developed by the Indigenous peoples of the Great Lakes region and northeastern North America. It was used to describe how land can be shared to the mutual benefit of all its inhabitants. The concept originated many hundreds of years ago and a “dish with one spoon” was often mentioned by Indigenous peoples while making treaties with one another to avoid conflict. The “dish” represents the land that is to be peacefully shared, and the “spoon” represents the individuals living on and using the resources of the land in a spirit of mutual co-operation. Formal ceremonies were held to celebrate the making of the treaty and would involve the exchange of wampum belts to record their agreement. The wampum belt was, in effect, a record of a diplomatic agreement. They ensured that the legality of the agreement would be preserved, as the belts were created as mnemonic devices that “tell the story” or details of the binding and legal agreements.

When making treaties with European powers and settler governments, Indigenous peoples continued to observe the concept of a Dish With One Spoon. However, European powers and settlers had a much different view from Indigenous peoples when making later treaties, regarding the use of Indigenous lands and resources. Europeans believed in the concept of private property, and so were not thinking of sharing the land in perpetuity.

Recently, many scholars have come to understand that the Dish With One Spoon concept can raise awareness regarding ecological and environmental sustainability. Until recently, the Dish With One Spoon Wampum was little known outside of Indigenous communities. Starting in the 2010s, more Canadians are aware of it. Perhaps this knowledge will help foster a spirit of reconciliation since the acquiring of knowledge concerning Indigenous history, culture and philosophy is the first step in this process.

Doctrine of Discovery⁷ is a set of concepts developed from a series of papal bulls (decrees) issued around the 15th century. It goes hand in hand with the concept known as *terra nullius*, Latin for “empty land.” The bulls that developed and supported these concepts provided theological justification and legal backing to European monarchs to invade and seize non-Christian lands, enslave non-Christian people “in perpetuity” and take their property. The idea that European colonial powers had a right to appropriate lands and possessions and treat non-Christians as undeserving of rights flows from this doctrine and these concepts, and heavily influenced the legislation that eventually governed Indigenous-Crown relations. This doctrine and these concepts also profoundly shaped the system of residential and day schools in which the Presbyterian Church in Canada was complicit.

First Nations⁸ are the original inhabitants of this continent. They are distinct from the Métis and Inuit. First Nations people are often known by other names, like Indians, Natives, Aborigines or Indigenous peoples. For the most part, First Nations people are Status or Treaty Indians registered with their home reserve, band or community. First Nation can refer to a band, a reserve-based community, or a larger tribal grouping. There are 634 First Nation governments or bands across Canada.

<https://www.afn.ca/about-afn/declaration-of-first-nations/>

Haudenosaunee -The Iroquois Confederacy made up of the Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Tuscarora and Mohawk nations. (See Six Nations of the Grand River).

<https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/who-we-are/>

Inuit⁹ are the Indigenous people of the north (from the Arctic land and waters from the Mackenzie Delta in the west to the Labrador coast in the east and from the Hudson’s Bay coast to the islands of the High Arctic).

Kairos¹⁰ The time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action. In the New Testament, **kairos** means "the appointed time in the purpose of God," the time when God acts.

KAIROS Canada unites Canadian churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to the call to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). KAIROS is a joint venture ecumenical program administered by the United Church of Canada. Ten participating member denominations and religious organizations (including the Presbyterian Church in Canada) are involved in the development and delivery of shared work. <https://www.kairoscanada.org/>

Métis¹¹ are recognized as Indigenous people who have both Cree First Nation and English/Irish/Scottish/French ancestry, specifically from the Red River Valley area.

Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation- See the Between the Great Lakes Purchase. <http://mncfn.ca/>

Six Nations of the Grand River (Ontario)¹² is the largest First Nations reserve in Canada by population, and the second largest by size. Six Nations is home to the six individual nations that form the Haudenosaunee Confederacy; Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora. (See Haudenosaunee). <https://www.sixnations.ca/> Haldimand Proclamation of 1784 <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/haldimand-proclamation>

Treaties¹³ are nation-to-nation agreements between Aboriginal people and the Canadian government (Crown). Treaties set out legally binding responsibilities, agreements and benefits for both. There are 70 recognized treaties in Canada. However, some First Nations never negotiated treaties, so the land remains unceded (not surrendered).

Resources in assembling this document

¹ <https://presbyterian.ca/2018/03/23/acknowledging-traditional-territory-recognizing-relationships/>

<https://presbyterian.ca/dod>

<https://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/Acknowledging-traditional-territory-in-church-resource-2016.pdf>

<https://www.kairoscanada.org/territorial-acknowledgment>

<https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/acknowledging-the-territory.pdf>

² Sheila L. Maracle is from the Mohawk Nation. She received her Bachelor of Education and Master of Education Degrees from UBC. Sheila is a veteran teacher from Vancouver's inner-city schools. She and her family moved home to Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in 2013 and she currently teaches Mohawk Language and Indigenous education at Queen Mary School in Hamilton. She commends the learning journey you are embarking on, to offer understanding, compassion and support for the local Indigenous communities in preparation for the results of the upcoming search for unmarked graves at the Brantford Residential School. Your Allyship is appreciated and integral to Reconciliation. Nya:wen. Thank you.

^{3,9,13} <https://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/Acknowledging-traditional-territory-in-church-resource-2016.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anishinaabe>

⁵ <http://mncfn.ca/treaty3/>

⁶ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/a-dish-with-one-spoon>

<https://www.anishinabek.ca/education-resources/treaty-education-home/the-journey-part-4-gdoonaagidnaa-the-dish-with-one-spoon/>

⁷ <https://presbyterian.ca/justice/doctrine-of-discovery/>

⁸ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/first-nations>

<https://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/Acknowledging-traditional-territory-in-church-resource-2016.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kairos>

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kairos>

¹¹ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/collection/metis>

¹² <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/six-nations-of-the-grand-river>