

ACKNOWLEDGING TERRITORIES OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES WITHIN DIVISION EVENTS

Background Statement

Catholic social teaching explains that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has inherent dignity. No human being should experience one's personal dignity or freedom compromised. Since oppression and injustice make it impossible to live a life commensurate with dignity, it is important for our educational communities to pay full respect to the historical circumstances, traditional and existing lands, and cultural values of our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people.

Acknowledging the territory is a way of honouring and showing respect for groups of people who have been living and working on the land of division meeting places from time immemorial. Therefore this policy addresses processes through which our Board of Trustees and schools will rightfully acknowledge First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Territory within our Division.

Procedures

1. Distinctions need to be made regarding the case for *welcoming* and *acknowledging* First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. The only trustees or employees who would welcome a gathering of people to the territory where an event is being held are people who are traditionally / originally from the territory. Therefore, unless a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit representative of the division is bringing greetings, all formal recognition will take the form of an *acknowledgement* of territory.
2. Acknowledging territory will be initiated immediately following prayers to begin any public meeting of the Board. Schools will be expected to make an acknowledgement of territory at any public awards or school celebration gathering where the student and parent community has been invited. Specifics regarding acknowledgement at the school level will be addressed in [AP 160: Event Protocol](#).
3. The Board chair or designate for the purpose of chairing a board meeting, will acknowledge territory, and will not ask a public member to acknowledge territory, as the meeting is the Board's responsibility on behalf of the public that the Board represents.
4. It is not necessary for the Board to rely upon a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit person to bring a territorial acknowledgement to a public meeting.

5. In the event that the Board is travelling and conducting a meeting in another traditional territory other than its own, the Board will make its best effort to seek out the name of the territory specific to the meeting place, and incorporate that territory into the acknowledgement.
6. The generally accepted acknowledgment for meetings will be as follows:

We honour the spirit of the land, the land that has sustained us all since time immemorial. We acknowledge that we are gathering on Treaty 6 territory, meeting grounds and gathering place of the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Dene and Nakota Sioux, and the homeland of the Métis people of Alberta. We acknowledge, honour, and respect the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.

Together we call upon all peoples to build a stronger understanding of those who dwell on this land we call home. The recognition of our collective histories on this land is a meaningful act of reconciliation. We honour those who walk with us - we are all Treaty People.

7. Although not required, one of the following may be considered as a means of making a personal connection to the land acknowledgment relative to one's particular context:
 - *"I come with respect for this land that we are on today, and for the people who have resided here in the past, as well as all who reside here now."*
 - *"Coming from (describe your background), I strive to deepen my own understanding of the local First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and I commit to reframing my responsibilities to the land and community."*
 - *"As a(n) Indigenous/non-Indigenous person myself, I am committed to...(describe your commitment to actively working towards meaningful reconciliation)."*
8. Prior to liturgies and masses in schools and division buildings, the [accepted acknowledgement](#) to be used has been approved by the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories and supported by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA) and the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA):

"We acknowledge that Treaty 6 territory on which we stand, is the ancestral land of the Indigenous peoples, and is common home to everyone in virtue of God, our Creator's, gracious gift."