

TRADITIONAL TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Working Document Updated Sept. 2025

This acknowledgement was developed in collaboration with the Indigenous Education Council & Elder's Circle of Sooke School District. It remains a working document and will be revised should wording or orthography change; we will update accordingly.

What is a Traditional Territory Acknowledgment?

Territory Acknowledgments honour and show respect to the nations who have lived, worked, and played in a location since time immemorial.

In SD 62, we acknowledge the traditional territories to honour and respect

- our direct working relationships with T'Sou-ke Nation, SĆÍΛNEW (Beecher Bay) Nation, and Paaʔčiidʔath (Pacheedaht) Nation – Nuu-chah-nulth
- the nations on which our schools are built, including T'Sou-ke Nation, SĆÍΛNEW (Beecher Bay) Nation, Paaʔčiidʔath (Pacheedaht) Nation, and all South Island Coast Salish Nations. We also recognize that some of our schools are located on the traditional territories of the MÁLEXEł (Malahat) Nation, and the Ləkʷəŋən peoples of Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

We are proud of the relationships we have with our three local nations, and use the words gifted by them in our territory acknowledgements. Posters of the Douglas Treaty, local map, and Territory Acknowledgements can be found in Westshore Schools. The Douglas Treaty area is unceded territory or land that has never been surrendered historically. Paaʔčiidʔath (Pacheedaht) Nation does not have a treaty and is unceded territory.

Where does the protocol of acknowledging Traditional Territories originate from?

Customarily, when entering another nation's traditional territory, the people entering the traditional territory would seek permission from the traditional stewards of the area and be welcomed through an opening ceremony. The protocol is based on First Nations' concepts of "host" and "guest".

What is the difference between a *Territory Welcome* and a *Territory Acknowledgment*?

A *Territory Welcome* is made by First Nations who are traditionally from the Territory.

A *Territory Acknowledgment* is made by Non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal attendees who are not traditionally from the territory.

Who should acknowledge the territory?

Generally, at a meeting or event, the host acknowledges the territory. Anyone hosting an event, regardless if they are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal should acknowledge the territory. Administrators, teaching staff, support staff, students, elders, and other knowledge keepers can acknowledge the territory.

Which territory/territories do I acknowledge at my school?

The territory you acknowledge depends on the school site. In SD62 there are four traditional territory acknowledgements: one for Port Renfrew Elementary School, one for Milnes Landing Schools, one for Westshore Schools, and one for Hans Helgesen Elementary School.

When should we acknowledge territory?

In a meeting or event, and for weekly school announcements or assemblies, the acknowledgment or welcome is typically the first item on the agenda. It should be read before the singing of O Canada. If missed, the acknowledgement can be made at some point during the gathering. If a school trustee is in attendance it is advised to acknowledge their presence after the territory acknowledgement.

How can a traditional Territory Acknowledgement be integrated into the learning environment?

There are a variety of ways to integrate a traditional Territory Acknowledgement into your learning environment. Below is a list of suggestions made by SD62's NA'TSA'MAHT Indigenous Education Department:

1. Administrators:

- Include Territory Acknowledgments in school newsletters/ monthly announcements/ school websites
- Share Territory Acknowledgement at school assemblies
- Acknowledge the territory on morning announcements
- Type the Territory Acknowledgment at the top of staff meeting agendas
- Encourage staff members to share the Territory Acknowledgment at staff meetings
- Invite a local elder to do the Territory Acknowledgment at your school/ assembly/ event (With honourarium)

2. Teaching Staff & Support Staff:

- Post the appropriate *Territory Acknowledgment* in your classroom
- Start your week or day with the Territory Acknowledgment in your classroom
- Include Territory Acknowledgments in class newsletters
- Volunteer to do the Territory Acknowledgment at monthly staff meetings
- Welcome visiting Role Models to the respective territory

3. Student:

- Acknowledge the territory at the beginning of in-school and land-based lessons
- Acknowledge the territory on morning announcements
- Share Territory Acknowledgement at school assemblies
- Join a Role Model in doing the Territory Acknowledgment
- Welcome visiting Role Models to the respective territory

4. Territory Acknowledgement Tips:

- Remember that acknowledging the local territories places students on the land on which they live
- Access the Territory Acknowledgement in English or French from the ABED Department
- Don't be afraid of making a mistake - the nations we work with are supportive and forgiving
- Copy the Territory Acknowledgment on the front/back of your schedule or attach a copy to a lanyard so it is readily available
- Be sincere – the Territory Acknowledgment should sound as natural as possible and fit into what you are doing
- A one-line acknowledgment such as “*Today, I would like to acknowledge the traditional Coast Salish/ Nuu-chah-nulth Territory of _____ Nation*” can be used for ‘on-the-spot’ moments
- For more formal occasions, Territory Acknowledgments can follow a script and should include the names of the three Nations SD62 works with

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General:

With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge that we live, learn, and work on the traditional territories of the Coast Salish: T'Sou-ke Nation, SĆÍÁNEW (Beecher Bay) Nation, and the Nuu-chah-nulth: Paaʔčiidʔath (Pacheedaht) Nation. We also recognize that some of our schools are located on the traditional territories of the MÁLEXEł (Malahat) Nation, and the Ləkʷəŋən peoples of Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

Sooke/Milnes Landing Schools:

With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge that we live, learn, and work on the traditional territories of the T'Sou-ke Nation.

Hans Helgesen Elementary School:

With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge that we live, learn, and work on the traditional territories of the SĆIΛNEW (Beecher Bay) Nation.

Port Renfrew Elementary School:

With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge that we live, learn, and work on the traditional territories of the Paaʔčiidʔath (Pacheedaht) Nation.

Royal Bay Secondary School:

With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge that we live, learn, and work on the traditional territories of the SĆIΛNEW Nation and the Ləkʷəŋən peoples of Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, specifically the Teechamista village site (which the theatre is named after).

French Version

This version should only be used by French Immersion schools or by staff working with French programming in the Curriculum Transformation department who also have the ability to communicate in French. This ensures that the acknowledgement accurately reflects the individual's ability to communicate in French.

Avec gratitude et respect, nous reconnaissons que nous vivons, apprenons et travaillons sur les territoires traditionnels des Salish de la côte : la Nation T'Sou-ke, la Nation SĆIΛNEW (Beecher Bay), et les Nuu-chah-nulth : la Nation Paaʔčiidʔath (Paaʔčiidʔath (Pacheedaht)). Nous reconnaissons également que certaines de nos écoles se trouvent sur les territoires traditionnels de la Nation MÁLEXEł (Malahat) et des peuples Ləkʷəŋən des Nations Songhees et Esquimalt.