

Territorial Acknowledgement

Guide for CRD Directors

Capital Regional District | January 2019

This document provides guidance to CRD Directors on how they may personalize, contextualize and provide a territorial acknowledgment when chairing or leading a meeting.

To be respectful to the local tradition of First Nations, the Board Chair acknowledges the territory on which our Board meetings have been held and will now approach individual Directors to participate in the acknowledgement on behalf of the Board at future Board meetings.

Territorial acknowledgements have also become common at most official meetings and events chaired or led by CRD Directors, demonstrating our organization's commitments to Reconciliation and authentic relationship building with First Nations.

While a territorial acknowledgment at the start of every official CRD meeting — other than the Board meeting — is not mandatory, a territorial acknowledgment is a practical way to express the CRD's commitment to the Statement of Reconciliation adopted by the Board.

Indigenous observers have been critical of acknowledgements when they do not seem authentic or when they appear to be tokenistic, without personal intention behind them and the CRD has heard from Indigenous leaders that territorial acknowledgements are better received if they reflect the personal values of the individual giving them.

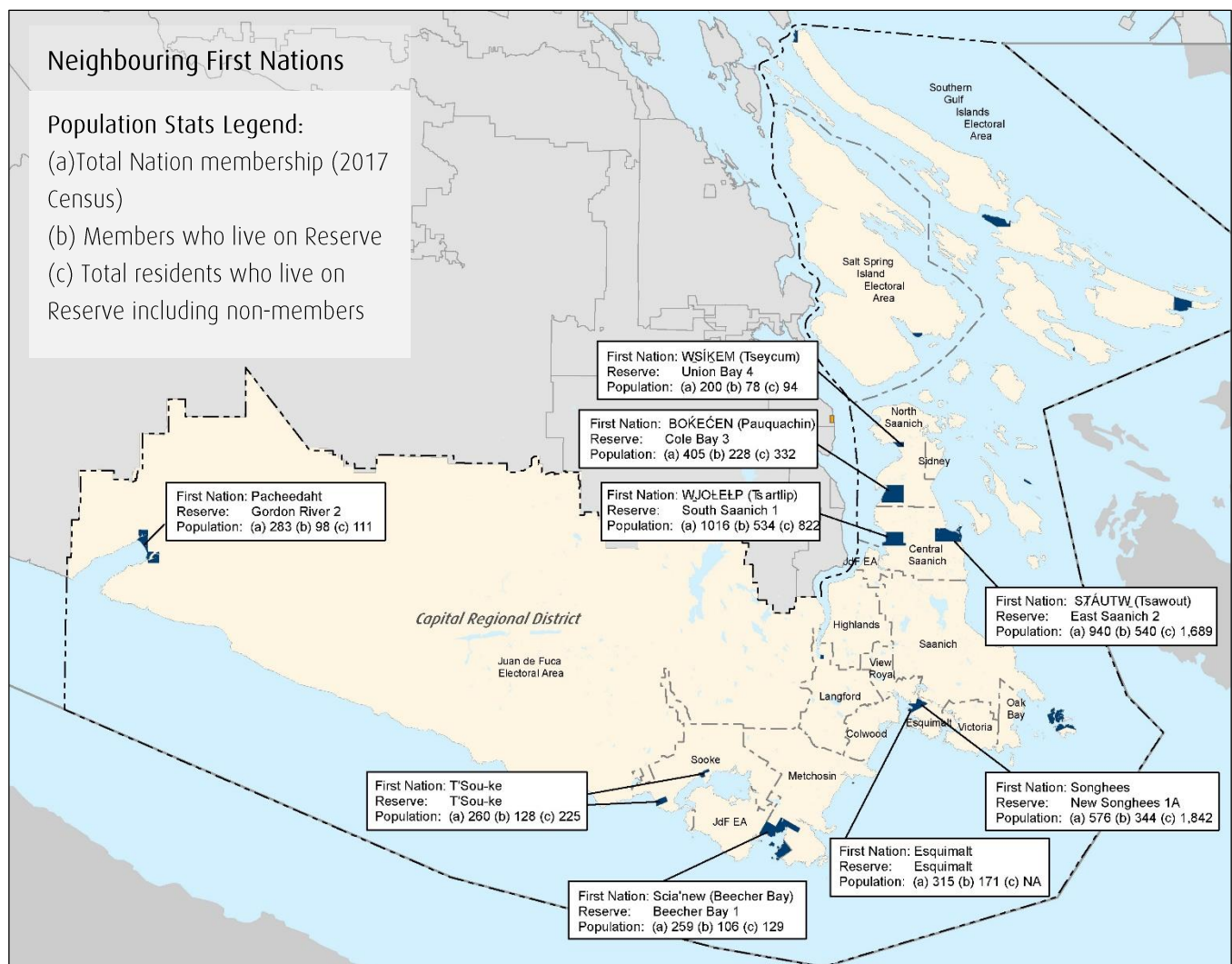
The following information has been prepared to support you as Directors should you wish to introduce a meeting you Chair or an event you lead with a territorial acknowledgment.

Why are Territorial Acknowledgements important?

To be respectful to the local tradition of First Nations, it is important to acknowledge the territory on which a meeting or event is being held. The CRD is committed to authentic relationship building with First Nations that is realistic and honest.

Which Nations do we acknowledge?

There are over 20 Nations, spanning from Tsawwassen and Semiamoo (on the mainland) to Stz'uminus and Lyackson (mid Island) whose community members and their ancestors have deep attachments to the lands and waters that encompass the CRD. However it is tradition, amongst First Nations, to always acknowledge the *core* Territory of the peoples, where a particular gathering is being held. The following is a map of the neighbouring Nations to the CRD.



What are the considerations, when developing an acknowledgement?

The practice of visitors humbly recognizing the territory on which they are standing has been around for a very long time, however the contemporary application of this tradition is linked to an evolving socio-political landscape. First Nations have become reacquainted with their rich and extraordinary culture, so too does the language and the knowledge of their history and their ancestors. Over time, your acknowledgement may need a subtle change to reflect the emergent story that the people of this land choose to tell.

If you are told you didn't get it right, integrate the lesson with humility and gratitude – and carry on with a “good heart and good mind” when delivering your acknowledgment. Consider it an opportunity, as an elected official, to strengthen your relationships with First Nations leaders.

Focus on the local. Try to be as specific to a community as possible, by naming the Nation (Songhees) or the linguistic group (Lkwungen) rather than applying a broad territorial brush to the specific area. “Coast Salish” for example, is an often used catch all term that is used to reference dozens of unique Indigenous groups on the Island and the mainland. The term itself may have colonial roots: **WSÁNEĆ** (Saanich Nations) knowledge

keepers have told us that “Salish” comes from the word for *hand*, which is a reference to how early settlers greeted Indigenous ancestors with a hand shake. In time, settlers referred to the local Indigenous peoples as Salish or Coast Salish. Of course this term has been popularized and although Indigenous peoples themselves will use it, we try to honour the understandings of the local Nations as much as we can. The use of a broad brush term can be experienced as dismissive of the diversity of local Nations of this area.

Do not be afraid to practice Indigenous languages. It can be challenging to correctly pronounce Lkwungen, **SENĆOŦEN**, and Diitiida language, however it is good to try and to keep learning where possible. There are good resources online to assist with this such as www.firstvoices.com and www.cas.unt.edu/~montler/Saanich

Respect the diversity. Although sometimes grammatically awkward, we say “peoples” instead of “people” to reflect the many and diverse cultural Indigenous groupings. By saying ‘peoples’ we are reminded that there are 203 First Nations communities across BC, and approximately 30 different languages and 60 dialects, representing approximately 60% of the First Nations languages across Canada. Even in one cultural group, such as the Lkwungen speaking peoples, there is great diversity. Using the term “peoples” acknowledges intergroup diversity.

Overlapping Territories. Before contact, territories were understood and managed according to a variety of contexts, such as kinship ties, occupation, seasonal travel routes, trade networks, resource management, and cultural and linguistic connections to place. Understanding traditional territories in the contemporary context is often informed by the *Indian Act* and modern Treaty negotiations. Collectively, we are all trying our best to move beyond a colonial view of boundaries and jurisdiction to navigate respectful acknowledgement of all the Indigenous groups that have attachments to these lands. This means that our understanding of territorial boundaries may change as new understandings come with it and that it is ok to do the best you can with the knowledge available.

Try to avoid possessive language. First Nations peoples are not “ours”, we do not “have” First Nations in this territory and they are not “within our borders”. These kinds of terms can be experienced as offensive to Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples and their governments consider their primary political relationship to be with the Crown, in keeping with the original agreements established with the government. The agreed upon relationships were to be based on mutual respect, cooperation and co-governance.

Table A: Example acknowledgements

Feel free to use these, edit, and expand

1. Before we begin, I want to acknowledge the Lkwungen (Le-KWUNG-en) speaking peoples on whose territory this CRD building stands. We recognize and respect the First Nations governments across this region – Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, here in the core area the **WSÁNEĆ** (wuh-SAY-nitch) Nations out on the Saanich Peninsula and Gulf Islands and to the west, Scia’new (Chee-AH-nook), T’Sou-ke (Sowk) and Pacheedaht (pah-CHEE-dah), all of whom have a long standing relationship with the land and seawaters, that continues to this day.
2. To begin, and as is tradition in these lands, we acknowledge that we are gathered in Lkwungen (Le-KWUNG-en) territory. The CRD Board has committed to a Statement of Reconciliation, which will guide us in our work to build strong and enduring relationships with our neighbouring First Nations governments – Songhees, Esquimalt, Beecher Bay, T’Sou-ke, Pacheedaht, Tseycum, **WJOLELP** (wuh-chawt-lip – Tsartlip prefers the non-anglicized pronunciation), Tsawout, Pauquachin, Malahat, and Penelekut Tribe.
3. The CRD conducts its business in Coast Salish and Nuuchahnulth territory and works to be increasingly mindful of its commitment to more inclusive governance with our neighbours. I would like to acknowledge the 11 neighbouring First Nations governments with whom we are committed to building stronger working relationships: Songhees, Esquimalt, Scia’new (Chee-Ah-nook), T’Sou-ke, Pacheedaht, Tseycum, Tsartlip, Tsawout, Pauquachin, Malahat, and Penelekut Tribe.
4. The CRD Headquarters stands in Lkwungen (Le-KWUNG-en) Territory, known today as Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. The CRD also has government-to-government relationships with the **W_ÁNEĆ** (Wuh SAY nitch) Nations on the peninsula, T’Souke and Beecher Bay Nations to the west and Pacheedaht First Nation, neighbouring Port Renfrew.
5. As we look over our Agenda for the day, let us be mindful of the potential implications that our decisions have on Indigenous peoples and to consider the common interests we have with neighbouring First Nations governments who are also making decisions and passing laws that support a sustainable region.

Examples for contextualizing one's Territorial Acknowledgement to a particular area of interest:

Parks - Indigenous culture, land, food, medicine and storytelling, are all inextricably tied to the surrounding lands and waters. CRD Regional Parks can play a crucial role in ensuring opportunities for vital knowledge transfer amongst First Nations citizens.

Environment – Much of the work we do as a Board, touches on environmental protection and restoration. It is important to acknowledge the wisdom and expertise of First Nations and to work hard to engage, consult and seek advice from the peoples who are Indigenous to this place.

Climate Change – As we undertake measures that help our region adapt to climate change, I want to acknowledge that neighbouring First Nations, all of which are located at the water's edge, are significantly impacted by sea level rise because they no longer can pick up their village sites and relocate to a safer place. The shifting ecology on the lands impacts access to traditional foods and medicines, and the warming waters are decimating the salmon stocks which is their primary food source.

Housing – First Nations communities and urban Indigenous residents are not immune to the region's housing crisis. Many local First Nations are unable to live in their home communities due to lack of housing opportunities. We have heard from First Nations leaders that homelessness is of grave concern, both on Reserve and off. As the CRD strengthens its commitment to creation of affordable housing, we must consider the needs and interests of neighbouring First Nations, and look for opportunities to collaborate.

Table B: Pronunciation Guide

Indigenous spelling	Indigenous pronunciation	Anglicized spelling	Anglicized pronunciation
W_SÁNEĆ (grouping of Nations on the peninsula)	wuh-SAY-nitch	Saanich	SA nitch
SENĆOŦEN (language)	sen CHAW then		
SṪÁ, EU, TW_	ts SAY out	Tsawout	SAY out
BOŦEĆEN	BAH kwa chin	Pauquachin	PAH kwa chin
W_JOLEŁP	wuh-chawt-lip	Tsartlip	SART lip
W_SIKEM	Hwa SIGH come	Tseycum	SIGH come
MÁLEXEŁ		Malahat	MAL ahat
Lkwungen (dialect)			Luh KWUNG gen
Songhees			SONG gees
Esquimalt			Es KWy malt
Scia'new	Chee-Ah-nook	Beecher Bay	
T'Sou-ke	Sowk		
Dididaht (language)	DID he dah		
Pacheedaht	Pa CHEE dah		

Note: The pronunciation guide is approximate and not necessarily based on linguistic standards.