



Land Acknowledgement Resource

*Prepared by the Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee
In consultation with Clergy, Professional, and Lay Leadership
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This document is not itself a land acknowledgement, nor meant to stand on its own. It is a resource, and ought to be used as a starting point for crafting a land acknowledgement to be said at the beginning of HBT-hosted events. We encourage leaders of worship services, educational or community programs, meetings, and other gatherings to discern when and how to most effectively use a land acknowledgement. We believe words are powerful and can give rise to real change, and that this ritual will evolve over time.

“Land acknowledgements are living entities formed by sacred breath that should be spoken from the heart and reflect humility, gratitude, respect, and responsibility toward place, fire, water, and air. They should speak of our honest, traditionally accurate recognition of our kinship with the land. If you are a guest on traditional lands that First Nations, Inuit and Metis called home for thousands of years, your acknowledgement should demonstrate respect and gratitude towards these peoples for the way they lived and continue to live in nature.” - Jan Sherman, Anishinaabe mother, culture keeper, storyteller, drummer, and spiritual guide

Event leaders are encouraged to review and reflect on this document before considering how to craft a land acknowledgement that is personal and meaningful. You are encouraged to craft different acknowledgements that are specific to the setting you are in, and bring the sincerity of your words to spark even greater impact through congregational conversations and commitments. We recommend that you select the light text from each section outlined below. The statement is not meant to simply be read out in rote; it should be engaging and come from the heart.

PART I. Introduction

Begin by explaining what you are about to say, with a brief version of “why”. For example:

- I would first like to acknowledge the lands on which we are grateful to be living, working, and praying today, and the people who were here, caring for this land and its inhabitants, before us.

For a worship context, something like this may be more appropriate:

- In prayer, we often express gratitude for what we have and for being where we are - in time and in place. Acknowledging the lands on which we are situated, and the people who were here, living and caring for this land and its inhabitants, before us, is an important part of our worship.

These can be further adjusted depending on the nature of the “event” (for example, during the Yom Kippur session on reconciliation, Rabbi Splansky said “On this Yom Kippur, which is about truth-telling and confession, we acknowledge...”).

PART II. Statement Acknowledging Original Inhabitants

This introductory statement is drafted based on the geographic location of 1950 Bathurst Street. If the event is taking place elsewhere, it may require revision. See <https://native-land.ca/> as a resource.

- We acknowledge that we at Holy Blossom Temple are hosted on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg [*Ah-nish-nah-beg*], the Haudenosaunee [*Hoe-de-nah-show-nee*], Ojibway/Chippewa, and the Huron-Wendat peoples. Under the Dish with One Spoon and Two Row Wampum Belt Covenant, many indigenous nations agreed to peaceably share and care for the land, and welcomed others to do the same. This land is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples from across Turtle Island.

PART III. Comment Regarding Treaties

In this part of the statement, we continue to describe the historical context of the land, but aim to acknowledge that it is not as straightforward as it may seem.

- We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit, while understanding that the signatories to that Treaty were not in equal positions of power, and that treaties contributed to the problematic history of settlement that we are challenged to confront.

PART IV. Judaism's Connection

It's important to connect this work to our own mission, vision, values, and statement of identity as a Canadian Reform Jewish synagogue. The below is a suggestion, but this section can also be further adjusted depending on the context of the event.

- In Pirkei Avot we read the words of Rabbi Tarfon, “lo alecha ha-m'lacha ligmor, v'lo ata ben chorin l'hibatel mimena” - “You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.” (Pirkei Avot 2:16) As Jewish Canadians we dedicate ourselves to the sacred responsibilities of Truth and Reconciliation and to the 94 Calls to Action.

PART V. Personal Reflection or Topical Connection

Here, add a sentence of your own reflection to connect to the topic at hand. This helps ensure that the acknowledgement is not performative. You could share something that you are personally doing to support indigenous communities and the ongoing work of reconciliation, or what being on this land means to you. For example, if you are leading a session on Tu BiShvat, you could mention the importance that Judaism places on respecting land. For worship, you could connect the *parsha* to indigenous history or the work of reconciliation.

- Personally, the actions I am taking and the learning I am engaged with are... [Insert]

PART VI. Conclusion

Wrap up the acknowledgement with a short sentence like:

- We are grateful for the opportunity to gather on this land and strengthen our community.

(Optional) PART VII. Virtual Links for Resources

If the event is on Zoom, you can paste in the chat box a link to additional resources of your selection. One good starting point is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action:

- https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf