

Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory

There have always been Indigenous peoples in the spaces we call home, and there always will be.

Territorial acknowledgements have existed for centuries as part of many Indigenous cultures. In recent years it has become common practice for organizations and individuals to acknowledge the land and the traditional custodians of the land at the beginning of gatherings.

1. Why is it important to acknowledge traditional territory?

- Acknowledging territory shows recognition and respect for the land and the traditional inhabitants of the land, both past and present. Recognition and respect are essential elements of establishing healthy, reciprocal relationships.
- Practicing acknowledgement can raise awareness of the history of the land and its first peoples that is often not well-known by non-Indigenous inhabitants.

2. Who should acknowledge traditional territory?

- The person giving the acknowledgment should be the person hosting or leading the gathering, regardless if they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous (acknowledgment of traditional territory is different than “welcoming” to territory, which would be done by local Nation leaders).

3. When is it appropriate to acknowledge traditional territory?

- It is appropriate to offer acknowledgment of traditional territory at large gatherings, events, assemblies, and meetings.
- Acknowledgement of territory can also be done in the classroom as a teaching tool or an inquiry. What do you know about the history of the land on which your school is located? What do you know about the local Nations? Why is land of such vital importance to Indigenous peoples?

4. How does one do an acknowledgement of traditional territory?

- The territorial acknowledgement should be done at the very beginning of the gathering (if you forget, just go ahead and acknowledge during the gathering!). SD61, in collaboration with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, has developed the acknowledgement statement that you see at the bottom of this page.
- The territorial acknowledgement should be approached not as an obligatory set of words to rush through in order to get on with the “real business”, but rather approached in the spirit of good relationship and understood as an important part of the “business”. The acknowledgement is also a call to give of our time and energy to learn and to build relationship.

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations on whose traditional territories we live, we learn, and we do our work.