

Facilitator's notes : Pondering Land Acknowledgements *(Updated 2024)*

These notes are to help your group with the complexities of reconciliation and Land Acknowledgements. The intention is for these notes to be one of many tools to support you on your faith and reconciliation journey.

I encourage 2 things.

1. Engage the people who are hearing the Land Acknowledgement to participate in writing it. Those who want to participate will be very grateful and those who don't want to participate are not yet on that particular path of reconciliation, and that's okay.
2. Have an indigenous person lead the workshop. You don't know what you don't know.

There are many of us who are passionate about supporting these conversations and I encourage you to reach out and find one that fits with your community. Please contact me for further information. kimbelroy@hotmail.com

There are grants for Indigenous reconciliation education, facilitation and workshops for communities of faith, clergy, regions and networks.

United Church of Canada Healing Fund, Justice and Reconciliation Fund, and the Dorothy Jenkins Fund might qualify.

Many blessings on your journey,

Kimberly Roy

Good afternoon and thank you for sharing this time with me.

I am Kimberly Roy and I live 250km west of Edmonton on the historic Marlboro Métis Settlement, the Kelly Lake Métis Settlement, Cree nation Tsuut'ina Nation, where the Īyāñé Nakón maḳóce (Stoney Cree people), [Nêhiyaw-Askiy \(Plains Cree people\)](#), [Michif Piyii \(Métis people\)](#) and the Mountain Métis people reside. These are my people.

Today my goal is to have an expansive conversation where no question is silly or looked down upon, where everyone feels safe and included and we listen with our hearts to hear.

Many of our Indigenous teachings tell us we were spirit first. I would like to think, our spirit could hear for eons before we could talk and that is why we are smarter when we listen than when we talk. However, after listening, please do not hesitate to ask questions. I clearly do not have all the answers but I will share what I can and find answers for you when I do not know.

I do not speak for all Indigenous peoples, I only speak for myself and share the teachings and wisdoms of my ancestors and elders.

I believe reconciliation is not just about what we say and do, it's how we participate in the journey.

The United Church of Canada, its clergy and executive has changed its position many times on Indigenous topics as times and people have changed.

I am an Alberta Métis Nation Citizen. On the back of each Metis Citizenship card, it says : The Métis People are recognized as one of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples under section 35 of the constitution act, 1982.

So here I am today, with you folks, learning and exploring together.

Let's take a few minutes and share as you feel comfortable about who you are, what you hope to gain from today and any questions you are looking to have answered. I will record them and if they do not get answered today, I will find someone who can answer them for you.

What the United Church of Canada says about Land Acknowledgments:

Acknowledging the territory where we gather and the people who have traditionally called it home for thousands of years is a way to continue to live out the church's Apologies to the First Peoples of North America. The acknowledgement supports our calls to others to pay respect to Indigenous peoples.

When you Google UCC land acknowledgement the Gathering Pentecost 1 2015 (Year B) pp. 86-87 comes up.

Helpful Definitions - Aboriginal, First Peoples, and Indigenous and 3 land acknowledgements that were being used at the time.

Some people think a land acknowledgement is just that. It only speaks to where one is currently situated and nothing more. Others think a land acknowledgement is part of the journey to reconciliation and should acknowledge the land we are on, and whose it was before it was ours. Some feel it is very important work towards reconciliation so it is just about the people not the land. Or, something in-between the two.

In popcorn style, as you feel comfortable what do you think a Land Acknowledgement is and why?

The Canadian Encyclopedia says:

In Canada, the process of reconciliation is tied to the federal government's relationship with Indigenous peoples. The term has come to describe attempts made by individuals and institutions to raise awareness about colonization and its ongoing effects on Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation also refers to efforts made to address the harms caused by various policies and programs of colonization, such as residential schools. For some, the word represents an opportunity to reflect on the past, to heal and to make right. For others, however, current gestures of reconciliation are merely performative and lack meaningful action to address the harms done by colonization.

Definition

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) — which was set up in 2008 to document the effects of residential schools on Indigenous peoples — defined reconciliation as the process of “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-

Indigenous peoples in this country.” The TRC went on to say that in order for reconciliation to happen in Canada, “there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior.”

Here are some the big questions,

Can we as personal citizens, independent clergy and or as a religious institution look at a Land Acknowledgement as one way to be a part of the process of reconciliation as awareness of the past AND action for the future?

And if so, what could a land acknowledgement say?

What can we say that might address the past and inform the future?

Here is a land acknowledgement I wrote inspired by Rev. Deb Collum for non indigenous gatherings.

I invite you to close your eyes and listen with your heart to the land acknowledgement the first time around then I invite you to write down your thoughts and feelings as I share this to you the land acknowledgement the second time around.

What stands out, what do you agree with, what do you disagree with?

Those who feel comfortable, we will have time to share thoughts after I read it through twice.

Marlboro and its surrounding areas is the homeland to the historic Marlboro Métis Settlement, the Kelly Lake Métis Settlement, Cree nation Tsuut’ina Nation, where the Īyāñé Nakón maḵóce (Stoney Cree people), Nêhiyaw-Askiy (Plains Cree people), Michif Piyii (Métis people) and the Mountain Métis people of Alberta.

We continue to find relics of their inhabitants as we plow the land, search the hills, and paddle along the rivers.

As we discover these relics, we can become connected, if we allow our hearts to connect, with the great people for whom this land is homeland.

The Athabasca and Macleod river watersheds feed our need for water, and fed their needs for water.

The great evergreen forests, Pembina rivers, Sundance creeks, and Obed foothills which provide current hunters and fishers with food provided the sustenance for thousands of years of habitation of Indigenous before Europeans set foot on this sacred land.

We have erred in our ability to live peacefully with each other.

We have sinned against our neighbor and our kinfolk in the driving Indigenous peoples from their homeland and disrespecting the treaties made in good faith.

The blood of their ancestors continues to cry out from the land we inhabit.

We must hear their cries; we must allow the sorrow of genocide and broken promises to move our hearts to confession and repentance if we are to learn to live as people who are entrusted by God to steward this land into a place that is honoring and abundant for all.

This land is not ours alone, it is a reflection of all our histories.

The stories of the past and the promises of the future rely on our memory.

We are called to protect and honor this history and work for a future that reflects the Kin-don of God.

We are all on different parts of the reconciliation path. Not one land acknowledgement fit every community of faith, meeting or gathering and nor should it.

I have come to understand a land acknowledgement as first a statement of acknowledging where I am standing on mother earth, saying out loud that I have not always done my best when it comes to hearing and acknowledging the truth of my peoples past, and what I plan to do about it.

This only applies for people who want to be a part of reconciliation.

If we are having an Indigenous person share a land acknowledgement, we should offer to have them share their land acknowledgement as they would with their people.

Even though, I am an Indigenous person, as defined by the Canadian Government and my ancestral roots, I too have contributed in colonialism

and work hard every day to seek justice for my people through reconciliation.

Not all Indigenous people feel the same. Many will not share land acknowledgements as they see it as settler work to do. They see it as part of the work of reconciliation and so to be asked to do a land acknowledgement for a public event can make them feel tokenized and that the settler is not actually participating in reconciliation. Do not be afraid to ask how an Indigenous person would like to participate. They will tell you what they are willing to do and what they are not willing to do and if asked, they will tell you why. We were all spirit first and I believe that lends to the teachings we share from deep within.

Most Indigenous people, like I did, acknowledge the land by saying who they are and who's they are. It has nothing to do with reconciliation.

Any questions about that?

As we move into thinking about how to write or rewrite a land acknowledgement, I invite folks to share about how and who wrote your current land acknowledgement and how it is used.

Possible steps to follow when writing and sharing a land acknowledgement:

Set some time aside and think about land acknowledgements. Ask yourself, who is it for, why am I writing it, how and where is it going to be used. Read some land acknowledgements and see what rings true for you and what does not. Always read them through once, sit for a moment, read them through again asking Creator to open you mind and heart to hear what is not readily heard.

Where are you, and what is your context. Learn whose land you're on through tools like native-land.ca, whose.land, and by reading local histories. Learn how to pronounce tribal names and words. THAT IS NOT EASY TASK. I have trouble pronouncing non English words and when I finally get them pronounced correctly, it seems every time I go back to say

them again, I have to relearn them. Find out who are Native leaders in your community and watch the content they are publicly sharing and reach out to them to learn. Most Indigenous people are humble about teaching or will point you in the right direction.

Put the pieces together. How does your research relate to your unique perspective, and to the gathering that your acknowledgement will open? What can you share that will provide proper acknowledgement and meaning? How does your personal identity tie into what you will share?

Create space and time to share. Do not rush through a land acknowledgement. Build time into your agenda, and also leave space to share what it is, why you're doing it, and invite questions if those in attendance may be unfamiliar. It's important to build understanding and share learning as a part of this process. So many people and businesses treat a LA as something to check off instead of a teachable moment or a place to pause.

Reflect and do more. Land acknowledgements should not be check boxes that you check off to say 'I am now an ally to Indigenous people...done!' You're not done. Think about how you will use what you learned to spark more learning, deeper conversations and robust community engagement.

Don't assume everyone knows or agrees with our Canadian History. Actual history and factual history are very different. Just because it was recorded that something happened at a particular place at a particular time doesn't mean it happened only in that way. History is famous for leaving out the lesser valued stories or of those of no importance at the time. Understand, everyone is on the journey to reconciliation at a different pace. Some people don't feel the need to be part of the journey at this time and we need to honor and respect their space. We who want to participate, deepen our understanding and be bold in our participation, also need to be respected and honored for our work. It is our responsibility to honor and respect our ancestors and the ancestors of our brothers, sisters, and others in Canada and learn some of the history that people have misplaced or forgot about.

~ Miigwech (thank you)