

Guidelines for Indigenous Territorial Acknowledgement

Coquitlam's Commitment to Reconciliation

Since 2022, the City has identified reconciliation as both a strategic goal and key priority in its Corporate Business Plan, which guides all activities and work across the organization. By doing this, the City has committed to taking concrete steps to enhance its positive relationship with the kʷikʷə́łəm and other First Nations.

Territorial Acknowledgement

As one part of its reconciliation work, Coquitlam has adopted the following territorial acknowledgement:

We acknowledge with gratitude and respect that the name Coquitlam was derived from the hən̓q̓əmiṇəm (HUN-kuh-MEE-num) word kʷikʷə́łəm (kwee-KWET-lum) meaning "Red Fish Up the River". The City is honoured to be located on the kʷikʷə́łəm traditional and ancestral lands, including those parts that were historically shared with the ḱíic̓əy̓ (kat-zee), and other Coast Salish Peoples.

Coquitlam's territorial acknowledgement honours and recognizes the original inhabitants of the land on which the city sits today. It will be incorporated in a variety of locations including City email signatures, corporate print and online documents, the City website and introductions for formal meetings and events.

Dialogue with local First Nations has influenced the words chosen for Coquitlam's Territorial Acknowledgement, and we expect that language will continue to evolve as we learn from the local Chief and Council, Elders, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous community members.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we recognize traditional territory?

Acknowledging traditional territory is a small part of the reconciliation process. For many First Nations, acknowledging traditional territory is a long-standing practice and a regular aspect of governance relationships and ceremony. Acknowledgements have become common across Canada at formal meetings, conferences, and public events as a sign of respect and reconciliation.

Can I alter the territorial acknowledgement in my email signature block?

While all City staff are encouraged to personalize territorial acknowledgements delivered verbally, email signature guidelines are standardized and should reflect the acknowledgement statement included in this document and in the City's Email Signature Guidelines ([CEDMS 2735280](#)).

How should traditional territory be recognized in written documents?

Traditional territory should be recognized in high-level strategic publicly available corporate documents, such as the Annual Report, neighbourhood plans and corporate strategies.

The written acknowledgement should appear near the beginning of the document or in a high profile location. The statement included in this document is the recommended acknowledgement, however phrasing may be adapted, as needed, to reflect Indigenous collaboration and/or the specific context of the document. If in doubt, contact the City's Indigenous Relations Manager.

At meetings and events, when should a territorial acknowledgement be used and who should make it?

There is no single right way or right person to make a territorial acknowledgement. Each individual is at a different stage in their learning, and their own stage of reconciling with their own history and with Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Often, the Chair or emcee will acknowledge the Indigenous traditional territory as the first item on the agenda or program. Individual speakers may also include a territorial acknowledgment in their presentation or when introducing themselves.

How do I prepare a territorial acknowledgement?

The territorial acknowledgement provided in this document is to be used unaltered in email signatures. For corporate documents, the phrasing may be adapted, as needed, to reflect Indigenous collaboration and/or the specific context of the document.

When delivering a verbal acknowledgement, individuals should consider the statement as a guide, not a script. If prescribed, verbal territorial acknowledgements run the risk of becoming a token gesture rather than a personal and meaningful practice offered as a sign of respect.

To thoughtfully prepare an acknowledgement, reflect and consider:

- How does this acknowledgement relate to the event or work you are doing?
- What is the history of the territory?
- What is the First Nation known for? How do they define themselves?
- What is your relationship to the territory, land, and water?
- How did you come to be here?
- How do you benefit from living on these lands?
- What actions can you take in this context in light of these reflections?

Where can I go for assistance?

Coquitlam's Indigenous Relations Office offers training as well as In-Office Hours for one-on-one guidance. For details go to the [Reconciliation page](#) on the CorQBoard.

Where can I find information to deepen my understanding about this territory?

The kwikwəłəm people have lived in their ancestral territory, referred today as the Coquitlam Watershed, since before remembered time. Today, kwikwəłəm First Nation has one reserve that shares jurisdictional borders with the City of Coquitlam. It is governed by an elected Chief and Council who serve a four-year term of office. Learn more about the kwikwəłəm on their website at kwikwetlem.com, including:

- [The Story of Kwikwetlem \(video\)](#)
- [Website homepage](#)
- [Territory](#)
- [People](#)
- [Government](#)

Where can I learn more about the local Indigenous language?

The traditional language of the kwikwəłəm people is hənqəminəm, which is the Downriver dialect of the broader language Halkomelem, one of the Coast Salish or Salish family of languages. The English phonetic pronunciation and audio clips for commonly used hənqəminəm words and phrases is available at kwikwetlem.com/pronunciation-guide.htm.

Pro tip: To easily use hənqəminəm spellings, consider adding frequently used words like kwikwəłəm to your autocorrect options in any MSOffice application.

Other resources:

Government of Canada: Canada School of Public Services — [Video: Territorial Acknowledgement](#)

Province of BC: [Writing Guide for Indigenous Content](#) — includes resources for terminology, spelling of Indigenous names, guidelines for proper capitalization and formatting of Indigenous terms, and guidelines on language and grammar.

First Nations Healthy Authority's Territory Acknowledgements: [Information Booklet](#) (PDF)

[Native-Land.ca](#): map of Indigenous territories, treaties and languages