

Indigenous Engagement in Rotary District 5080

A guide for building relationships and acknowledging Indigenous territory



By D5080 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force



Preface: The Learning Model, by Andrea Mann

Andrea Mann created this Learning Model to help people in their learning and community work. In describing its development, she says, “As a settler, there will always be a lifetime of learning ahead, but I am reassured and guided by recent teachings from Métis scholar Dr. Jaime Fiddler, ‘once you have a relationship with the knowledge, you can easily continue learning in every direction’ (personal communication, Nov. 12, 2021). Let us continue to learn and take action together with respect, humility and courage.” This model and approach particularly capture the way Rotary District 5080 clubs can walk forward and build relations with local First Nations in a good way.

The heart in the Learning Model title and at the center of the graphic continually reminds us of the importance of relationship. The model incorporates ethics like consent, reciprocity, respect, renewal, relationship and empathy throughout. These ethics align with Rotary’s ethics. Andrea’s Learning Model is a guide, reference, and touch point for our more inclusive, authentic, de-colonized engagement with one another and with our communities, hence it is infused throughout this guide.

Study the model and you can see that following Commitment to better futures is Self, a period of respectful listening to gain insight and build awareness about Indigenous peoples and priorities. In the Land phase, integrating new knowledge and emotions through self-reflection helps prepares for building relations with local First Nations persons and groups. With deepening awareness of place and culture, ‘walking with’ leads to ‘working with’, and the interconnectivity and reciprocity that results enables a stronger sense of community and collaboration that integrates and honours Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing and being. This strengthens the hearts of community members and Rotarians, which ultimately strengthens the collective heart of community.

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Development of this Guide

Our core consideration and hope in developing this guide and, by extension, meaningful territorial acknowledgements, is to do no harm. If well-meaning Rotarians boldly forge a way forth without pausing, listening, considering, and accepting potentially difficult realities presented to us, even if carrying the best of intentions, we run the risk of doing harm. The purpose of centering this work around Andrea Mann's Learning Model is to help broaden perspective and insight to help us walk forward together in a good (read: unharmful) way. This guide intends to amplify others' voices to help outline a path forward. Not all voices share the same talk, tone, and intent, and we hope you will respectfully listen and carefully consider all voices reflected here as you walk forward on your relational journey.

This guide was created when District 5080 Governor Lynn O'Connor (21.22) and District 5080 Diversity Equity and Inclusion Task Force determined clubs in the district could benefit from guidance and consistency in Territorial Acknowledgement development. The DEI Task Force can continue to act as a resource to help guide clubs to work with local Indigenous groups, to develop a shared context and to build relationships. We hope clubs will then be set to create their own authentic and meaningful territorial acknowledgement.

This document is a working/living document that will change over time, as the Rotarians learn more by way of culturally participating in this reconciliation act. As you learn, please share your experiences with one another and with the DEI Task Force in the spirit of co-creating the path for walking forward in a good way. Any feedback you have on this document can be sent to hailstormridge@yahoo.ca with the subject line like: Feedback on Indigenous Engagement Guide.



Commitment: finding out more

What is a territorial acknowledgement?

Acknowledging territory is presenting a verbal or written statement that communicates recognition of and gratitude for the First Peoples indigenous to a particular area, their histories and their distinct and unique connections to the land. It is recognition of their presence both in the past and the present. It may reflect a treaty or may be expressed as “unceded” where no treaty exists.

A territorial acknowledgement is often offered at the beginning of a gathering, meeting, or event to orient those present to the place where they gather, to the story it holds, and to the people who have lived and gathered there, often for millennia.

A territorial acknowledgement, in its best form, goes beyond the words which are spoken and signifies a commitment to building right relations with Indigenous people, including the need for reconciliation, the impacts of colonialism, and the desire to build and maintain healthy, reciprocal relations with Indigenous people.

A number of excellent video clips in the [Appendix](#) share the perspective and voice of Indigenous peoples from Canada and USA as they describe the meaning and importance of land acknowledgements.

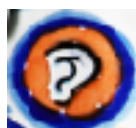
Why is Rotary interested in Indigenous engagement?

Many of Rotary’s core values and mandates align with developing strengthened relations with Indigenous peoples. Acknowledging Indigenous lands is one component of relationship building and empowerment that demonstrates respect, acknowledges history, and facilitates working together on shared challenges. The following further calls Rotary to help raise awareness and deepen engagement:

- The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹ identifies that, “Indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests,” and, “Recognizing the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources.”
- Amplifying Indigenous voices and acknowledging the truths of the past and present align directly with Rotary’s Four Way Test: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?
- Shektar Mehta, RI President 21-22, notes Rotarians want Rotary to be a place that celebrates diversity, that fully represents our communities, and that offers all members equitable opportunities to thrive, and Rotarians recognize that embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) will allow us to do more meaningful work while engaging with people who know they’ll be valued for the qualities that make them unique.

¹ https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf. Accessed May 9, 2022.

- RI President (22-23) Jennifer Jones wants members to imagine the possibilities in the change they can make to transform the world. “Rotary opens doors and we need to harness our connections, to deepen relationships and create new partnerships,” Jones said.
- The Rotary International DEI Code of Conduct, intended to help Rotary members create and maintain an environment that is collaborative, positive, and healthy for everyone, includes using respectful language, being supportive, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, and celebrating diversity.



Self: respectful listening

What is the history of Indigenous or First Peoples in your area?

Dig in to the available information to deepen your knowledge and awareness of Indigenous or First Peoples in your area. Your club members may have knowledge, awareness, and relationships to guide your club in learning more. Most Bands or Nations have a website with resources and contacts; many schools and local governments have designated a key person to lead learning, engagement and actions for students and citizens. Local speakers and available media can form a foundation for learning more about the area in which your club operates. The materials provided in the [appendix](#) can help you reach out to local Indigenous leaders and representatives. To build relations means to share context, and this can only be done when voices which may have been quiet are given a chance to rise. With curiosity, respect and humility, your club can begin to raise awareness by listening to openly and engaging in discussion. Change can come from taking in new knowledge and insight, even if it challenges previously held paradigms (or perhaps especially if it does!).

Engage your club in reflecting on their awareness and purpose

Sincerity and authenticity are the foundation of the most effective acknowledgements. Start with reflecting within your club on your current level of awareness and knowledge around local Indigenous peoples. Get curious about what building relations and acknowledging land means to each other. Suggest that people consider their own history with the land, both ancestral and local. Encourage people to consider colonialism and the privilege that followed. These can be challenging paths to walk, so remind members that acknowledging past truths helps in stepping toward better futures.



Land: Awareness and acknowledgement

Developing a Land Acknowledgement

There isn't one right way of wording an acknowledgement, although there are phrases and tones to avoid. Sincerity and authenticity are the foundation of the most effective acknowledgements. As you identify who is in the area, consider carefully their past and current relationship with the land. Focus on building relationships as you develop your acknowledgement in order to keep it relevant and real.

When relationships are being built with local Indigenous communities, ask nation representatives specifically about wording and terminology for your acknowledgement, rather than making assumptions. This is important to ensure that it is both respectful and representative, as acknowledgements sometimes

change, or specific communities are given prominence depending on the context or the audience in attendance. Also, given that there is no single standard orthography for traditional Indigenous names, this can be an opportunity to ensure correct pronunciation of Indigenous community or nation names². A true and meaningful acknowledgement will come from your heart, adapt to different contexts or to new learning, and allude to both the legacy of the past and the hopes of the future.



Community: build relationships

As you share perspectives and begin to build relationships with local Indigenous people, you can ask how they would most value being acknowledged by your club, how they might value being included or featured in your club or meetings, and what further actions would be meaningful for you and your club to take. Encourage club members to read, listen and learn on their own and share with the club, rather than holding expectations that local Indigenous people should be your teacher about their history. Build respectful reciprocal relationships.

Lines, maps and truths

In keeping with the articles of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Rotary acknowledges that it is the place of neither Rotarians nor Rotary clubs to pronounce relative accuracy of maps developed and owned by respective and sovereign First Nations. Rotary District 5080 acknowledgements of traditional and ancestral territory need to be inclusive and respectful of each nation's own definitions of their specific territories. This approach is consistent with Rotary International's core values, the spirit and intent of the UNDRIP (Articles 13, 15, 25, and others), and Canada's Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

² <https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory>. Accessed May 10, 2022

District 5080 territorial acknowledgement

A District 5080 territorial acknowledgement was developed that covers the whole area and is built from the relationships established during this process and the learning that has arisen through developing club and area-level acknowledgements. As is hoped for all acknowledgments, it will continue to evolve as relationships, awareness and intents grow richer.

This acknowledgement is a starting point for District 5080 clubs that captures the spirit of our intentions to be respectful and inclusive. You can adapt it for your area while you work to build relationships and further refine your own acknowledgement.

With deep gratitude and respect, I/we wish to acknowledge that the lands on which we gather in Rotary District 5080 are on the traditional (unceded) territory of many First Nations groups, including, the Sinixt (sin-eye-ck-st), Ktunaxa (tune-ah-ha), Syilx (seal-ck) or Okanagan, Spokane, Palouse, Yakama, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Wanapum, Nez Perce, Schitsu'umsh or Coeur d'Alene, Kalispel, Colville, Nespelem, San Poll, and the Secwepemc peoples and home to proud Metis communities.

For time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have gathered here for sustenance, sharing, counsel, and fellowship; they have learned from and cared for this land and its creatures, including one another.

As Rotarians, we acknowledge and commit to this spirit of care and learning.

In the development, these were two maps consulted:

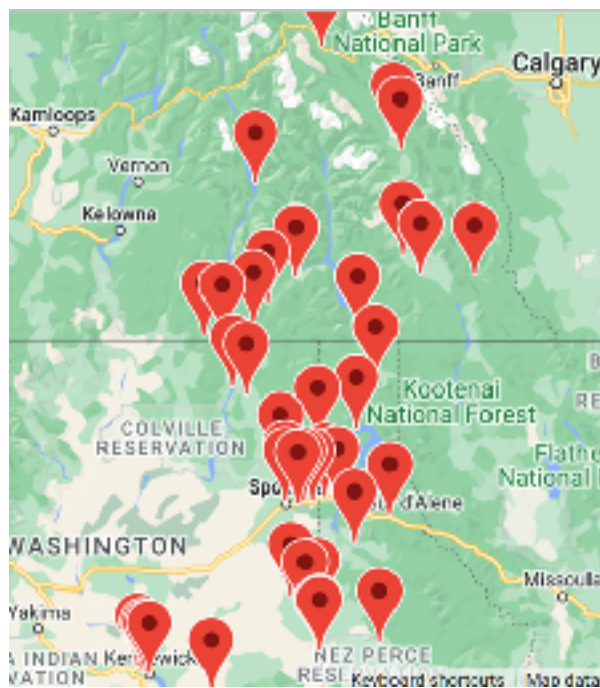


Figure 1: Club map of District 5080

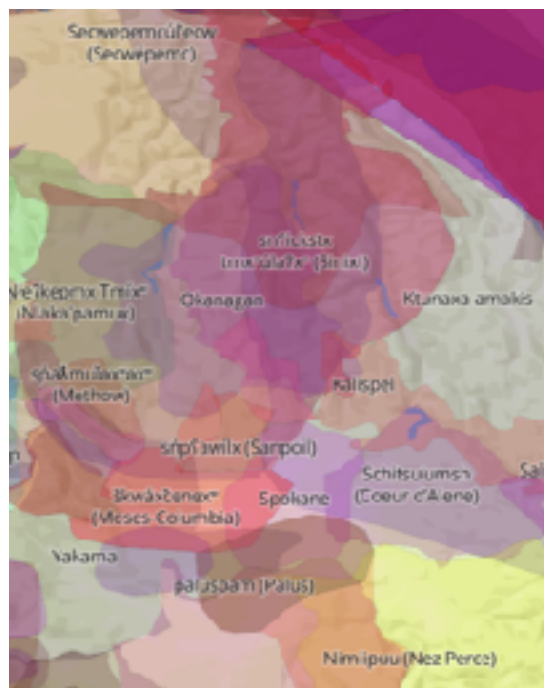


Figure 2: map snip from Native-land.ca (approx. same area)

Appendix One: Resources and Links

Sample letter of introduction to local indigenous groups

Dear Nation Leader,

Please accept this letter of introduction with my most sincere gratitude. I appreciate you taking the time to engage.

My name is Lynn O'Connor, and I am the Immediate Past District Governor for Rotary International District 5080, which spans from Golden, British Columbia in the north to Fernie, BC, Kellogg and Orofino, Idaho in the east, to Walla Walla, Washington in the south, and to Grand Forks, BC and Richland, WA in the west. There are 57 Rotary clubs in this district and over 1500 Rotarians.

My hope with this letter is to introduce myself and connect you with people from the local Rotary club. As Rotarians, we would like to get to know local First Nations peoples better and to learn more about the land on which we live, work and play. We accept this as our responsibility, with no expectation or burden placed to you. We would like to build reciprocal respectful relationships, and hope you also would like this.

I understand how busy you are and respect that you have many important demands on your time. We would really appreciate any time you can spare for a meeting (either in person or by phone) in the coming weeks. My contact information is below and I would very much look forward to hearing from you.

Signed by Lynn and a local Rotary club representative

Various Resources

Honouring Indigenous Peoples

20 Rotary Districts across Canada and the US have signed onto this Rotary initiative to help bring Indigenous & Non-Indigenous Peoples together for community well-being and advancing the next generation of leaders. Their website states, "Honouring Indigenous Peoples begins with building meaningful equitable relationships. By creating bonds and supporting one another, we employ key elements needed to walk the path together" <https://honouringindigenouspeoples.com/>

University of British Columbia

This guide has many links and good guidance to support researchers working with Indigenous topics. It also supports faculty who are teaching remotely. <https://guides.library.ubc.ca/distance-research-xwi7xwa/landacknowledgements>

Native Land Digital

Native Land Digital is a Canadian not-for-profit organization that is Indigenous-led, with an Indigenous Executive Director and Board of Directors who oversee and direct the organization. Their website hosts a database of territories, languages, and treaties, complete with maps, apps, guides, and blogs. The resources have been curated through research and crowd-sourced contributions. Their overview of territorial acknowledgment development includes location-specific guidance and links to maps, historical information and websites. While developing relationships should be the core of your acknowledgment, this is a great reference to get started. <https://native-land.ca/resources/territory-acknowledgement/>

US Dept of Arts and Culture video

This video accompanies #HonorNativeLand—a guide and call-to-action to spread the practice of acknowledgment of traditional Native lands at the opening of all public gatherings. [#HonorNativeLand - YouTube](#)

Native Governance Centre

Native Governance Center is a Native-led nonprofit dedicated to assisting Native nations in strengthening their governance systems and capacity to exercise sovereignty. This is their guide: [A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgment - Native Governance Center](#)

Salt Lake Community College

Students, elders, academics from Salt Lake Community College share perspectives on both land acknowledgements and personal introductions. [Land Acknowledgment - YouTube](#)

District 7080 acknowledgement

<https://rotary7080.org/sitepage/circle>

Their acknowledgement sits on their webpage: *We acknowledge that the clubs of District 7080 are situated on land that has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples from the beginning. Rotary District 7080 has been occupied for centuries by many Nations and Tribes of the First Peoples. These are the Anishinaabeg (Ojibway), Huron-Wendat, Haudenosauonee (Iroquois) and the Attawandaron. These lands and territories are covered by various Upper Canada Treaties and the Haldimand Treaty. We pay tribute to the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, as we work to understand their ways and build a partnership that will benefit us all.*

Sheridan College

Stephen Paquette, member of the Board of Governors and Indigenous Education Council of Sheridan College, captures Indigenous perspective on land in this brief clip: [Indigenous Voices - Land Acknowledgement - YouTube](#)

University of Calgary

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2ktALZK_sU

Canadian Friends Service Committee

In this video produced by the Canadian Friends Service Committee, Naomi Bob, an Indigenous Youth Wellness Project Coordinator, outlines some history and purpose of land acknowledgements. She differentiates between token and genuine acknowledgements. [Why are land acknowledgments important? Naomi Bob - Indigenous Voices on Reconciliation - YouTube](#)

Apihtawikosisan

A thoughtful, provocative, and well-researched rebuttal to some assertions about territorial acknowledgments made in Canadian academic circles around 2016. <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>