

# Canadian University Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands, Treaties, and Peoples

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At many Canadian universities it is now common to publicly acknowledge Indigenous lands, treaties, and peoples. Yet, this practice has yet to be considered as a subject of scholarly inquiry. How does this practice vary and why? In this paper we describe the content and practice of acknowledgment, linking this content to treaty relationships (or lack thereof). We show that acknowledgment tends to be one of five general types: of land and title (British Columbia), of specific treaties and political relationships (Prairies), of multiculturalism and heterogeneity (Ontario), of no practice (most of Quebec), and of people, territory, and openness to doing more (Atlantic). Based on these results, we conclude that the fluidity of acknowledgment as a practice, including changing meanings depending on the positionality of the acknowledger, need to be taken into account.

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Plusieurs universités Canadien pratique une reconnaissance des territoires, des traités, et des peuples autochtone en publique. Cette pratique, cependant, n'a jamais été considérée comme une enquête savante. Dans ce projet nous regardons comment les reconnaissances varie par institution et pourquoi. Nous trouvons qu'il y a un lien entre le contenu des reconnaissances et les relations traité. On démontre cinq forme des reconnaissances: territoire et titre (Colombie britannique); traité spécifique and les relations politiques (Prairies); multiculturalisme et hétérogénéité (Ontario); l'absence (la majorité du Québec); et des peuples, territoire et volonté a plus faire (Atlantique). Nous concluons que la fluidité de la reconnaissance, comme pratique, est fluide et doit prendre en considération la position de la personne qui le fait.

MANY CANADIAN INSTITUTIONS, ranging from governments to school boards, now make some kind of public acknowledgment of Indigenous peoples, lands, and treaties. Recent government acknowledgments include those made by Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne in her major speeches, the recognition of Louis Riel as the first leader of the province of Manitoba, and official recognition by some Canadian cities of their location on Indigenous territory (City of Vancouver 2014; Csanady 2014; Manitoba Metis Federation 2016). Canadian universities are also among this group. As part of a broad pledge of “shared commitment” to improving opportunities for Indigenous students and communities (Charbonneau 2015; Universities Canada 2015), and partly in response to the 2015 publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada final report, universities are either introducing or reaffirming their commitment to a public acknowledgment and recognition of Indigenous lands, treaties, and peoples.

The University of Manitoba has acknowledged that they “respect the Treaties that were made on these territories,” “the harms and mistakes of the past,” and have pledged to “dedicate ourselves to move forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.” At his inauguration, the 13th President of the University of British Columbia, Arvind Gupta, remarked that “We are all blessed to be here on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people. As President, I will do everything I can to ensure that UBC is and remains a trusted partner and a good neighbor to the Musqueam people” (Gupta 2014). While acknowledgments can potentially be an important step in the process of reconciliation, the variability in university acknowledgment is not well-understood.

This paper describes the content of acknowledgment as practiced at universities, tying it to treaty and colonial-Indigenous relationships. Our aim in compiling this information is to stimulate discussion on the role of universities vis-à-vis the practice of acknowledgment. We present an overview of materials obtained from Canadian universities and their

representatives, during the spring and summer of 2015 and 2016, about how they acknowledge Indigenous peoples, lands, and treaties. We find that there are five general types of acknowledgment: of land/unceded territory and peoples (seen largely in British Columbia), of treaties and political relationships (found among Prairie institutions), of multiculturalism<sup>1</sup> and heterogeneity (typified by Ontario schools), of no practice (seen mostly in Quebec and some religious schools), and of people and territory (and openness to doing more; throughout the Atlantic).

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF INDIGENOUS LAND, TREATIES, AND PEOPLES**

Acknowledgment in and of itself is a complicated term, at times referring to a recognition of truth or existence and at other times implying gratitude or appreciation. At its core, it might be stated that acknowledgment refers to a recognition and appreciation of another's right to self-determining autonomy and existence. Indigenous nations and peoples have and continue to recognize each other often on the basis of clan, language, and nation (Alfred 1999; Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel 2014; Thom 2009;) and when Indigenous peoples engage in acknowledgment of each other, it is both a cultural and political practice. Acknowledgment and recognition are also core principles of non-Indigenous international law. Nation states have recognized each other as well as Indigenous nations via the concepts of state, government, sovereignty, treaties, constitutions, and international forums (Brownlie and Baker 1990; Frideres 1996; Niezen 2000).

At the same time, however, recognition of any kind<sup>2</sup> is an inherently challenging political project as seen in the decades-long controversy over United Nations recognition of Palestine or Canada's reluctance to sign international conventions on the rights of Indigenous peoples. Settler colonial states such as Canada have long used recognition as a means of defining Indigeneity and therefore setting the terms of who is entitled to Indigenous people's land (Wolfe 2006). Within this context, many Indigenous activists and political leaders have worked to gain federal recognition via legal challenges and lobbying, as well as engaging in resistance to this state of affairs via direct action (e.g., see Henderson 2015; Monture 1986; Ramos 2008; Turner 2006; Wotherspoon and Hansen 2013). As a result, acknowledgment and recognition have also spread to subnational spheres, such as cities, as well as to institutions such as universities.

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1. By multiculturalism, we mean the reference to Indigenous culture(s) but not direct mention of treaties or other structural inequities.

2. Several scholars such as Corntassel (2007, 2012) and Coulthard (2007, 2014) critique the focus on rights and recognition but, we believe, would distinguish this from Indigenous practice.

The current practice at universities developed in large part from the actions of three groups: faculty and students at Aboriginal and Indigenous studies departments and centers, who recognized visiting guests and speakers from other nations and territories as well as the territory and nation that they were on; activism from movements such as Idle No More; and the influence of large-scale political events and dialogues such as the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the 2008 to 2015 Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is therefore important to note that the current practice stems the work of Indigenous activists and that it has spread as a result of this work. We examine the extent to which there are patterns in the variability in acknowledgment and whether these reflect treaty relationships (or lack thereof) with federal and provincial governments.

In the west, with the exception of the Douglas Treaties (1850 to 1854—Vancouver Island), Treaty 8 (1899—encompasses part of Northern British Columbia), the Nisga’a Final Agreement (2000), and the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement (2009), there are no treaties with the Crown in British Columbia, so the land upon which universities are located has never been formally surrendered. Precedent and case law is continuing to define the implications that derive from this history (e.g., 1763 Royal Proclamation; *Calder v Attorney-General of British Columbia* [1973], *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* [1997]; *Tsilhqo’in Nation v British Columbia* [2014]).<sup>3</sup>

Moving further east to the Prairies, the 11 Numbered Treaties (1871 to 1921) representing the ties between Cree, Blackfoot, Dene, Dogrib, Métis, and Ojibwe peoples and the Canadian government dominate relations. Many of these are viewed by legal scholars and the Canadian government as land ceding treaties forsaking precolonial rights to land (Asch 2002:31)<sup>4</sup> and this changes the nature of the colonial relationship in this region.

Ontario, unlike the Prairies, has a mix of “number treaties” and land “purchase” agreements. The province, such as other regions, is also the site of struggles over land title—as seen in the dispute between the Algonquins of Ontario and the Ontario and federal governments (see <http://www.tanakiwin.com/>). Other disputes are readily found, for

3. Irrespective of these legal decisions and the Royal Proclamation “recognizing” Aboriginal title, Indigenous people have “a priori claims to land, sovereignty, and ways of being” (Mackey 2014:242; for critique of the assumptions of the Royal Proclamation, see also Christie 2005). Aboriginal title according to the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs is defined as “Our Indigenous Peoples, as Nations, hold the jurisdiction and responsibility to protect, access and use the resources upon the Land for the benefit of our Peoples, this is our Original Title” (Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs [UBCIC] 2016). There are also Canadian legal definitions of title that take a different understanding of the meaning of title more akin to land “ownership.” As Day (2001) notes in a discussion of sovereignty and of Patricia Monture-Angus’s work, “For Europeans, . . . it is about ‘rights’ and ‘control of territory,’ while for Monture-Angus, it involves ‘responsibility’ and ‘relationship with.’” (p. 184).

4. There is, however, ongoing dispute over whether or not those treaties have been faithfully kept and whether there is need for renegotiation of them.

example, those in the Haldimand Tract, which has seen growing urban development, and conflicts emerge such as that in Caledonia between Indigenous peoples and other interests over the Douglas Creek Estates (on Ipperwash conflict, see also Linden 2007; Morden 2013).

Until the 1970s, the province of Quebec was subject only to the Huron-British (1760) and Peace and Friendship (1725–1760/1761) treaties.<sup>5</sup> Each of these was in the Eastern part of the province and most were signed before the 1763 Royal Proclamation, which served as the *Magna Carta* for later treaties (Asch 2012; Asch and Bell 1993; Cardinal 1999). The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975), with the Cree, Naskapi, and Inuit in the province's North changed this, and was Canada's first "modern" treaty (see Ramos 2000). Since then the federal government and province have negotiated three additional treaties all of which again affect the Northern part of the province: the Northeastern Quebec Agreement (1978), the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement (2008), and the Eeyou Marine Region Land Claims Agreement (2011). The region along the Saint Lawrence River is largely Mohawk and Wendat and is the site of highly contentious politics. The Gaspé region is Mi'kmaq.

The treaties that affect three Maritime provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador are excluded here) have all been Peace and Friendship Treaties largely negotiated before the 1763 Royal Proclamation. These were nonaggression pacts that did not specifically cede any land to the Crown at the time of signing, but instead outlined relationships of trade and commerce. Newfoundland and Labrador differ from other Atlantic Canadian provinces because they joined Canada only in 1949, because of the extinction of the Beothuk, in which Europeans played a leading role, and because of the presence of Innu First Nations and Inuit. Although there have been First Nations people in the region for centuries, the region is party to two modern treaties: the (Nunatsiavut) Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement (2005) and Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreements (2008). The federal government and province only recently recognized the Qalpu Mi'kmaq band (2011).

This paper examines the extent to which the nature of these treaties and the accompanying colonial relationship upon which they are based shapes how universities engage in practices of acknowledgment and reconciliation. While many First Nations are signatories to treaties, as the above attests, the nature and substance of these treaties varies considerably—some emphasize land ceding, others relations of trade and commerce, and

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5. With respect to the Peace and Friendship Treaties (1725, 1749, 1760/1761) these involve territory now considered to be the Gaspé region of Quebec as well as the three Maritime Provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island; see Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada: <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028589/1100100028591>). The Peace and Friendship Treaties have been the basis of legal challenges made by the Listuguj First Nation. On maps offered by Mi'kmaq Elder Daniel Paul of Mi'kma'ki large parts of the Gaspé region are included ([http://www.danielpaul.com/scan\\_image/LandOfTheMi'kmaq.jpg](http://www.danielpaul.com/scan_image/LandOfTheMi'kmaq.jpg)). For these reasons, such treaties are also applied to that region of Quebec.

in some areas there are either no treaties or ongoing disputes over the interpretation of the spirit and intent underlying these agreements.

## METHODS

To ascertain the extent to which and how Canadian universities acknowledged Indigenous peoples and lands we used a two-step process. First, we searched the Web sites of 98 universities in Canada. This group includes all institutions listed by Universities Canada as well as 13 additional private universities that have enrollments above 1,000 students. Web sites were searched with a number of keywords for English universities, including “Indigenous,” “Aboriginal,” “First Nations,” and “traditional territory,” and “acknowledgement.” For French university Web sites, the keyword “autochtone” and “Amerindien” was used as well as the English keywords on the English versions of those Web sites. We also searched each of the University home pages as well as, where they existed, considered Indigenous studies/department pages. The vast majority of acknowledgments were on the latter.<sup>6</sup>

Second, we contacted representatives of university’s President’s Office and/or Aboriginal Centre to confirm what was on the Web site or to see if we missed acknowledgment practices. We began with email and we received answers from, in a few instances, the university president, and in others from the Directors of Aboriginal Centres. The exact wording of the correspondence was amended as the project progressed as we realized that we could not apply the same framework in all cases. If there was no email reply, then we called the representatives by phone. If there was no explicit Web acknowledgment, then we included the details from the email/phone conversation. In those instances, we also included links to Indigenous studies pages rather than to the page with the acknowledgment per se.<sup>7</sup> In some instances, universities did not respond to either emails or phone calls and/or were unable to provide information after several rounds of inquiry. All Web searches and follow-up communication occurred during the spring and summer of 2015. We have double-checked the Web links that are current as of June 1, 2016, and also resent the final table to all contacts in September 2016. As many schools indicated that things had again changed, further updates were again made at this time (again indicating the pace and rapid nature of change on this practice).

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<sup>6</sup> In many cases it was quite difficult to locate university acknowledgments. Unless the aim is to locate an acknowledgment, it is likely that it will be missed by many visitors to university Web sites.

<sup>7</sup> In some instances where we were unable to locate either a Web acknowledgment or by email and phone, we include an acknowledgment from the CAUT Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory (2016)—available at <http://www.caut.ca/news/2016/05/27/territorial-acknowledgement-guide>. This guide is more general and we hope that much of the information presented in this paper will serve to complement it. These are marked as such in the table.

What is clear, if the Web sites are any indication, is that acknowledgment as a practice at universities has been led by Indigenous faculty, students, and centers. The vast majority of people we contacted expressed enthusiasm for the need for the project. Our aim is to provide the most up-to-date information available and to contribute to a conversation rather than to be the final word on the practice. As such, all reporting errors and inaccuracies in this paper are attributable to the authors rather than to those we contacted. All individuals contacted were performing their duties in capacity of their professional roles under Articles 2.1 and 2.2 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2). Research of this type does not require ethical review.<sup>8</sup> This information was sent to us by the Principal Investigator's institutional Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

## UNIVERSITY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Table 1 provides the results of university Web site and our inquiries. Because the table is very large only the results for British Columbia and Alberta are provided in the paper. The full table results are available in the online Supplement and also at <http://perceptionsofchange.ca/acknowledgement%20paper.htm>. The first column in the table lists Indigenous lands/territory, the second column lists which treaties, if any, were signed, the third column lists province and institution, the fourth column reports the university acknowledgment, and the fifth column indicates the university Web sites that either contain the acknowledgment and/or that reference Indigenous centers/departments. We identify five general types of acknowledgment: of land and title (British Columbia), of treaties and political relationships (Prairies), of multiculturalism and heterogeneity (Ontario), of no practice (most of Quebec/some religious schools), and of people and territory (and openness to doing more; Atlantic).

We begin with the universities located on Indigenous land largely occupied by the province of British Columbia. As Table 1 shows, the acknowledgments for these universities have a strong emphasis on land, territory, and title and the unceded nature of the relationship. Thus, the University of British Columbia—Okanagan campus says that “We respectfully acknowledge the traditions and customs of the Okanagan Nation and its people in whose traditional territories we are gathered today.” Thompson Rivers University acknowledges that “The Kamloops and Williams Lake Campuses of Thompson Rivers University are situated on traditional Secwepemc (Shuswap) territory.” Kwantlen Polytechnic University says that “Surrey, Cloverdale and Langley are Kwantlen territory

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on Article 2.1 of the TCPS2, see <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter2-chapitre2/>.

Table 1  
**Canadian University Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands, Treaties, and Peoples: Results for British Columbia and Alberta—All Other Provinces are Provided at <http://perceptionsofchange.ca/acknowledgement%20paper.htm>**

Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
British Columbia Coast Salish	Douglas treaties	Vancouver Island University	In keeping with regional protocol, I would like to start by acknowledging and thanking the Coast Salish people whose traditional territory Vancouver Island University resides on. . . . I would also like to express my appreciation to the Aboriginal communities on Vancouver Island and the members of the Hwulmuxw Mustimuxw Siem for their ongoing and invaluable support and participation in our programs and services (more detail on Web site)	<a href="https://www2.viu.ca/aboriginal/index.asp">https://www2.viu.ca/aboriginal/index.asp</a>		

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Table 1

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote "official")	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Coast/ Straits Salish	Douglas treaties	University of Victoria	Situating on traditional Coast and Straits Salish territory, the University of Victoria is recognized for its commitment to and expertise in innovative programs and initiatives that support Indigenous students and communities (from Web site)	<a href="http://www.uvic.ca/home/about/community/aboriginal/">http://www.uvic.ca/home/about/community/aboriginal/</a>		
Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lkwungen (Songhees)	Douglas treaties	Royal Roads University	Royal Roads University rests on the traditional lands of the Lkwungen (Songhees) and Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) ancestors and families who shared this beautiful place with the neighbouring Nations of Scia'new (Beecher Bay) and T'Sou-ke (Sooke) (from Web site)	<a href="http://www.royalroads.ca/news/totem-pole-unveiling-celebrates-culture-tradition-and-learning">http://www.royalroads.ca/news/totem-pole-unveiling-celebrates-culture-tradition-and-learning</a>		

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Musqueam	No treaty	The University of British Columbia— Point Grey	UBC’s Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people (from Web site)	http://aboriginal. ubc.ca/	http:// aboriginal. ubc.ca/ community- youth/ musqueam- and-ubc/	http:// strate- gtcplan. ubc.ca/the- plan/ aboriginal- engagement/
Coast Salish: No treaty Musqueam, Squamish, Tsilil- Waututh	No treaty	The University of British Columbia- Downtown Cam- pus/Robson Square	We are located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded Coast Salish territory (from email) specific mention of Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh People is now preferred as “Coast Salish” is increasingly being regarded as an anthropological term among community members (from FNHL director)	No Web links found		

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Coast Salish: Musqueam, Squamish, Tseil-Waututh	No treaty	Emily Carr University of Art + Design	We [] would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples live, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwu7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Selilwataʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations (from CAUT 2016)	https://www. ecuad.ca/student- life/campus-amenities/ aboriginal-gathering-place		

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Coast Salish: Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil- Waututh	No treaty	Simon Fraser University	“We acknowledge the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, on whose lands the SFU campus reside . . .” (quotes on Web site); also SFU’s location on traditional First Nations lands should be acknowledged with one of the following two phrases, which are suitable to all SFU campuses and locations in the Lower Mainland.SFU acknowledges the	http://www.sfu.ca/aboriginal- peoples.html	https://www. sfu.ca/clf/ styleguide/ sfu-style/ traditional- acknowledge- ments.html	

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Squamish	No treaty	Quest University	Musqueam, Squamish and Tseil-Waututh peoples on whose traditional territories we are privileged to live, work and play. OR SFU acknowledges the Coast Salish People on whose traditional territories we are privileged to live, work and play	<a href="http://www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples.html">http://www.sfu.ca/ aboriginalpeoples.html</a>	<a href="https://www.sfu.ca/clif/styleguide/sfu-style/traditional-acknowledgements.html">https://www. sfu.ca/clif/ styleguide/ sfu-style/ traditional- acknowledge- ments. html</a>	
			We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh peoples (Squamish). Quest University Canada sits on the Squamish traditional territory, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in this blessed territory (from email)	<a href="http://www.questu.ca/about.html">http://www.questu.ca/ about.html</a>		

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Katzie/ Kwantlen/ Semiahmoo/ Tsawwassen	No treaty	Kwantlen Polytechnic University	Let me begin by acknowledging the location of our KPU Langley campus on the unceded territories of the Coastal Salish people. In particular the Kwantlen, the Semiahmoo, the Tsawwassen and the Musqueam First Nations on whose land we offer our services as a polytechnic university	<a href="http://www.kpu.ca/aboriginal/gathering-place">http://www.kpu.ca/ aboriginal/gathering-place</a>		
Kwantlen	No treaty	Trinity Western University (Christian)	We [I] would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Kwantlen, Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Tsawwassen First Nations (from CAUT 2016)	<a href="http://twu.ca/research/institutes-and-centres/university-institute-of-indigenous-issues-uand-perspective/">http://twu.ca/research/ institutes-and-centres/ university-institute-of-indigenous- issues-uand-perspective/</a>	<a href="http://twu.ca/research/institutes-and-centres/university-institute-of-indigenous-issues-and-perspective/">http://twu. ca/research/ institutes-and- centres/ university- the-institute- of-indigenous- issues-and- perspective/</a>	

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Stó:lō	No treaty	University of the Fraser Valley	UFV strives to be a place of learning that recognizes, respects and includes indigenous ways of knowing. Our Fraser Valley locations are in the traditional territory of the Stó:lō peoples (from homepage Web site). It is with great pleasure and pride that we welcome you to the traditional unceded Territory of the Sto:lo Nation and to S'olh Shxwleli, “Our Place” or the UFV Indigenous Student Centre (from Web site)	https://www.ufv.ca/ about_ufv/	http://www. ufv.ca/isc/	https://www. ufv.ca/ calendar/ current /ProgramsF- L/IS.htm

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Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc/ Shuswap	No treaty	Thompson Rivers University	TRU's Kamloops and Williams Lake campuses are located on the traditional territory of the Secwepemc peoples, in British Columbia's southern interior. In Kamloops (from the Secwepemc word for “meeting of the waters”, the main campus overlooks the junction of the North Thompson and South Thompson rivers, from which the university gets its name (from Web site). The Kamloops and Williams Lake Campuses of Thompson Rivers University are situated on traditional Secwepemc (Shuswap) territory (from Web site)	<a href="http://www.tru.ca/about/campuses.html">http://www.tru.ca/about/ campuses.html</a>	<a href="http://www.tru.ca/aero.html">http://www. tru.ca/ aero.html</a>	

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Okanagan	No treaty	The University of British Columbia- Okanagan Campus	We respectfully acknowledge the traditions and customs of the Okanagan Nation and its people in whose traditional territories we are gathered today. (Ongoing discussions with Aboriginal community members, students, staff, and faculty have highlighted the importance of a physical environment that welcomes community members to the territory of the Syilx Okanagan people—from Web site)	<a href="http://cegs.ok.ubc.ca/prospective/undergrad/indigenous-studies.html">http://cegs.ok.ubc.ca/ prospective/undergrad/ indigenous- studies.html</a>	<a href="http://students.ok.ubc.ca/aboriginal/welcome.html">http:// students.ok. ubc.ca/ aboriginal/ welcome. html</a>	

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Lheidli T’enneh	The Lheidli T’enneh Final Agree- ment	University of Northern British Columbia	The University of Northern British Columbia, along with the City of Prince George, reside on the traditional lands of the Lheidli T’enneh Nation. “Lheidli T’enneh means the people from the confluence of two rivers in the Dakelh language, and refers to the place where the waters of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers meet, and the Lheidli T’enneh call home” (from Web site). The protocol expected of presenters within the university is to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Lheidli T’enneh. One cannot <i>welcome</i> people onto the territory unless they are a member of the Lheidli people. It is expected that people <i>acknowledge</i> the territory though (from email)	<a href="http://www.unbc.ca/nations-centre">http://www.unbc.ca/nations-centre</a>	<a href="http://www.unbc.ca/first-nations-studies">http://www.unbc.ca/first-nations-studies</a>	

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Alberta Plains/ Wood Cree	Treaty 6	Concordia University of Edmonton	We II wish to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 territory and a traditional meeting ground and home for many Indigenous peoples, including Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, and Nakota Sioux People (from CAUT 2016)	<a href="https://concordia.ab.ca/2015/10/talking-circles-at-cue/">https://concordia.ab.ca/ 2015/10/talking- circles-at-cue/</a>		

(Continued)

Table 1

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote “official”)	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Plains/ Wood Cree	Treaty 6	MacEwan University	I begin our ceremony today by recognizing that we are gathered on the traditional lands and waters of diverse Indigenous peoples (from email)	<a href="http://www.macewan.ca/wcm/CampusLife/Aboriginal-EducationCentre/index.htm">http://www.macewan.ca/wcm/CampusLife/Aboriginal-EducationCentre/index.htm</a>		
Plains/ Wood Cree	Treaty 6	The King's University of Alberta	Unable to ascertain (university not on CAUT list)	No Web links found (some documents available)		
Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux	Treaty 6	University of Alberta	“Welcome to the University of Alberta. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional territory on which we are gathered today, a welcoming place for peoples from around the world. I would like to acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis and Nakota Sioux.” (from Web site quotes in original)	<a href="http://www.toolkit.ualberta.ca/CommunicationsTools/AcknowledgmentOfTraditionalTerritory.aspx">http://www.toolkit.ualberta.ca/CommunicationsTools/AcknowledgmentOfTraditionalTerritory.aspx</a>	<a href="http://www.aboriginalservices.ualberta.ca/en/AboutUs/CulturalProtocol.aspx">http://www.aboriginalservices.ualberta.ca/en/AboutUs/CulturalProtocol.aspx</a>	

(Continued)

Table 1

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Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote "official")	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux	Treaty 6	University of Alberta (Agustana campus)	We [] wish to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 territory and a traditional meeting ground for many Indigenous peoples. The territory on which the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta is located provided a travelling route and home to the Cree, Blackfoot, and Métis, as it did for the Nakoda, Tsuu T'ina, Chipewyan, and other Indigenous peoples. Their spiritual and practical relationships to the land create a rich heritage for our learning and our life as a community (from Web site)	<a href="https://www.augustana.ualberta.ca/offices/aso/engagement/statement.html">https://www.augustana.ualberta.ca/offices/aso/engagement/statement.html</a>		

(Continued)

Table 1

**Continued**

Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote "official")	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Blackfoot	Treaty 7	Mount Royal University	Mount Royal University is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikuni, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Iyârhe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, and that the traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Mohkinstsis" which we now call the City of Calgary. The City of Calgary is also home to Metis Nation of Alberta, Region III (from email)	<a href="https://www.mtroyal.ca/IndigenousMountRoyal/">https://www.mtroyal.ca/ IndigenousMountRoyal/</a>	<a href="https://www.mtroyal.ca/Indigenous-MountRoyal/Indigenous-Strategy/index.htm">https://www. mtroyal.ca/ Indigenous- MountRoyal/ Indigenous- Strategy/ index.htm</a>	
Blackfoot	Treaty 7	The University of Lethbridge	Since its inception in 1967, the University of Lethbridge has valued its location on traditional Blackfoot territory (from Web site)	<a href="http://www.uleth.ca/aboriginal-initiatives">http://www.uleth.ca/ aboriginal-initiatives</a>		

(Continued)

Table 1

**Continued**

Peoples/ nation	Treaty	Institution	Acknowledgment policy or practice (does not de facto denote "official")	Web link (current as of June 1, 2016) (link to acknowledgment is first, if none available then link is to Indigenous Studies Centre/Department, other sites and centers also listed in order to provide as many sources/links as possible)	Web link 2	Web link 3
Blackfoot	Treaty 7	University of Calgary	<p>Welcome to the University of Calgary. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the traditional territories of the Blackfoot and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikuni, the Kainai, the Tsuu T'ina and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations. The City of Calgary is also home to Metis Nation of Alberta, Region III (specific tribal acknowledgment—there is also a basic acknowledgment and an extended acknowledgment—there is also an extended acknowledgment) (info obtained from document provided by email)</p>	<p><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/nativecentre/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/nativecentre/</a></p>	<p><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/indigenous/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/indigenous/</a></p>	

during our ceremonies.” Finally, the University of the Fraser Valley states that the “University of the Fraser Valley is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Stó:lō people.”

In the Vancouver area, where there are three First Nations with overlapping traditional territory, the University of British Columbia acknowledges territory differently depending on the location of an event in the city. In recent years, recognition of the status of the land as “unceded” is now common:<sup>9</sup> on the main campus, for instance, the acknowledgment is typically of the “traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people,” and often followed by a greeting by a community member, first in the *hənq̓əminəm* language and then in English, that includes some comment about relationships, history, and the meaning of “unceded.” The inclusion of “unceded,” and the general focus on land and territory in the British Columbia university acknowledgments reflects the unique legal and political situation in British Columbia.

Moving further east to Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, the focus of acknowledgment changes to peoples and treaties. The University of Manitoba, for example, says that its “campuses are located on original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.”<sup>10</sup> MacEwan University (Alberta) told us that they recognize that “we are gathered on the traditional lands and waters of diverse Indigenous peoples,” an acknowledgment, albeit one that is somewhat general. An example of recognition of treaties can be seen at the University of Regina, which told us that “At the Regina campus, we are on Treaty 4 territory. For the Saskatoon and Prince Alberta locations (for both University of Regina and First Nations University of Canada), it is on Treaty 6 territory. So often times, we will start off by acknowledging that we are on Treaty 4 territory or Treaty 6 territory.”<sup>11</sup>

The acknowledgments practiced by Ontario universities have the most diverse content and often prioritize cultural values and traits over treaties or unresolved land claims. For this reason, we denote it as a form of multiculturalism and what could be called “heterogeneity.” King’s University College’s acknowledgment illustrates this more all-encompassing approach when it states that, “The Attawandaran (Neutral) peoples once settled this region alongside the Algonquin and Haudenosaunee peoples,

<sup>9</sup> The word unceded has been added to the entry in Table S1 upon recommendation by the UBC director of the First Nations House of Learning.

<sup>10</sup> The full-text of the acknowledgment on the University of Manitoba Web site is more elaborate. As of December 2015, six Manitoba universities (Brandon University, Canadian Mennonite university, University of Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, Université de Saint Boniface, University College of the North) along with several colleges and the Manitoba school board also signed the Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint (<http://media.cmu.ca/index.php/2015/indigenous-education-blueprint-signing-ceremony/>).

<sup>11</sup> Also worth noting is that a department (English) at the University of Saskatchewan also includes its own treaty acknowledgment (<http://artsandscience.usask.ca/english/>) as does law at the University of Windsor (<http://www.uwindsor.ca/law/aboriginal/>).



and used this land as their traditional beaver hunting grounds. The three other longstanding Indigenous groups of this geographic region are the Anishinaabe Peoples, the Haudenosaunee Peoples, the Leni-Lunaape Peoples.” Here there is not only reference to land and peoples, but also to a method of land usage (beaver hunting), although it locates the specific acknowledgment in the past and does not comment as specifically on current relations.

The University of Toronto—the country’s largest and most internationally recognized university—also has one of the longest and most complicated acknowledgments as it recognizes historical usage, land/territory, multiple First Nations, political agreements and signatories, and makes specific reference to Anishinaabe culture and politics (Turtle Island):

The sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory (see <http://guides.library.utoronto.ca/aboriginal/>).

It, perhaps more than any other, provides a clear illustration of the wide content possibilities that could be included in any acknowledgment. It was revised by the Elders Circle (Council of Aboriginal Initiatives) on November 6, 2014.

In some instances, as seen in University of Sudbury and Laurentian University of Sudbury, efforts are also made to include Indigenous blessings and prayer, as well as language. As they both note, “We include Indigenous prayers, blessings, songs, etc. in most of our public presentations. In addition, the President (of the University of Sudbury), who is actively learning Ojibway, usually divides his speeches so that parts are said in that language as well as in French and English” (this was updated in September 2016 see Table 1). This is the only case we were able to identify where the president made an attempt to learn and incorporate language.<sup>12</sup> At Algoma University, we were informed that “it is important for them to recognize that the main campus of Algoma University used to be a former residential school. The two local First Nations in this territory would be Garden River First Nation which was founded by Chief Shingwauk (Shingwaukonse) and Batchewana First Nation.” This was the only university that made residential schools an explicit part of acknowledgment.

<sup>12</sup> We did not specifically ask other schools about language. Also worth noting is that the Council of Ontario Universities has a Web acknowledgment that can be found at: <http://cou.on.ca/about/more/traditional-land/>.

That Ontario universities are more diverse and also made specific reference to culture likely reflects the fact that they are situated on territories represented in a mix of numbered and land purchase agreements.

The responses from many universities in Quebec differed greatly from universities elsewhere in Canada; we characterize these as having no acknowledgment practice. None had a protocol that we could find, official or otherwise, of acknowledgment. Concordia informed us that it was in development and were very enthusiastic. In one case, we were informed that the school had been granted the land from the Catholic Church and that was why there was no protocol. Another school told us that acknowledgment of traditional territory was not a social, economic, or cultural issue for the school and that acknowledging traditional territory was not customary of the region. For McGill, Canada's third largest university, the acknowledgment comes from Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT, 2016)—“We [I] would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations.” The lack of acknowledgment is likely linked to the competing nationalisms of the province, which has struggled to build an independent Quebec state and Indigenous people deal with double colonization from Quebec as well as Canada. This might also be traced to the fact that recognition of Indigenous territory would conflict with narratives about Quebec as a distinct society, and for sovereigntists, as a distinct state (Jenson and Papillon 2000; Niezen 2000).<sup>13</sup>

Like Quebec, the Atlantic Canadian provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador generally do not have official protocols of acknowledgment in place. With respect to acknowledgment, many of the universities had unofficial acknowledgment policies in convocation speeches, and on an ad hoc basis for ceremonies. At Mount Allison University when we began our research we were told that during convocation the president says, “Let me thank as well the members of the Mi'kmaq nation on whose traditional territory we meet.” This has since been updated to

Before we begin the proceedings, I would like to acknowledge, honour and pay respect to the traditional owners and custodians (from all four directions), of the land on which we meet. It is upon the ancestral lands of the Mi'kmaw

13. Still, while on the whole, Indigenous peoples in Quebec have been more closely linked to the federal government (e.g., during the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum, the vote in the concomitant Cree referendum was to stay in Canada), the Quebec government has made numerous agreements. The relationship with the federal government is uneasy to say the least. The conflict underlying the 1990 Oka Crisis, for example, took place at both the provincial and the federal levels. When the conflict between Mohawks of Kanesatake and the town of Oka began, it was at the provincial level (the town mayor called in the Quebec provincial police—Sûreté du Québec. As the conflict grew, the Canadian prime minister replaced the police with the army, making this a federal or nation-to-nation conflict (see Wilkes 2016; Wilkes, Corrigan-Brown, and Myers 2010; Wilkes and Kehl 2014).

and Wolastoquyik (Maliseet) peoples that Mount Allison University is built. As we share our own knowledge, teaching, learning and research practices within this university, may we also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal custodianship of this country.

Quite a few schools expressed a willingness to engage in acknowledgment or indicated that they were working on it. The University of Prince Edward Island, for example told us that “PEI does not have an official protocol for acknowledging the Mi’kmaq territory we are in. We do this on an ad hoc basis i.e. Indigenous ceremonies and events, such as our annual Pow Wow on campus. It is, however, something we are working on.”

At Cape Breton University, while we were unable to obtain an official verification, Indigenous affairs is listed as a link on the university’s front page and there is also mention of Unama’ki College. The description states that “Unama’ki is the Mi’kmaq word for Cape Breton Island, and loosely translates to ‘Land of Fog.’ Cape Breton has been home to the Mi’kmaq people for centuries, and Unama’ki College strives to meet the needs of Mi’kmaq and all other Aboriginal students from across the country.” Through personal contacts in the region, moreover, we know of the occurrence of informal and ad hoc recognition in many institutions.

## CONCLUSION

While the practice of acknowledgment of Indigenous lands, treaties, and peoples is increasingly widespread across Canadian universities, it has yet to be considered as a subject of inquiry. How does this practice vary and why? We described the content and practice of acknowledgment and suggested that the form of acknowledgment would be shaped—in part—by the treaties in (or not in) place. It is important to note that acknowledgment is a practice that comes from Indigenous faculty, students, and community members. We found that acknowledgment tended to be one of five general types: of land and title (British Columbia), of specific treaties and political relationships (Prairies), of multiculturalism and heterogeneity (Ontario), of no practice (most of Quebec), and of people and territory (and openness to doing more; Atlantic).

Taken together these results provide a broad overview of acknowledgment and why it takes particular forms in particular places. Acknowledgment of land and title predominates at universities in British Columbia that has not signed treaties and hence is unceded territory. In the Prairies where the Indigenous Nations and the Canadian government signed the 11 Numbered Treaties (1871 to 1921), there is a focus on these treaties and acknowledgment of treaty territory and relationships. The approach taken in Ontario is more heterogeneous reflecting the fact that there are both numbered treaties and land purchase agreements. Greater attention is needed, however, as to why there is a greater preponderance of references

to culture in universities in Ontario compared to elsewhere. Universities in Quebec either did not respond or do not engage in the practice, a difference that might be related to sovereigntist politics and territorial aspirations in the region. In the Atlantic region there is an openness to further developing acknowledgment practice and reconciliation. There is a recognition by some schools of Mi'kma'ki but it is often people rather than territory, reflecting the older and more diffuse nature of the Peace and Friendship treaties.

Overall, the typologies of acknowledgment documented in our analysis reflect the ongoing treaty and colonial relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples. There is currently no university acknowledgment of urban Indigenous and so-called nonstatus peoples (e.g., see Miller 2003), mirroring the lack of recognition of these groups by the federal government. Because of this, in their current form, university acknowledgment, if primarily referencing treaties and treaty relationships, could be on pace to maintain colonization rather than lead to full reconciliation. As such, current practices by universities are open to many of the critiques launched against the pursuit of rights within the current political system (cf. Corntassel 2007, 2012; Coulthard 2007, 2014). Therefore, in moving forward, vis-à-vis university acknowledgment of Indigenous people, two considerations should be taken into account.

First, acknowledgment as a practice is fluid and likely to change over time. Even during the time in which we conducted this study, several universities that did not have such a practice when we began the research developed an official policy and we had to repeatedly change the entries in the table. As universities seek to develop the practice, an update will be needed as is more detailed research on exactly how and why acknowledgment developed at particular institutions. It will be important to track what institutions do and what is missed and how this ties in to the local context. That Algoma University is on the site of a residential school is one example. It will be important to consider the potential consequences of a mass movement that sees acknowledgment become routine practice. Should all institutions, not simply universities, practice formal recognition? Where might this lead without the kinds of power that governments have? It will be important to critically question whether acknowledgment maintains the status quo or promotes reconciliation. Certainly, if taken too literally, acknowledgment as practiced by some is likely to become a tokenistic practice of checking the box (Fridkin 2016).

Second, meaning making and positionality around acknowledgment need to be considered. The meaning of Indigenous peoples acknowledging treaties and colonial relations as well as each other is different than when non-Indigenous people do it. Corntassel reflects that "When visiting another Indigenous nation's territory, as Cherokees and Indigenous nations, we carry our communities and sense of place with us . . . . You only approach another Indigenous nation after you have thought it through, over

and over again, and if there is willingness on the part of the host nation(s) to include or accept strangers” (Snelgrove et al. 2014:4). In contrast, it is likely that for some non-Indigenous people engaging in acknowledgment could also be “unsettling” (Regan 2010; see also Denis 2015) insofar as there is an implied “what next” to acknowledging either unceded territory, residential schools, or a treaty relationship. It remains the case that until actual land is returned, and the terms of some treaties renegotiated or abrogated entirely, “critical consciousness does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism” (Tuck and Yang 2012:19; see also âpihtawikosisân 2016; Corntassel 2012). For these reasons, it is important for universities and other institutions to critically question what is meant by acknowledgment and who is doing it.

Ultimately our hope is that the analysis provided in this paper will be of use to universities and individuals, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who are seeking appropriate and respectful ways to engage in acknowledgment and promote reconciliation. While the vast majority of universities now include acknowledgment as part of their public profile, universities and university leaders, if non-Indigenous, may want to consider taking a more proactive role in explaining why they are acknowledging Indigenous peoples, lands, and treaties and critically think about what their practices are doing. As a number of scholars and activists have noted (cf. Battell Lowman and Barker 2015; Kovach 2013; Waila 2015), everyone is responsible for reconciliation and it is imperative that this task not be solely the responsibility of Indigenous studies departments, and Indigenous faculty and students.

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## **Supporting Information**

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

**Table S1.** Canadian University Acknowledgement of Indigenous Lands, Treaties, and Peoples.