

## AD0100 – WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST NATION TRADITIONAL TERRITORY

Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Dākelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, syilx, and Tâilhqot'in Nations.

### 1.0 PURPOSE

Indigenous Peoples have practiced land acknowledgements since time immemorial. Land acknowledgements are an important and respectful practice that continue to be used today. Acknowledging Traditional Territories is about acknowledging the First Nation ancestral homelands as being unceded and unsurrendered. Recognizing traditional Indigenous land is one way of acknowledging our colonial and settler history, as well as the rights of Indigenous Peoples and their connection to their land.

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to Interior Health (IH) staff for the protocols on Acknowledging First Nation Traditional Territory.

### 2.0 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	<i>A land acknowledgement is a way to honour and show respect that the First Nation(s) had, and continues to have, a relationship since time immemorial with the land. Unless you are a member of a First Nation where Interior Health resides, you are a guest on these territories.</i>
<i>Cultural Humility</i>	<i>Cultural humility is a process of self reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and privileges to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience and culture and is focused on identifying then dismantling power imbalances (HQBC, 2025)</i>
<i>Cultural Safety</i>	<i>Cultural safety is about the experience of the patient. It is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address <b>power imbalances</b> inherent in the healthcare system. It results in an <b>environment free of racism and discrimination</b>, where people feel safe when receiving health care. Only the Indigenous patient accessing or receiving care can define it as culturally safe (HQBC, 2025)</i>
<i>Elder</i>	<i>Elders are the carriers of the wisdom and teachings rooted within the Indigenous community or communities to which</i>

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TERM	DEFINITION
	<i>they belong. The term Elder does not refer to one's age, but rather to one's place within the community, and the level of cultural and traditional knowledge that they possess.</i>
<i>Honoraria/ium</i>	<i>Protocol for monetary gestures of appreciation for what has been taught and shared, given to Elders or Knowledge Keepers.</i>
<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>The Canadian Constitution Act, 1982 Section 35 (2) recognizes three groups of Indigenous Peoples: First Nations/"Indians" (status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit. These three distinct groups have their own unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Although the term "Indian" is imbedded in the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982 Section 35 (2) it is not an acceptable term to refer to Indigenous Peoples and should not be used.</i>
<i>Internal Events</i>	<i>IH educational opportunities, events or conferences, meetings using an official IH agenda, and formal staff gatherings not open to the general public. Examples include lectures or educational presentations, visioning or planning workshops, multi-stakeholder committee meetings, and awards ceremonies.</i>
<i>Knowledge Keeper (Carrier)</i>	<i>Persons recognized within a community who possess a level of cultural and traditional knowledge. The term is bestowed by the community to individuals who are deemed spiritual and cultural knowledge keepers.</i>
<i>Public Event</i>	<i>An IH-hosted gathering where general members of the public and/or community representatives are invited to attend or participate.</i>
<i>Traditional Territory</i>	<i>The geographic area identified by a First Nation to be the area of land which they and/or their ancestors traditionally occupied or used.</i>
<i>Welcome</i>	<i>A Welcome to the Traditional Territory is only offered by the First Nation whose lands you are on as a guest. The Welcome follows a traditional protocol where guests to a territory are welcomed and given permission to enter by the First Nation. A Welcoming shows respect to the ancestors of that land, both human and non-human.</i>

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### 3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 IH is committed to strengthening the cultural competence of the organization and among its staff to provide Culturally Safe and relevant care for Indigenous Peoples. IH staff share the responsibility of recognizing and acknowledging the Traditional Territories on which they live and work.
- 3.2 For both Internal Events and Public Events, IH staff will provide an Acknowledgement of the specific Traditional Territory or Territories on which the event is taking place.
- 3.3 For Public Events, IH staff should consider inviting an Elder or Knowledge Keeper from the local First Nation(s) to provide a Welcome to the Traditional Territory. IH staff are advised to recognize the Knowledge Keeper or Elder's contribution and time with an Honorarium.

### 4.0 PROCEDURES

- 4.1 Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory
  - 4.1.1 At all Internal Events and Public Events IH staff should provide an Acknowledgement of the Traditional First Nations Territory or Territories on which the event is taking place.
  - 4.1.2 An Acknowledgement is provided by an IH staff member or by a person who is not from the traditional territory (e.g., the chair, emcee, or speaker).
  - 4.1.3 An Acknowledgement is the first item on a meeting or event agenda.
  - 4.1.4 Traditional Territory Acknowledgements include the following considerations:
    - Acknowledge the Traditional Territory or Territories on which the event is occurring.
    - Name the specific First Nations Community or First Nations Peoples on whose Traditional Territory the event is occurring.
    - Refer to the [Indigenous Communities and Organizations Map](#) to see communities that IH serves and the geography of First Nations Traditional Territory in the Interior.
    - Refer to the [Basic Guide on Pronunciation](#) of First Nations on how to pronounce First Nations that IH serves.

Example Acknowledgement:

"Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the [insert Nation Name here] Nation, where we are grateful to be gathered today."

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- 4.2 Welcome to First Nation Traditional Territory
- 4.2.1 A Welcome and/or Acknowledgement is the first item on a meeting or event agenda.
- 4.2.2 In addition to the Acknowledgement, IH staff should consider inviting a local First Nation(s) person to provide a Welcome at Public Events such as conferences and special events.
- 4.2.3 A Welcome is provided only by the First Nations people who are traditionally from the territory. Honoraria are provided to Elders or Knowledge Keepers who are invited to a Public Event to provide a Welcome.
- 4.2.4 IH staff responsible for planning or hosting the event will ask the local First Nation(s) to provide the appropriate Welcome, as protocols vary between First Nations.
- Refer to [First Nation Communities Contact List](#) for information on communities that IH serves. Identify yourself and your position, the organization, and the event/request, to ensure the community has enough information to connect you to the correct person.
  - When contacting an Elder, a phone call may be preferred over email. Ensure communication is open and ongoing until the event is complete. Be sure to confirm how the Elder would prefer to be introduced at the event. Elders need to be properly supported when invited to an event. Refer to the [IH Honoraria and Gifting Guide](#) for guidance on how to support elders
  - Nation specific protocols, regarding offering of traditional ceremonial tobacco, sage or sweetgrass should be discussed with the Elder prior to the Welcome to the Traditional Territory and can be discussed when an invitation is initially extended. If it is determined that an offering of traditional ceremonial medicines is appropriate, ensure that the offering is given to the Elder prior to the Welcome to the Traditional Territory. If unsure where to get medicines and tobacco refer to the [Indigenous Vendors Guide](#) or contact [Indigenous Partnerships](#).
- 4.3 Honoraria
- 4.3.1 Honoraria
- Honoraria is a component of the Welcome protocol to show respect for wisdom and cultural contribution.
  - In most cases, an honorarium includes travel expense to and from the event, and the amount of time required for event.
  - Multiple factors, including distance travelled, will determine an appropriate Honorarium. Refer to the [IH Honoraria and Gifting Guide](#).
  - Presenting the Honorarium to the individual can occur directly after a Welcome is provided.

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- Honoraria are not to be provided to IH employees or employees of other provincial health authorities.

### 4.3.2 Financial Consideration

- Manager approval is necessary to ensure funds are available from the respective cost center to provide Honoraria. Refer to [AP0700 Signing Authority](#) for protocols related to employee and organization expenses.
- If uncertain about the type or value of the Honoraria, refer to the [IH Honoraria and Gifting Guide](#) or contact [Indigenous Partnerships](#).

## 5.0 REFERENCES

1. Adapted from [Vancouver Coastal Health \(2015\) Aboriginal Cultural Competency Policy](#)
2. Adapted from [Cultural Protocol: Fraser Salish Territory Acknowledgement](#)
3. [Basic Guide on Pronunciation](#)
4. [First Nation Communities Contact List](#)
5. [Health Quality BC. \(2025\). Backgrounder: Cultural Safety & Humility and Indigenous Specific Anti-Racism Education and Training Framework.](#)
6. [IH Honoraria and Gifting Guide](#)
7. [IH Indigenous Vendor Guide](#)
8. [Indigenous Communities and Organizations Map](#)

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