

Indigenous Relations and UBC

The Indigenous peoples of Canada (considered “Aboriginal” by legal definitions), includes First Nations (status and non-status “Indians”, also a legal term but is considered offensive to many Indigenous people), Métis (a unique culture that developed among descendants of the First Nations and early European fur traders, primarily in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta), and Inuit (from northern Arctic communities). Out of the ~600 distinct First Nations groups in Canada, around 200 nations exist within BC and have lived in this area for 10,000 years before European contact and colonization. Government policies that formed and continue to shape Canada have amounted to the genocide of Indigenous peoples (2019 National Inquiry: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>). Many of these policies, such as forced sterilizations and residential schools, have officially ended (in 1973 and 1996, respectively), although their intergenerational effects are ongoing. The 2019 report also highlighted policies remaining in place today, including lack of police protection and the over-apprehension of children, that contribute to the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Reconciliation is the collective effort to engage with this reality, understand the continuing impacts of colonialism, and work collaboratively for a better future.

The City of Vancouver is within the overlapping traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and sel̓ilwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, while UBC is situated on the land of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm. Land acknowledgments are the most common way members of the University can begin to participate in reconciliation with the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm people. At UBC, a land acknowledgment is usually given before public events, presentations, and ceremonies, and sounds like this:

I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered today on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

Land or territorial acknowledgments are important because they publicly give recognition that the University is on land that was taken from the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm people without a legal treaty (“unceded”), and this land still retains traditional and ancestral value to the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm. Recognizing and acknowledging the injustice inherent in UBC’s occupation of xʷməθkʷəy̓əm land is a necessary first step towards reconciliation. For students who may not be familiar with Indigenous peoples in BC and Canada, land acknowledgements can be a first introduction to this history. Still, they can be seen as an empty gesture if not followed by meaningful action. Therefore, it is vital to critically engage with actions and events on campus, and what can be done to actively support the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm and other Indigenous communities beyond land acknowledgments at UBC.

For more information about reconciliation efforts at UBC, the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm people, and to learn how to support Indigenous communities and students at UBC and beyond:

- xʷməθkʷəy̓əm and UBC webpage: <http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/community-youth/musqueam-and-ubc/>
- Booklet of principles for collaboration with the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm community: <https://bit.ly/2SqRKKj>
- More information about land acknowledgments at UBC: <https://students.ubc.ca/ubclife/welcome-musqueam-territory>
<https://blogs.ubc.ca/campusenvironments/land-acknowledgments/>

- UBC’s “Aboriginal Portal” offers a broad introduction to Indigenous relations on the Vancouver campus, current events and news: <http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/>
- Wherever you’re from within Canada or the U.S., Indigenous peoples have lived there for thousands of years. Find out who those peoples are and take the time to learn more about the communities who call this land home: <https://native-land.ca/>
- The UBC-Aboriginal Timeline documents UBC’s key historical moments with Indigenous peoples, while locating these moments in broader contexts at institutional, provincial, and national levels (i.e., UBC, BC, and Canada): <https://timeandplace.ubc.ca/timeline/>
- Learn why the terminology we use when referring to Indigenous peoples is important, and which terms are the most respectful, in the *UBC Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines*. This booklet also contains a guide for giving land acknowledgments: http://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/ubc_indigenous_peoples_language_guide.pdf
- The Indigenous Foundations website is a great information resource on key topics relating to the histories, politics, and cultures of the Indigenous peoples of Canada: <https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca>
- First Peoples Writing is a blog that showcases written and creative works by students in UBC’s First Nations Study Program: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/isujblog/>
- Find and learn about Indigenous public art on campus: <http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/map-indigenous-public-art/>
- The Social Justice Institute’s booklet, *resisting the university: an alternative orientation handbook*, addresses Indigenous efforts at UBC and is available for download here: <http://thetalon.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/resisting-the-university-an-alternative-orientation-booklet-2.pdf>

Resources specific to Indigenous students:

- UBC’s hub for Indigenous students lists scholarship and funding opportunities, programs and services specific to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, Indigenous-specific spaces on campus, information on preparing for life at UBC, and links to Indigenous student associations: <https://you.ubc.ca/aboriginal-students-ubc/>
- The Talking Stick weekly newsletter for Indigenous student updates, like free Tuesday lunches at the Longhouse and other events (e-mail fnhl.community@ubc.ca to sign up).
- The “Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement” (SAGE) mailing list for Indigenous graduate students in all departments. It shares opportunities and events such as writing groups, job postings, conferences, and relevant lectures (e-mail grad.sage@ubc.ca).
- UBC.caISES (Canadian Indigenous Science and Engineering Society, a subchapter of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society - AISES) is an Indigenous science student club with networking and volunteer opportunities (email ubc.caises@gmail.com).