

## Land Acknowledgement Draft 1, 19/08/2016

*We respectfully acknowledge the territory in which we gather as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, and the island of Newfoundland as the ancestral homelands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk. I would also like to recognize the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut and the Innu of Nitassinan, and their ancestors, as the original peoples of Labrador. We strive for respectful relationships with all the peoples of this province as we search for collective healing and true reconciliation and honour this beautiful land together.*

### Explanation

Opening with a land acknowledgement is an ongoing tradition that is recognized by First Nations across Canada. Perpetuating this practice demonstrates commitment to furthering a post-colonial environment. This land acknowledgement is offered to recognize Aboriginal peoples' enduring connection to their traditional territories, to recognize the history of the land that is currently shared by many peoples, and to recognize stewardship as a shared responsibility of all those who reside in a territory. It was written with the following considerations:

- Memorial University represents more than the province's most urban area. It does this in name, with its self-identified obligations, and with campus placements around the province. To maintain consistency with Memorial University's position, the Land Acknowledgement offered here recognizes collaborators from many areas of the province.
- Recognizing that it is both respectful and accurate to identify peoples by their self-declared descriptors, in place of external labels, this Land Acknowledgement utilizes the most current appellation supported by the organizations that officially represent the Aboriginal Peoples of the province. For instance, the Aboriginal peoples of southern Labrador are transitioning from the title 'Metis' to the more accurate descriptor 'Southern Inuit.'
- Land acknowledgement in other areas of the country may use the term, 'unceded,' referring to the absence of a land surrender by original occupants. While 'unceded' is an apt qualifier that accurately describes some areas of the province, three out of five of the organizations that represent Aboriginal populations in the province have initiated land stewardship agreements with the provincial and federal governments. 'Unceded' is not used in this Land Acknowledgement, as it does not accurately describe the whole province.
- The phrase, "...and their ancestors..." is included in the land acknowledgement to reference the belief that incomers have arrived sequentially. Although the nature of the consolidation of one arrival to the next is not yet discernible, there is strong supporting evidence that suggests previous occupation by distinct populations. Whether people were absorbed through intermarriage, displaced, or they vacated beforehand, "...and their ancestor..." acknowledges the predecessors sometimes referred to as the Thule, Maritime Archaic, and "Palaeo-Eskimos."
- The Beothuk peoples are commonly believed to be extinct, however recent genetic marker testing in neighbouring populations may introduce new evidence into this dialogue. The Beothuk people are referenced in this acknowledgement given that much of the eastern portion of the Island part of the province was inhabited by Beothuk and that their tragic demise is a shared part of this province's recent history. This reference is meant to honor the spirit of their legacy, regardless of forthcoming evidences.