Report to:	Stratford Public Library Board
Meeting Date:	October 5, 2021
From:	Julia Merritt, CEO
Subject:	SPL Land Acknowledgment Draft

Why Make Land Acknowledgments:

A land acknowledgement statement is usually made at the beginning of a gathering or special event. The purpose is to acknowledge the host Indigenous nation(s) on whose territory people are gathering, as a sign of gratitude and respect. Acknowledging the traditional territories of host nations has been a practice common to many Indigenous nations for generations, but is new to many Canadians.

Protocols for Use at SPL:

Based on staff research, the following is recommended for SPL:

Who:
- Designated head of the meeting
- At formal events, this is the Board Chair, CEO or their next-available (Vice-Chair, Deputy CEO, etc)
- At programs, this is the SPL staff representative, or a board member (if available)

What:
- The full land acknowledgment statement should be read out loud for all attendees to hear
- The abbreviated land acknowledgment statements are for use in writing, when and as appropriate (such as email signatures). They should not be used to start any formal gathering.

Where:
- Board meetings, in person and online
- All-staff meetings, in person and online
- Any gathering event where the organizer believes it to be appropriate; including public programs or informal staff meetings. Staff and board members will need to exercise their own judgement and discretion.

When:

- At the beginning of the gathering, after calling the meeting to order/program to start but before any business is conducted

Some Guidance, from the City of Toronto, from a 2019 report (full report available if desired):

"[Land acknowledgements are] considered a first step, done to acknowledge and honour the First Peoples that have lived here for thousands of years, and the enduring presence of Indigenous Persons in the area for time immemorial.

When a land acknowledgement is being given, City of Toronto staff and partners will pause, be present, reflect, and consider how to impact change in their work. This can include conscious thought on our place here, these lands, and how colonization and the oppression of Indigenous persons has privileged some over others.

Indigenous people typically give thanks, appreciation, and respect for all in creation, including their ancestors, communities, other beings, clans, allied nations, and "mother earth" at the start of gatherings, ceremonies, and events. For settler Canadians moving toward implementing this teaching, it is also about public Acknowledgement of this respect towards and recognition of Indigenous peoples, practices, and ways of knowing.

Outcomes from Using this Document:
With the close of 2019 and into early 2020, City of Toronto staff and partners will:

- Hear a Land Acknowledgement 2 to 5 times in a month.
- City staff and partners will reflect on their relationship to these lands.
- Gain a better understanding of the treaties that cover Toronto.
- Have a greater understanding of the phrase "we are all treaty people".
- Understand the importance of honouring and giving respect to First Peoples, here with us today and their ancestors.
- Have a better sense of ways and practices to create good relationships and connections with various Indigenous communities.

Importance of Land Acknowledgements
Where did land Acknowledgements come from? Giving thanks, respect and honoring the land and ancestors was and continues to be a common practice within Indigenous communities. The process of showing appreciation and giving thanks has a long history on these lands.

As a member of Canadian society, we are all treaty people. Treaties are binding agreements to guide the relationships, with the settlement of "Canada". Treaties are the legal basis for acquiring land by settlers and they allowed for the settlement of Canada.

Treaties or agreements were the way of most Indigenous persons for thousands of years. Often this included exchanges of gifts and significant ceremony and spoken word and understanding of agreements. When settlers began to arrive, in order to maintain diplomatic relations, they needed to adopt and take up the culture, values, and practices of the people already living in what is now known as Canada.

The Toronto Public Service can incorporate Indigenous perspectives and ways of thinking, treating each individual with respect, while being mindful of the connections on this land. This will help ensure productive and positive relationships.

Land Acknowledgements are a small yet significant way to show respect and acknowledge the presence of Indigenous peoples past and present.

Ten Actions and Practices to Get You Started

The following section and "ten actions" are meant to build your practice and support you and your divisions work with Land Acknowledgements. Take these actions when you are preparing for and giving a Land Acknowledgement. These are based on the most frequently asked questions of staff and partners.

1. Take a moment to reflect on how you came to call Toronto and Canada home. Take time to think about how you/your family came to share in the life and prosperity of this land. Prior to giving your land Acknowledgement, you may want to start with a statement like, "Jane, second generation settler, of German descent…" If you were born in Canada or the U.S. consider searching the treaty and territorial Nations where you grew up. For example, "Donald, white settler, from Manitoulin Island and the Robinson Huron Treaty territory which includes the Ojibwa, Odawa, and Pottawatomi Nations, moved to this territory 15 years ago…"

2. Clear the room/space of distractions. This also gives those in the room a moment to come together and listen to your words. Ask people to put their phones on vibrate, and to mind the door for any late comers. This will help ensure those at the meeting or event are grounded, present and comfortable.

3. Take time to say the land Acknowledgement out loud. Practicing the Land Acknowledgement is especially important with some of the pronunciations that can be tricky if not previously spoken.

4. There are many times when saying a Land Acknowledgement is appropriate. While you don't have to say a Land Acknowledgement at every meeting, they can and should be conducted on a regular basis at both formal and informal meetings. For example at community meetings, City events, team meetings, etc.

5. Allocate time and presence on your agendas for the Land Acknowledgement and take it upon yourself to do it. Breathe, pause and take your time while saying the Land Acknowledgement. This also allows time for people to think more deeply.

6. Do not always ask your Indigenous colleagues and partners to do it**.** This is a practice best done by non-Indigenous people.

7. We all need to do Land Acknowledgements. The Mayor, Council, City Manager, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, have been clear that we are all to take part in this act of respect and first step towards reconciliation.

8. There is not a right or wrong way to providing a Land Acknowledgement. Try not to worry if you don't say it quite right. Showing vulnerability and a level of discomfort is an indicator of learning and good intentions and will be appreciated and understood by those you are meeting/gathering with.

9. Stand or sit while offering the Land Acknowledgement. Some events will necessitate standing; sitting will make sense at other events or meetings. Ensure you have announced that you are giving the land Acknowledgement, confirming those present are comfortable, present and able to connect with your words. Sitting or standing is good, as long as those present can connect with your words and reflect.

10.Research Treaty 13 and the Williams Treaties. Along with reading about these treaties, look at some of the other agreements and treaties for this area, The Dish with One Spoon, the War of 1812, and the Doctrine of Discovery. These formed the legal basis on which land was taken for the settlement of "Canada".”

Staff Recommendation

SPL staff recommend that the Board endorse this protocol for the use of its Land Acknowledgment.