

Indigenous land acknowledgments: opinions toward a practice unknown to many depends on context, place

Canadians divided on whether or not acknowledgements aid reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

September 9, 2019 – Do Canadians feel

Indigenous land acknowledgements are a valuable instrument towards reconciliation in this country? Opinion largely depends on who is doing the acknowledging, along with when and where they are doing it.

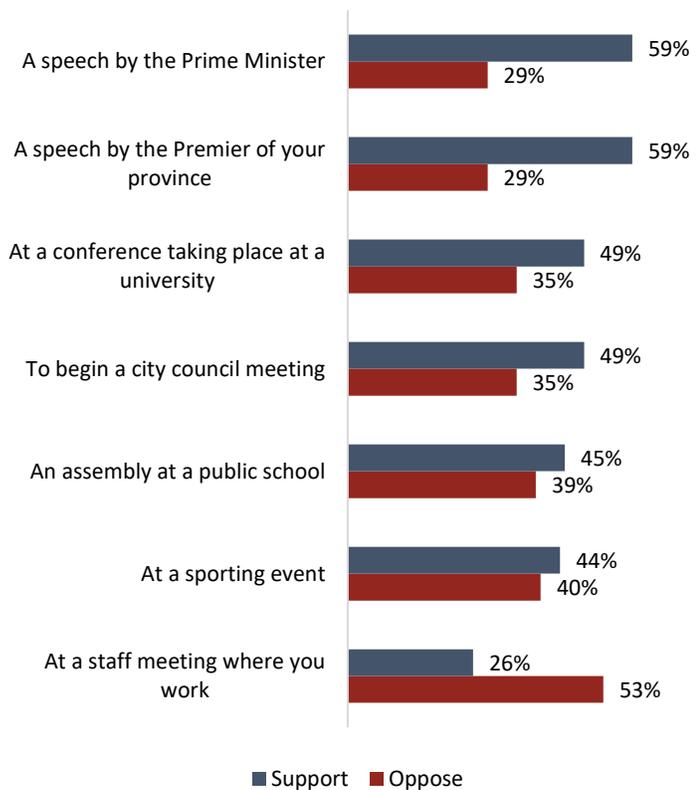
After being recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, the practice has [become more commonplace](#) in recent years.

That said, a significant segment of the population is unfamiliar with the custom wherein meetings, speeches, public gatherings or other occasions may begin by noting the event is taking place on the traditional territory of local Indigenous peoples.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds four-in-ten Canadians (39%) have heard such an acknowledgement at a public event, rising to majority levels in the four western provinces and dropping to just one-in-six in Quebec (17%).

Women appear more receptive toward this practice than men. More than half of men (53%) believe these types of acknowledgement do little to help reconciliation with Indigenous people, nearly twice the number (29%) who say they're actually quite meaningful. On the other hand, four-in-ten women (41%) believe land acknowledgements are a valuable part of reconciliation, slightly more than the proportion who disagree (35%), with a sizable group (24%) saying they remain unsure what effect the practice has.

Please tell us whether you support or oppose having an Indigenous land acknowledgement made at each of these venues or occasions: (All Respondents)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from August 1 – 6, 2019 among a representative randomized sample of 1,524 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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Context is important: six-in-ten say they support hearing a land acknowledgment from the Prime Minister (59%) or premier of their province (59%). Far fewer say they would like to hear them at sporting events (44%) or a staff meeting in their workplace (26%).

More Key Findings:

- More than one-in-three Canadians (36%) say that Indigenous land acknowledgements are a valuable part of reconciliation with Indigenous groups in Canada. A slightly larger group (44%) disagree, believing instead that they do little to advance reconciliation.
- Those with university education are considerably more likely (62%) to have heard an Indigenous land acknowledgement than Canadians with other educational backgrounds – college and technical school: 32 per cent, high school or less: 25 per cent
- A majority of residents in every region, at least 54 per cent, say they would support their premier making a land acknowledgment before public speeches

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Western provinces more familiar with land acknowledgements

While Indigenous land acknowledgements have become increasingly common at events across Canada, including [sessions of Parliament, city council meetings and National Hockey League \(NHL\) games](#), the practice is highly regionalized both in its prevalence and public perception.

Nationally, 37 per cent of Canadians say they are familiar with Indigenous land acknowledgements, with another one-in-four (24%) saying they are not very familiar with the practice but have heard of it. Four-in-

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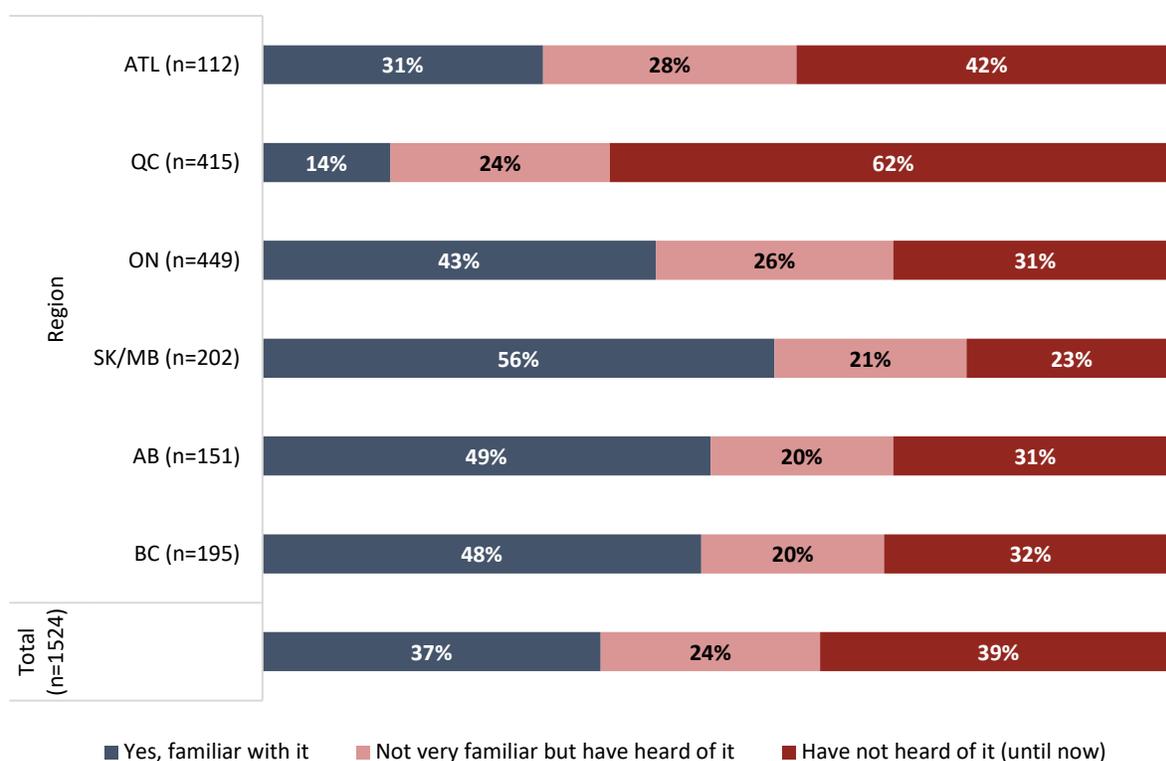
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ten (39%), meanwhile, appear unaware of such acknowledgements, saying they had not heard of them at all before this survey.

In Atlantic Canada and especially Quebec, relatively few people appear familiar with Indigenous land acknowledgements. In fact, a full majority (62%) of Quebecers polled said they had not even heard of the practice before responding to this [ARI survey](#).

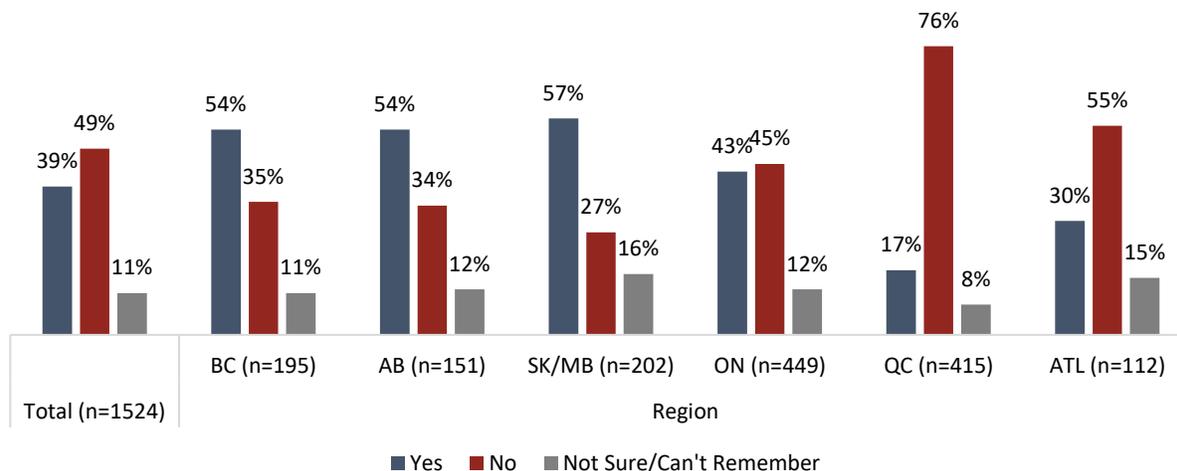
On the other hand, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan—the two provinces with, by far, the [highest proportion of Aboriginal](#) residents at 18 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively—more than three-quarters (77%) say they have at least heard of Indigenous land acknowledgements.

**Are you familiar with this practice of indigenous land acknowledgement?
(All Respondents)**



In addition to generally being more familiar with the practice than their eastern counterparts, residents of Western Canada are also more likely to say they've personally witnessed an Indigenous land acknowledgement at least once, with more than half of respondents in B.C. (54%), Alberta (54%) and the Prairies (57%) reporting this. It is a very different story east of Manitoba:

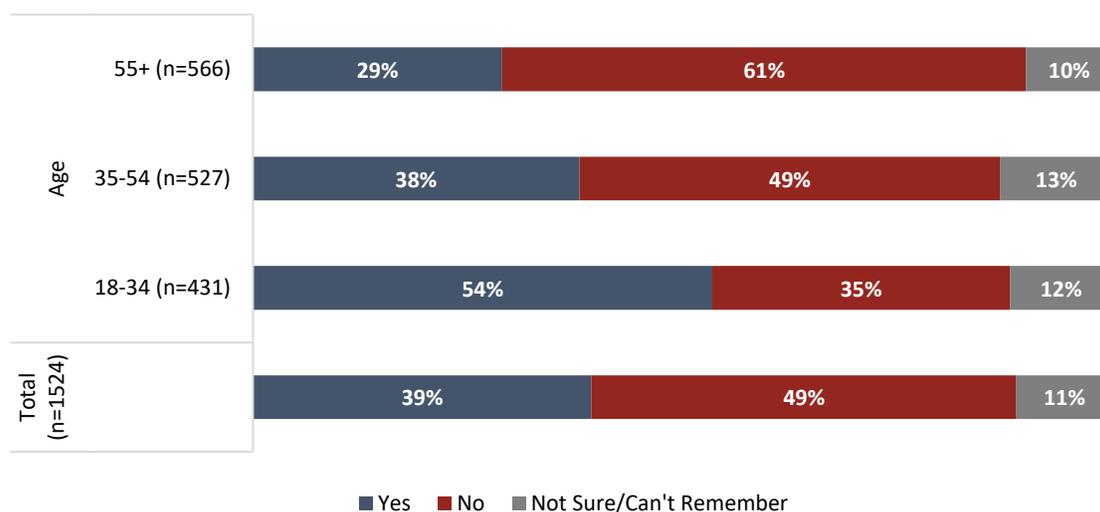
Have you ever heard an indigenous land acknowledgement at a public event you attended? (All Respondents)



Age, education drive opinion

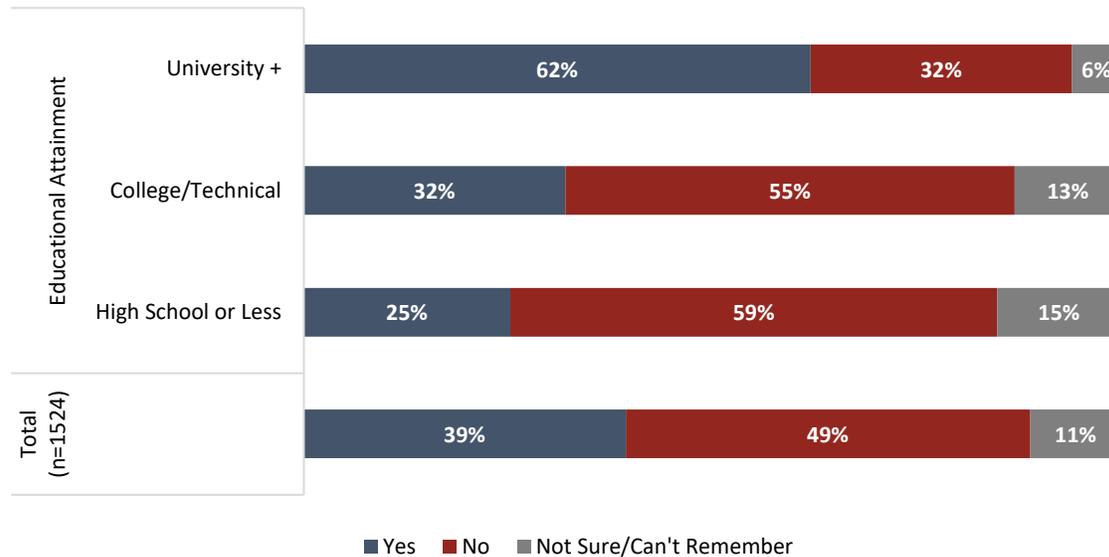
There is a considerable age divide driving familiarity with and opinion of the practice. 54 per cent of Canadians ages 18-34 say they have heard an Indigenous land acknowledgement at a public event they attended, nearly twice the proportion of those 55-and-older who say the same:

Have you ever heard an indigenous land acknowledgement at a public event you attended? (All Respondents)



Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the prevalence of Indigenous land acknowledgement protocols at [Canadian universities](#), those who have completed at least some university are at least twice as likely as those with a college, technical, or high school education to say they have personally heard such acknowledgements:

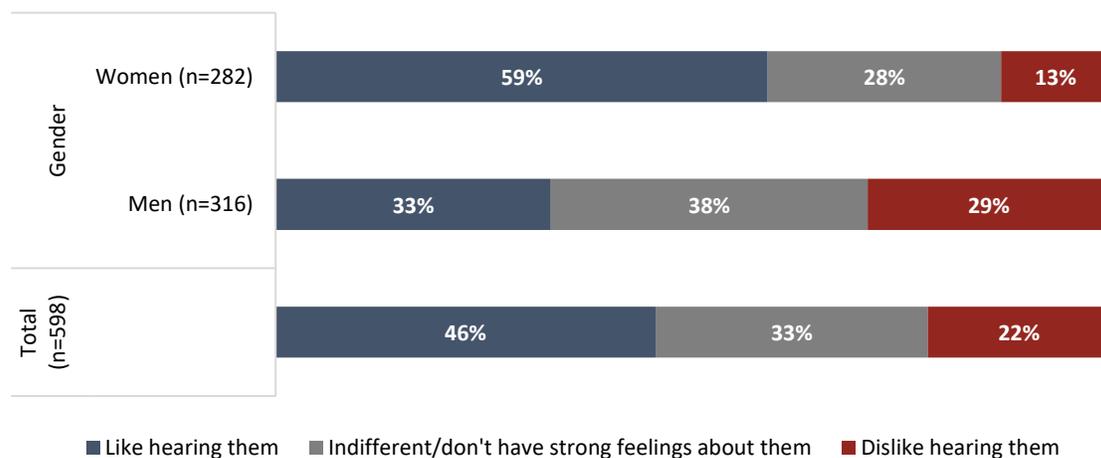
Have you ever heard an Indigenous land acknowledgement at a public event you attended? (All Respondents)



Public perception of land acknowledgements

Among those who have heard or seen an Indigenous land acknowledgement, nearly half say this is an experience they enjoy (46%) while one-in-five (22%) disagree. One-third (33%) of this group also say they are indifferent towards the practice and don't have strong feelings about it either way. Women are nearly twice as likely as men to say they like hearing such acknowledgements, with men divided close to evenly across all three options:

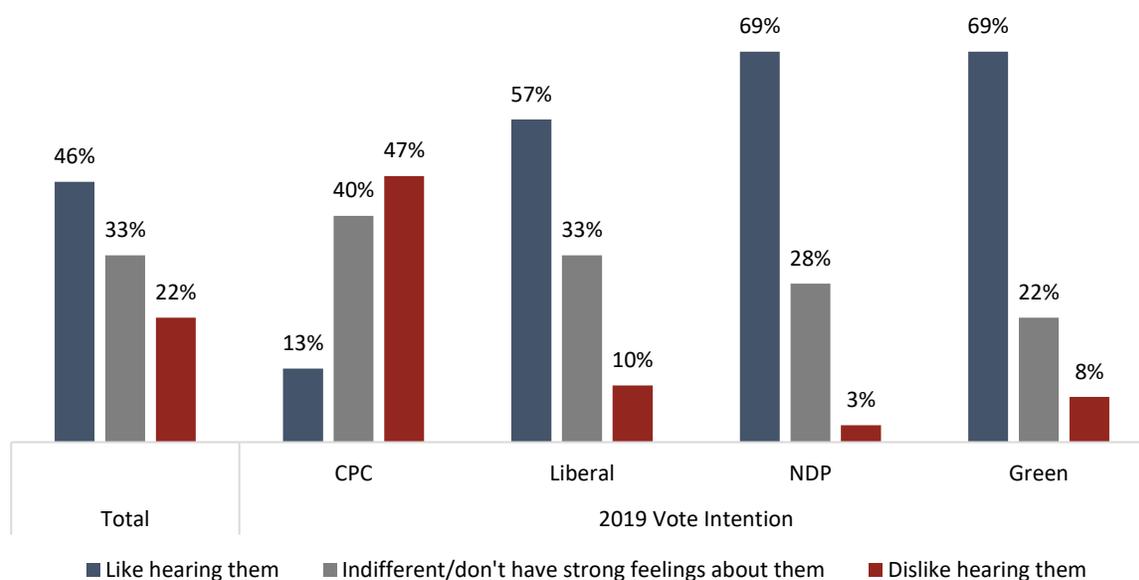
**Overall, how do you feel when you hear these land acknowledgements?
(Have heard an acknowledgement at public event, n=598)**



The political divide

Political preference is also a notable driver of opinion on this issue: whereas majorities of those planning to vote for the Liberals, New Democrats (NDP) or Greens in the upcoming federal election say they like hearing Indigenous land acknowledgements, just 13 per cent of Conservative supporters say the same. In fact, self-identified CPC voters are nearly four times more likely to actively *dislike* hearing such acknowledgements, though another four-in-ten (40%) from this group say they're indifferent.

Overall, how do you feel when you hear these land acknowledgements?



Context matters

Indigenous land acknowledgements in Canada today occur in a variety of public and, increasingly, private venues. Canadians' opinions of the practice often depend on the specific context in which it occurs. For example, six-in-ten support having an Indigenous land acknowledgement in a public speech by the Prime Minister of Canada or the premier of their province, but this figure drops significantly when the question turns to other venues like schools, city council meetings, sporting events and staff meetings:

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Would you support or oppose an indigenous land acknowledgement made at each of these venues or occasions? (All Respondents, n=1524)					
	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not Sure/Can't Say
A speech by the Prime Minister	30%	30%	13%	15%	12%
A speech by the Premier of your province	27%	32%	14%	15%	12%
To begin a city council meeting	20%	29%	19%	17%	16%
At a conference taking place at a university	20%	29%	18%	17%	16%
An assembly at a public school	18%	27%	20%	19%	16%
At a sporting event	18%	27%	22%	18%	15%
At a staff meeting where you work	9%	17%	28%	26%	20%

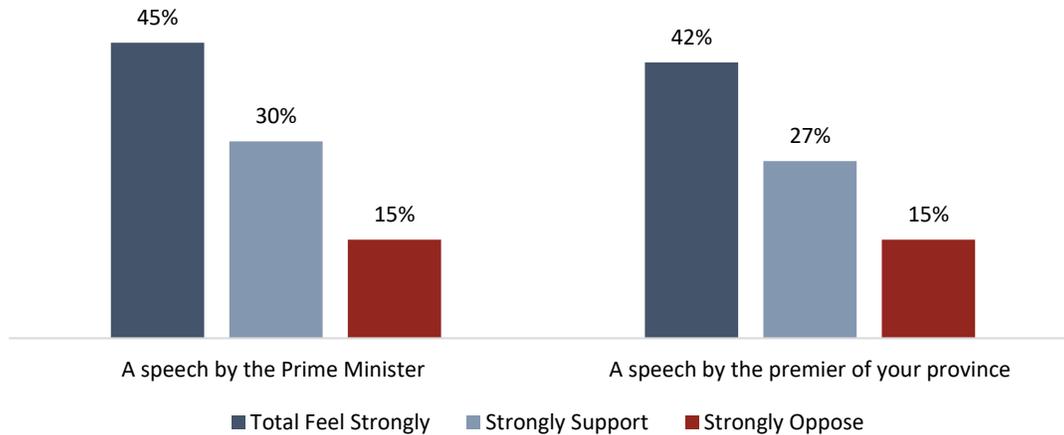
Notably, Canadians' opinions are quite nuanced across each of the individual scenarios offered, with most respondents expressing *at least* some degree of uncertainty about whether they'd support an Indigenous land acknowledgement taking place.

Fewer than half of respondents, in other words, feel strongly about the issue, regardless of the venue in question, with the Prime Minister and premier positions evoking the strongest reactions. In these cases, those who strongly support an Indigenous land acknowledgement taking place outnumber those who strongly oppose it by a two-to-one margin.

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Would you support or oppose an Indigenous land acknowledgement taking place at each of these venues or occasions? (All Respondents)

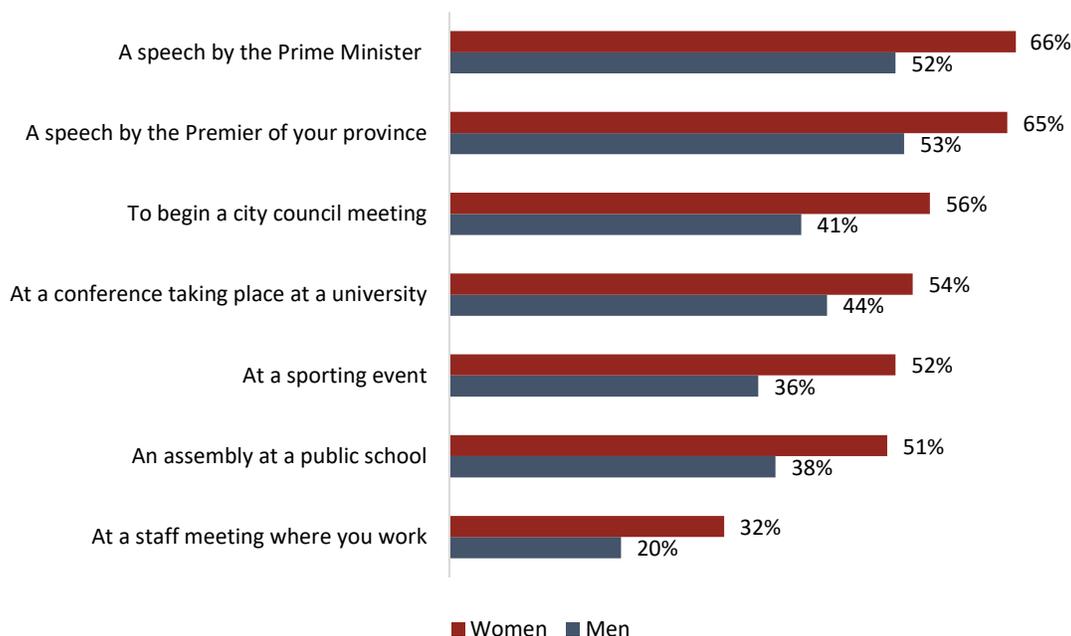


Within this group of respondents who *do* feel strongly, roughly equal numbers strongly support and strongly oppose a land acknowledgement taking place at a university conference, public school assembly, city council meeting or sporting event. Indeed, such venues have been sites of considerable controversy in recent years, with many questioning both the efficacy of the practice and its effects on open debate in educational settings.

Meanwhile, potential land acknowledgements at professional staff meetings garner little enthusiasm. Fewer than one-in-ten (9%) Canadians say they would strongly support a land acknowledgement taking place in this setting, three times fewer than the number who would strongly oppose it.

For every venue or occasion mentioned, women are more likely to say they would support an acknowledgement:

Percentage who would support an Indigenous land acknowledgement at each of these venues/occasions by gender (All Respondents)



In each province, a slight majority say their premier acknowledging the land is something they support, with a core group of three-in-ten disagreeing in most areas of the country:

Would you support or oppose an indigenous land acknowledgement made at a speech by the premier of your province? (All Respondents, n=1524)						
	BC (n=195)	AB (n=151)	SK/MB (n=202)	ON (n=449)	QC (n=415)	ATL (n=112)
Strongly Support	27%	28%	28%	28%	25%	25%
Support	33%	30%	26%	33%	32%	29%
Oppose	14%	19%	19%	13%	13%	15%
Strongly Oppose	18%	14%	16%	14%	14%	11%
Not Sure/Can't Say	8%	9%	11%	11%	15%	21%

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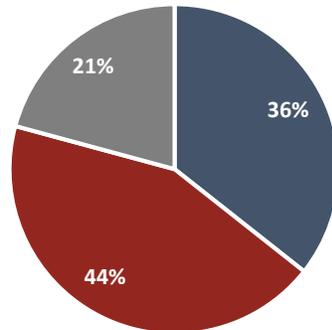
Finally, one’s personal familiarity with acknowledgements is strongly associated with their general feelings toward the practice. Those who have heard a land acknowledgement at a public event they attended—albeit a disproportionately younger, more educated group in and of themselves—are far more likely to say they support this practice than those who have no personal experience with it.

Would you support or oppose an indigenous land acknowledgement made at each of these venues or occasions?			
(% saying strongly support/support)			
	Total (1524)	Have you ever heard an indigenous land acknowledgement at a public event you attended?	
		Yes (n=598)	No (n=752)
A speech by the Prime Minister	59%	71%	51%
A speech by the Premier of your province	59%	71%	51%
To begin a city council meeting	49%	64%	38%
At a conference taking place at a university	49%	65%	38%
An assembly at a public school	45%	61%	33%
At a sporting event	44%	58%	35%
At a staff meeting where you work	26%	36%	19%

Valuable part of reconciliation or hollow practice?

Regardless of their level of familiarity or personal perception of Indigenous land acknowledgements, Canadians are divided on its larger social impact. A plurality (44%) say acknowledgements do little to help reconciliation with Indigenous people in Canada today, more than the roughly one-third (36%) who say they are a valuable part of reconciliation:

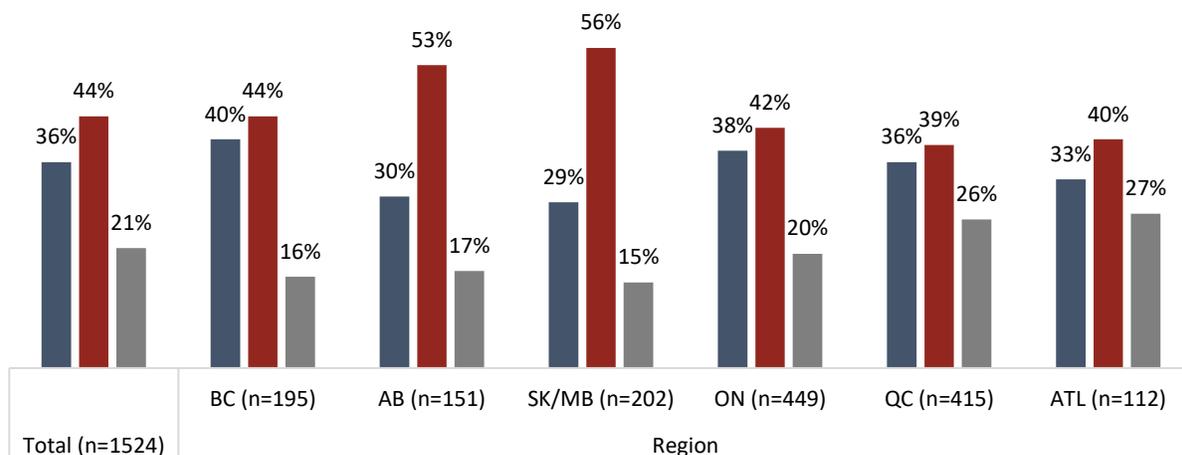
**Which of these statements is closer to your view?
(All respondents)**



- These types of acknowledgements are a valuable part of reconciliation with Indigenous people in Canada
- These types of acknowledgements do little to help with reconciliation with Indigenous people in Canada
- Not sure/Can't say

In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, provinces where residents appear more familiar with the practice than anywhere else in the country, more than half (56%) say these types of acknowledgements do little to help reconciliation with Indigenous people.

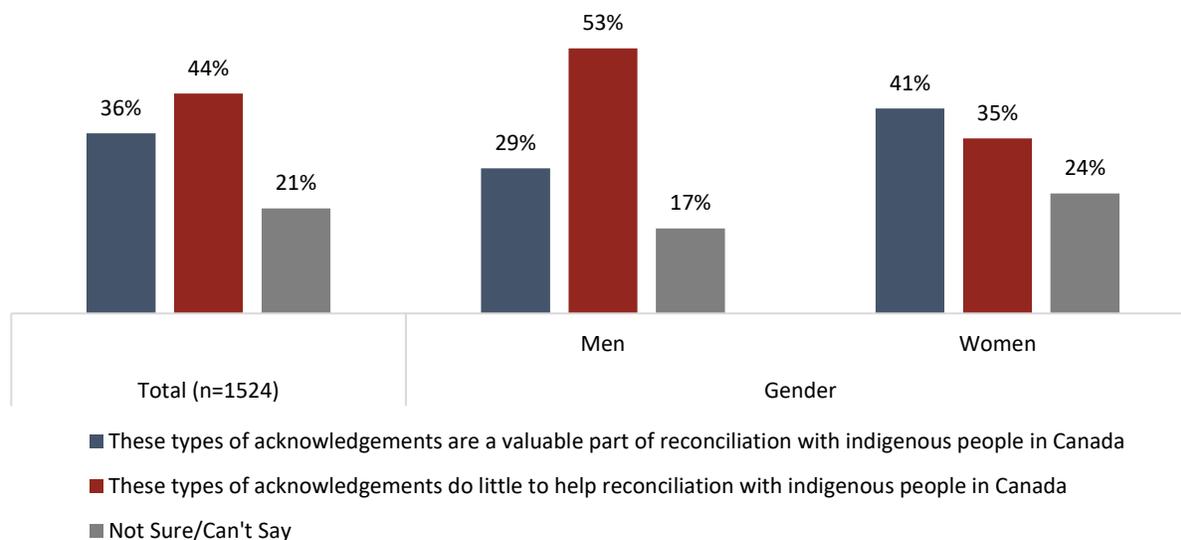
**Which of these statements is closer to your view?
(All Respondents)**



- These types of acknowledgements are a valuable part of reconciliation with indigenous people in Canada
- These types of acknowledgements do little to help reconciliation with indigenous people in Canada
- Not Sure/Can't Say

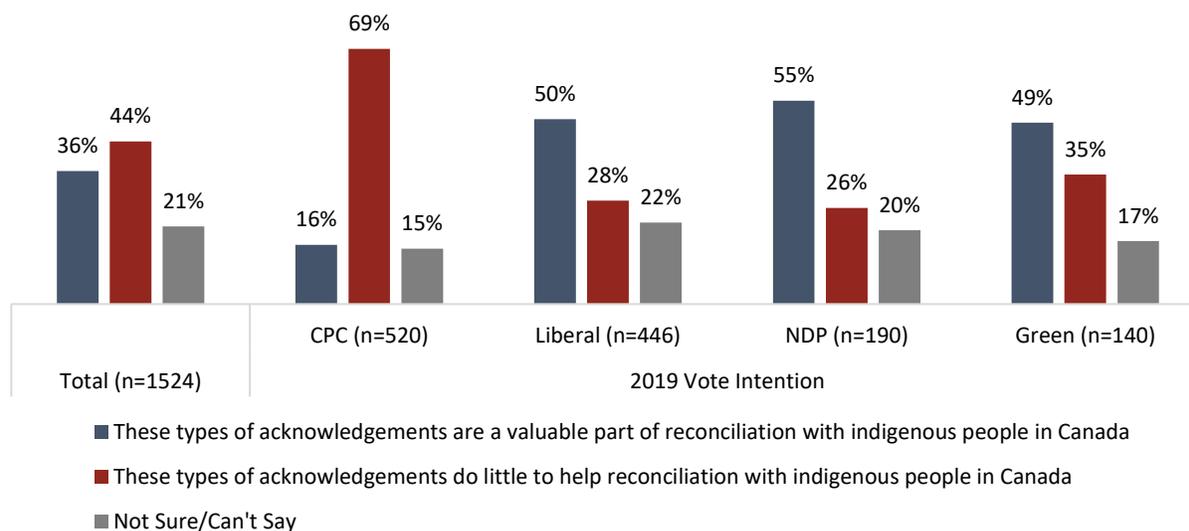
As with their overall impressions of Indigenous land acknowledgements, Canadian men and women diverge on the question of their social significance. Whereas four-in-ten (41%) women say these acknowledgements are a valuable part of reconciliation with Indigenous people, a slight majority (53%) of men say the opposite.

**Which of these statements is closer to your view?
(All Respondents)**



One group is unequivocal: seven-in-ten (69%) Conservative voters say acknowledgments do little to advance reconciliation, more than four times the number who believe they're a valuable practice. Those planning to vote for the Liberals, Greens or NDP, on the other hand, are more optimistic.

**Which of these statements is closer to your view?
(All Respondents)**



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, click [here](#).

For detailed results by federal vote intention, click [here](#).

For detailed results by level of familiarity with indigenous land acknowledgements, click [here](#).

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