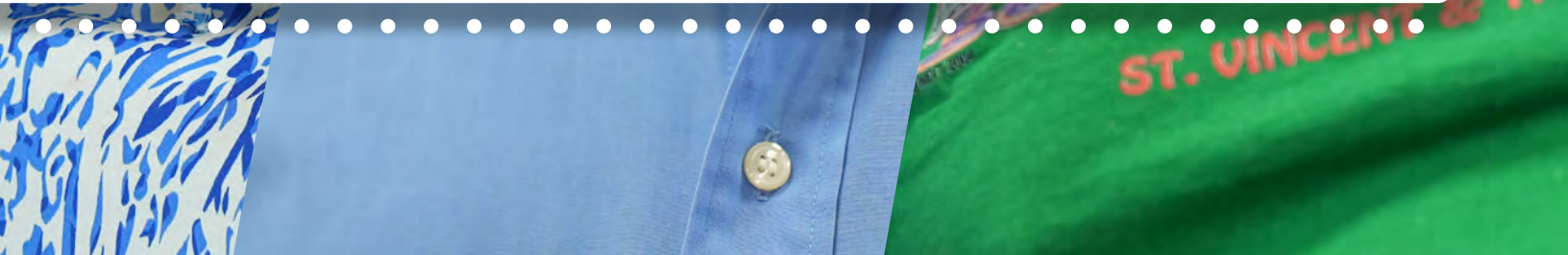


Toronto Seniors
Housing Corporation



Winter 2025

Seniors Speak



Seniors Speak Winter Issue



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Message from the CEO

Dear Tenants,

Welcome to the Winter edition of Seniors Speak. You will find in it all sorts of timely news and fun photos. Thank you to all the tenants who shared their stories and photos with us. You make every issue shine!

As I look back over the past year, it is clear that the Community Activities Fund was well used and really enjoyed. There were nearly 200 tenant volunteer-run events ranging from recreational to social gatherings, art classes, BBQs, and specialty meals. I also enjoyed meeting many of you during the CEO tours.



As we pause and mark Black History Month, you will read about a fellow tenant with a remarkable family story surviving the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. You will also meet an inspiring Canadian Olympian and another very giving tenant volunteer with a long history of helping others. We hope you enjoy getting to know them in this issue.

We will be continuing our Building Planning meetings through to March. The meetings give you the chance to provide your thoughts on what social and recreational activities you would like to host in your building. We will also begin providing new tenant volunteer training as part of the building meetings for interested volunteers.

The Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) had a successful year too. We are currently recruiting STAC members as we hope to increase the number of STAC tenant volunteers to six in each region.

Please stay safe, stay warm, and take good care this winter!



Tom Hunter
Chief Executive Officer



A century of family love, strength, and determination

Black History Month is a time to celebrate the contributions and lives of Black Canadians and a time to remember. In the 1800s more than 30,000 slaves escaped to Canada through the Underground Railroad – a secret organization of people who helped Black freedom seekers. In Canada, the Act to Limit Slavery of 1793 meant that a Black person, who crossed the border independently, became free. More than 3,000 Black Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia, the last stop on the Underground Railroad.

This is where Dorothy Sharp's story begins. Her grandparents were enslaved and escaped from Maryland, in the United States, to Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Her family history is one of strength and resilience. "My grandparents risked their lives," she says. "They told stories of unimaginable hardship to survive but they shared them with gratitude. What they did to seek a better life was inspirational. I live my life by this example."

Dorothy continues to live in the neighbourhood that she grew up in but one that has changed much over the years. Back then, people travelled by horse and carriage. The iceman travelled along dirt roads to deliver blocks of ice for the ice box.



She was born in 1926, just before the Great Depression. Her family struggled, like thousands of others, but they always had hope and a willingness to work hard. “Everyone in the neighbourhood helped each other. My dad would fix fences. The Italian neighbour made soups and someone else had fruit trees, so they shared the fruit,” she says.

“I have lived through births, deaths, happiness, and sadness. It is all a part of life.”

But segregation was real and harsh. They were one of only a few families of colour for miles. One other family was that of classmate Lincoln Alexander, the first Black Canadian member of Parliament and the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. They remained friends throughout their lives.

Dorothy, and her husband Wally, were happily married for 63 years and raised five children. He sadly passed away in 2009. “At 98, I have lived through births, deaths, happiness, and sadness.

It is all a part of life. Mine was focused on family. We came together at the dinner table. No cell phones back then,” she comments.

For Dorothy Sharp, Black History Month is not just something you read about in a book. For her, it is her family legacy.

“And no matter what, I plan to go out smiling!” she happily shares.





The Building Planning meetings continue

The Building Planning meetings for Community Connect+ will continue throughout February to March. This is the opportunity for you, and other tenants in your building, to come forward with your requests for activities and events for 2025 and to express your interest in volunteering. Staff will provide an update on the programs and services you requested last year and information on the Community Activities Fund (CAF), including the 2024 spending for your building.

CAF and tenant volunteer-run events were a huge success!

As the numbers tell us, last year's CAF was well enjoyed, and well used, by all. There were a variety of events like photography, craft and beading classes, lots of BBQs, and community meals. There were nearly 200 tenant-run events last year with 60 events ending off the winter season.

Upcoming new learning and development sessions for Tenant Volunteers

Three new learning sessions are being developed for the Community Activities Fund (CAF), the Tenant Code of Conduct, and Community Connect+.

Community Services Coordinators (CSCs) will set up learning sessions on how to complete a CAF application as part of the Building Planning meetings which continue through March. The other sessions include Understanding the Tenant Code of Conduct and Learning More About Community Connect+. These will be available this spring through your CSC.

STAC recruitment update

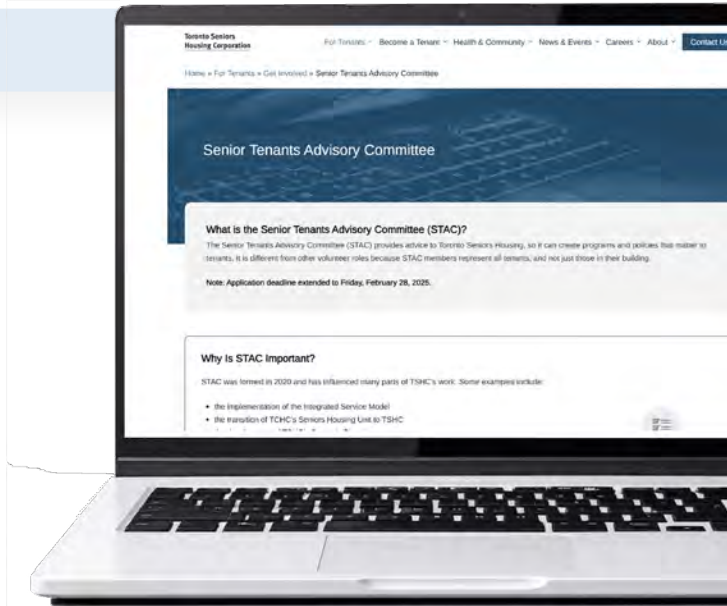
If you are looking to be more involved, the Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) is a wonderful opportunity to provide feedback as a tenant volunteer on a wide range of important issues. We are currently recruiting volunteers to join STAC. We will be accepting applications until **4 p.m. on Friday, February 28.**

STAC had many accomplishments in 2024. The tenants on this committee had their say on the CAF, the Community Use of Space Policy, the Tenant Complaint and Human Rights Policy, as well as the Translation and Interpretation Policy consultations.

STAC informed many programs including the Tenant Experience Survey, the summer BBQs, and planning for winter events. This also includes the recent STAC recruitment. STAC members shared their thoughts on how to apply for the use of entertainers at tenant events, and the Tenant Volunteer Code of Conduct.

Overall, STAC helped with quality improvement projects like Community Connect+, Seniors Month, Seniors Day, Seniors Speak newsletter and influenced the City's ConveneTO and the Renter's Forum.

We encourage everyone interested to apply. For more information, go to TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/STAC or speak with your Seniors Services Coordinator.



Use of Community Space Policy now in effect!



The Use of Community Space Policy is in use as of January. The Policy was created to help tenants and staff understand the conditions for using community spaces. The policy was based on tenant ideas. All programs and activities must benefit tenants and align with Toronto Seniors Housing policies.

Through this Policy, the process for tenant-led programming and events has been simplified with new forms and booking processes.

The new Policy will provide all tenants with fair access to book the available community rooms and shared spaces in their buildings.

This Policy and supporting Guidelines explain how a tenant may book the room for casual or private use or if tenants would like to run a recurring program, like a movie night. Casual use means that all tenants may join in. Private use is for something that is by invitation only, like a family birthday party.

As a result of tenant feedback, this Policy now includes agency-run repeated programming and events, but this must be for all tenants.



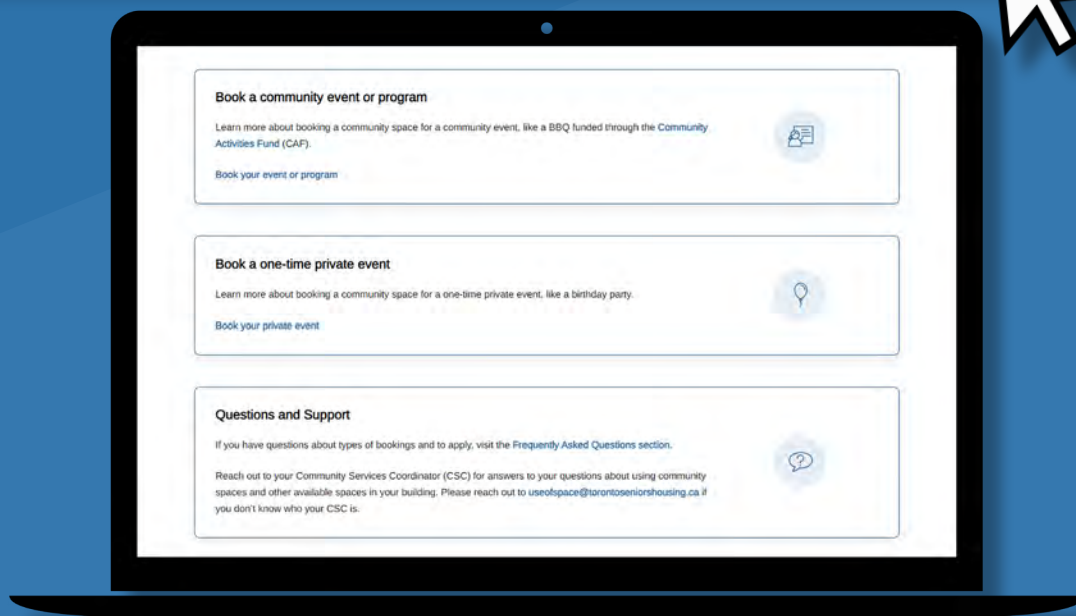
All bookings are based on a “first come, first served” basis. This means that the first tenant or agency that books the community room will have the room booked.

The Use of Community Space Guidelines are also based on tenant feedback.

Anyone using the community space must comply with all rules and laws regarding public conduct and safety. While pets are allowed in community spaces, owners must care for, and clean up after, their pets. As before, tenants and agencies are expected to clean up after themselves and leave the space as they find it.

You can get the booking forms on the website:

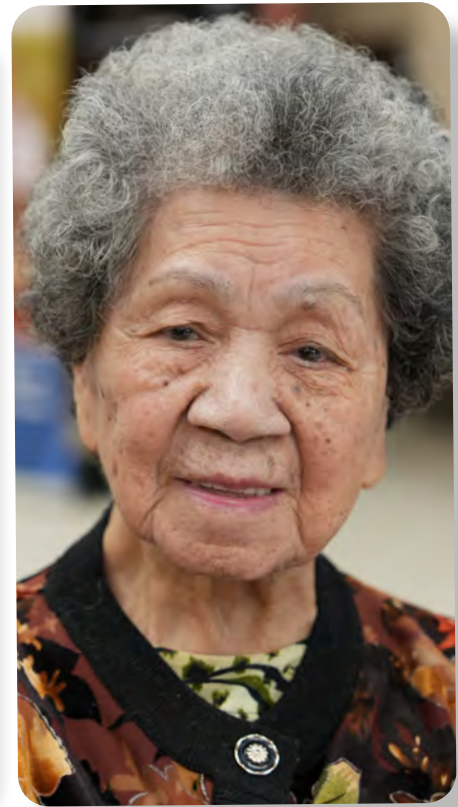
[TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Book-A-Space](https://torontoseniorshousing.ca/Book-A-Space)



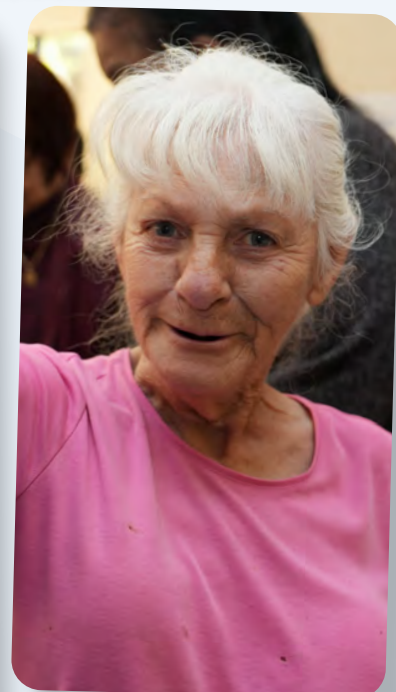
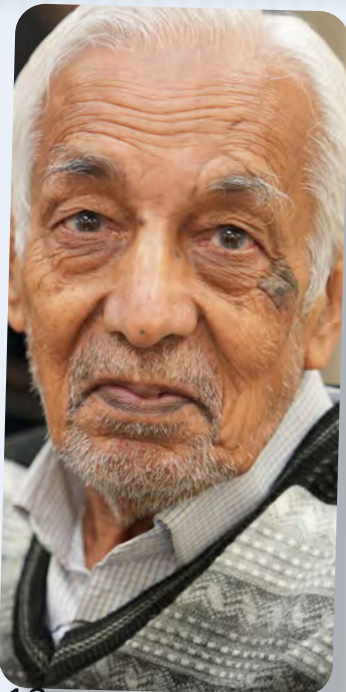
Should you need help with the form, please reach out to your Community Services Coordinator or email:

UseOfSpace@TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca

We want everyone to be able to use the community rooms and shared spaces fairly in their buildings. **They are there for all to enjoy!**



Your community at a glance!





Doing it “my way” all the way to gold



When you first meet Laura Misciagna, you will notice her easy smile. Quietly underneath though is a foundation of strength. As she has cerebral palsy, her life story is one of inspiration, hard work and dedication.

Laura trained for years, putting in long days on the track and in the weight room. After intense training, she brought home to Canada three gold and a bronze medal from the 1988 Seoul Paralympics.

As the 1950s American singer Frank Sinatra once sang, she did it “my way.”

“I raced backwards in my wheelchair. That’s my unique racing style,” she shares. “It is tricky to do this. I had to turn my head around a lot during the race to make sure I did not go outside the lines. If I did, they would disqualify me.”





“I trained really hard and stayed focused on my goal. That’s what you need to do in sports, and in life,”

Laura’s determination never stopped. She raced in the 100, 200, 400, and 800 metre races. She was so fast that the paralympic committee had to eliminate one of her races as she had no competitors. That is how she ended up winning a bronze medal instead of gold. The organizers put her in a new, co-ed relay

race with athletes she had not practiced or competed with before the race. Despite it all, she still managed to win a medal.

Overcoming this challenge was just another step towards Laura’s successful athletic career. “To win the 800-metre race, I practiced racing 1,000 metres,” she comments. “This way I figured the 800-metre race would be easy for me. I trained really hard and stayed focused on my goal. That’s what you need to do in sports, and in life,” Laura shares proudly.

Like the song goes, in sports and in life, as Laura says, she truly did it “my way!”

Grand opening of accessible community spaces



Did you know that the Responsible Personal Accessibility in Toronto Housing (R-PATH) Committee works with Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC) on community accessibility projects?

These are called, “common space projects.” They affect spaces used by all the tenants in the community like the community room, laundry room, lobby, and more.

A common space project starts with a visit to the community by R-PATH and staff from the Design and Engineering department of TCHC. Together, they look at what changes are needed to make areas more accessible and easier to use. This is called a “scope.”

R-PATH and staff also meet with tenants for your feedback on the project. We ask how your community functions in the current space, what is missing, and how you would like to use the space.

In the fall of 2024, two communities had projects completed.

At 2950 Lawrence Avenue East, tenants saw upgrades to the:

- community room
- exercise space
- billiard room
- laundry room
- office
- Seniors Services Coordinator (SSC) office
- lobby



Tenants were happy to learn there will be a Phase 2. This will extend the covering of the building's front steps.

At 2008 Pharmacy Avenue, the community room is now more functional and useable. The upgrades are:

- a larger kitchen
- the removal of a stage to give more floor space
- an upgraded courtyard
- the superintendent's office is now more accessible

Tenants were told that bike storage will be built after approval by the City of Toronto.

TSHC hosted grand opening events at both locations.

R-PATH with TSHC and TCHC look forward to completing more common space projects.



Volunteering by the numbers



For Suran Selladurai, he is grateful for his good fortune of moving to Canada nearly four decades ago.

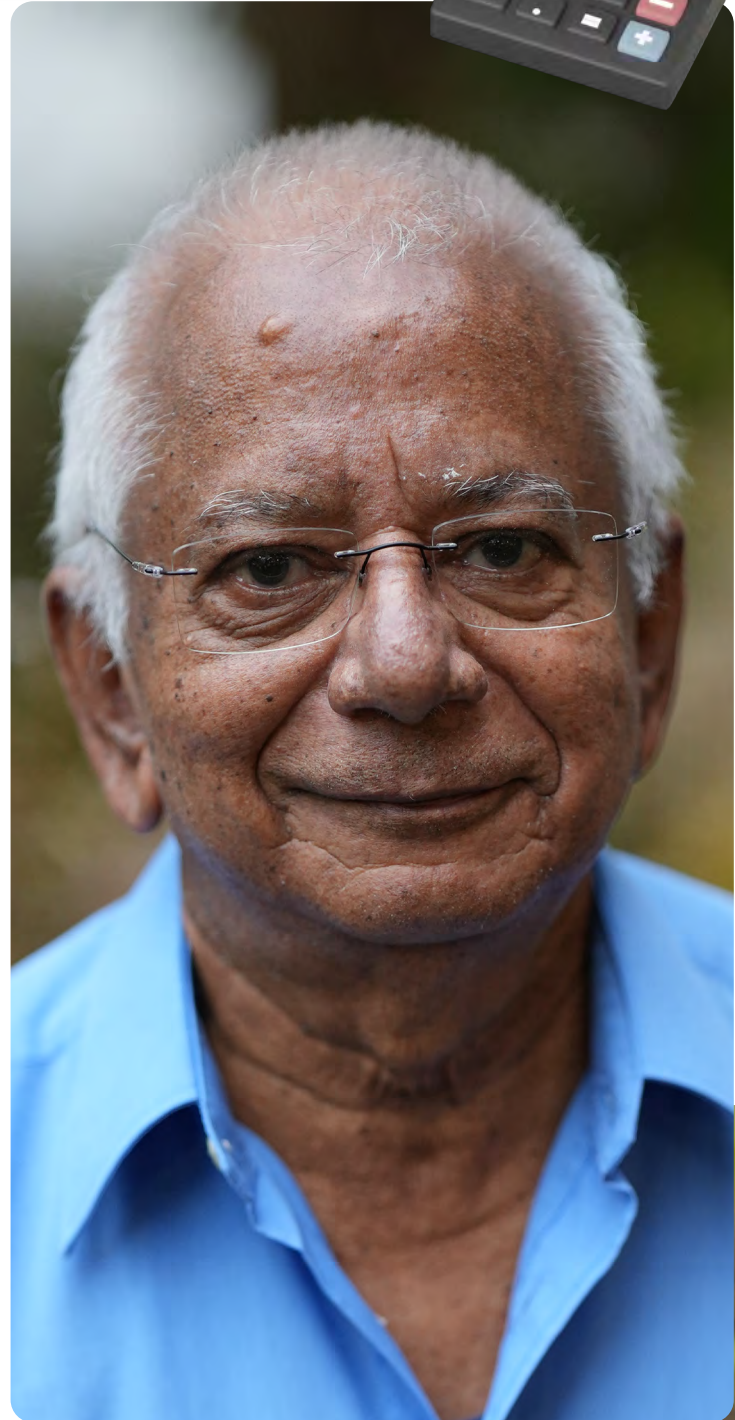
When he stepped off that plane from his homeland Sri Lanka, he counted himself lucky. He was born with a last name that was on the wrong side of the civil war, as it sounded like he was Tamil. His brother was killed, and he narrowly escaped the same fate.

But his journey to today's happy life was not easy as he found it hard to get work at first. He says what helped him was that Toronto was a multicultural city.

"I know how to work hard. Back home, I worked for a company that sent me to Japan," says Suran. "In five weeks, I not only learned the language but was promoted!"

Grateful for the opportunities

Canada gave him, Suran showed his gratitude for living in Canada by volunteering with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) tax return program a few years ago. "For me, the numbers are easy," Suran notes. "What was unbelievable is that I did returns during the pandemic for nearly 500 people and for 150 of them, we had never met."



He now continues his volunteering journey with the Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC). “With STAC, I’m helping all my neighbours. It’s big picture thinking,” Suran shares warmly. Suran takes his role very seriously but loves it. He also enjoys meeting tenants from all the other buildings. “It’s really important that our opinions be heard. Decisions that are made for us need to include us in the discussion.”

For Suran, volunteering has evolved from working with numbers to engaging in meaningful conversations. He believes the discussions he participates in with STAC ultimately lead to a better quality of life for his neighbours.

And as he sees it, a better quality of life was what he was seeking when he first stepped off that plane, so many years ago.

“With STAC,
I’m helping all
my neighbours.

It’s big picture
thinking,”



Community information



New seniors support - Toronto Community Crisis Service

There is now new mental health support for seniors. Call 211 to reach Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS). They provide free, confidential, in-person support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through their mobile teams. It is not a police call. The team will connect you to services and resources. To learn more, call 211 directly or go to: toronto.ca/CrisisService



Seniors' services and programs



For information on services like managing your health, recreation, and more, call 311 or go to: toronto.ca/seniors

Your Seniors Services Coordinator also has a copy of the Directory of Services for Seniors and Caregivers in their office. This can also be found online at: bit.ly/4hrtH8k

Toronto Public Health providing opioid overdose kits



Tenants requested information about how to get naloxone kits. Naloxone is a medication that can rapidly reverse an opioid overdose.

Toronto Public Health (TPH) offers a take home naloxone program for clients and their friends/family. Go to: bit.ly/4jxnfOM

Your local pharmacy may provide naloxone kits. Information, as well as where you can get a free kit, is available here: bit.ly/3QGnWst

Remember to do your taxes



Anyone receiving rent-geared-to-income (RGI) must file a tax return every year. The tax filing deadline for your 2024 tax return is Wednesday, April 30, 2025.

We recommend tenants seek advice from a tax professional. For more information, go to: bit.ly/4gkS9HG



Seniors Speak is available in many languages

Call **416-945-0800** to request this document in an alternate language or format.

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Stay connected! 



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Want to be featured in an upcoming newsletter? Prefer to get Seniors Speak in your email inbox? Contact us at SeniorsSpeak@TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca.

Get in touch

You can call these numbers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or reach us via email at Support@TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca.

Tenant Support Centre: 416-945-0800

Community Safety Unit: 416-921-2323

Crime Stoppers: 416-222-8477

Acknowledgements

Toronto Seniors Housing values the diversity of our city and the tenants we support. We also acknowledge the history, both positive and negative, that has led to this rich variety of people living together in Toronto.

Please visit TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Acknowledgements/ for Toronto Seniors Housing's Land and African Ancestral Acknowledgements.