

Territory Acknowledgements

Thanks to Nativeland.ca & Allison Jones for the resources and Talitha Tolles for putting this worksheet together.

Why do a Territory Acknowledgement?

Territory acknowledgement is a way that people insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. This is often done at the beginning of ceremonies, lectures or any public event. It can be a subtle way to recognize the history of colonialism and a need for change in settler colonial societies.

However, these acknowledgements can easily be a token gesture rather than a meaningful practice. All settlers, including recent arrivants, have a responsibility to consider what it means to acknowledge the history and legacy of colonialism. What are some of the privileges settlers enjoy today because of colonialism? How can individuals develop relationships with peoples whose territory they are living on in the contemporary Canadian geopolitical landscape? What are you, or your organization, doing beyond acknowledging the territory where you live, work, or hold your events? What might you be doing that perpetuates settler colonial futurity rather than considering alternative ways forward for Canada? Do you have an understanding of the on-going violence and the trauma that is part of the structure of colonialism?

"If we think of territorial acknowledgements as sites of potential disruption, they can be transformative acts that to some extent undo Indigenous erasure. I believe this is true as long as these acknowledgements discomfit both those speaking and hearing the words. The fact of Indigenous presence should force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands."

- Chelsea Vowel, Metis,
Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements

How to Acknowledge Territory?

- Respectfully asking someone from that Nation or from a local organization such as a Friendship Center or Indigenous Student Center;
- Check the Nation's website, they may have a phonetic pronunciation on their "About:" page, an audio-recording of their name, or videos that include people saying the Nation's name; or
- Call the Nation after hours and listen to their answering machine recording.

To thoughtfully prepare an in-depth acknowledgment requires time and care. You may find it helpful to reflect on and research questions such as:

- Why is this acknowledgement happening?
- How does this acknowledgement relate to the event or work you are doing?
- What is the history of this territory? What are the impacts of colonialism here?
- What is your relationship to this territory? How did you come to be here?
- What intentions do you have to disrupt and dismantle colonialism beyond this territory acknowledgement?

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Questions to be asking before I do a Territory Acknowledgement:

- Where is the closest Nation?
- Where is the closest Friendship Center
- Where is the closest Indigenous Student Center?
- Do I know the correct pronunciation and spelling of the Nation's name?
If so, what is it/ what are they?
- Why is this Acknowledgement happening?

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- What are the impacts of colonialism here?
- What is your relationship to this territory? How did you come to be here?
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