

## How to...

# Acknowledge Indigenous territory

### Purpose

This guide was developed primarily for settler-run Future Ground Network groups that gather on Indigenous land and territory on Turtle Island (Canada). The guide provides some background and recommendations to help local groups meaningfully recognize Indigenous sovereignty and begin to educate their members and supporters by giving land acknowledgements at meetings and events.

This guide was adapted from <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/>, Climate Justice Toronto's land-story practices, and with [reference to other resources and critiques developed by Indigenous authors and educators](#).

### Making meaningful acknowledgements

To thoughtfully prepare an in-depth acknowledgement requires time and care. Here are two models for meaningful acknowledgement:

1. Pair each spoken acknowledgement you give with a concrete action in solidarity with an Indigenous community near you. Questions to consider:
  - a. Is there an ongoing struggle by Indigenous land defenders or water protectors near you (e.g., Free Grassy Narrows, Stop Alton Gas, Unist'ot'en Camp)? What support can you offer (e.g., share what's happening as well as any demands or calls for support that the organizers have made; pass around a hat to collect donations)?
  - b. Read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. Did any stand out to you? Are there ways you can take part in implementing them?
  - c. Is there a local initiative focused on redistributing land and/or resources back to Indigenous Peoples? What can you do to promote it?

2. Develop a longer "land story" to address your personal relationship to colonialism through family history.

Questions to consider:

- a. What stories were you told about this land growing up (from school, at home, during immigration processes etc.)? Consider the erasure of stories concerning displacement, dispossession, and enslavement of Black and Indigenous communities.
- b. How have your ancestors' relationships to this land – or to legacies of colonialism or imperialism elsewhere in the world – opened up or shut out your access to land, wealth or power today? Do you or your family own property or land?
- c. What are some of the privileges you experience today as a result of historical and ongoing colonial violence?
- d. What are you, or your organization, doing in your work that might be perpetuating colonial attitudes or practices?
- e. Conversely, what are you doing to disrupt colonialism and support Indigenous Peoples' future on this land?

## Why give a land acknowledgement?

Territory acknowledgement is a way to foster understanding of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. Spoken acknowledgements are often given at the beginning of ceremonies, lectures and public events.

However, these acknowledgements can easily be a token gesture rather than a meaningful practice. All settlers, including recent arrivals, have a responsibility to consider what it means to acknowledge the history and legacy of colonialism:

- What are some examples of privilege settlers experience today because of colonialism?
- How can individuals develop reciprocal, non-extractive relationships with peoples whose territory they are living on in the contemporary Canadian geopolitical landscape?
- What are you or your group doing beyond acknowledging the territory where you live, work and hold your events?

- What might you be doing that perpetuates settler colonialism rather than considering alternative ways forward? Do you have an understanding of the ongoing violence and trauma that are part of colonialism's structure?

**Note:** It's important for the person giving the acknowledgement to remain conscious and committed to making it about the place and its people and not about the speaker's sensibilities and emotions.

## Providing some history

In its most basic form, a territorial acknowledgement should acknowledge the people, their sovereignty and stewardship, history and land that was stolen. You could also include information about treaties or agreements. This is a great learning opportunity for the person acknowledging as well as for the people listening. Do your research to make sure this information is accurate.

### Learning more about land acknowledgements

- [Are you planning to do a Land Acknowledgement?](#) Debbie Reese for American Indians in Children's Literature, March 9, 2019
- ['I regret it': Hayden King on writing Ryerson University's territorial acknowledgement](#) Unreserved, CBC January 20, 2019
- [Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements](#) Chelsea Vowel, September 23, 2016
- [What is the significance of acknowledging the Indigenous land we stand on?](#) (CBC) Ramna Shahzad, July 15, 2017

You can search <https://native-land.ca> confirm which nations' land you're on. It's good practice to contact the nations you get in your results to learn more about how they want to be

acknowledged, how to pronounce their name and if there are any other nations or peoples that should be acknowledged.