

Territorial Acknowledgements

Shady treaty negotiations, starvation, violence and outright land theft mean that Canada's Indigenous peoples today occupy less than one-half of one percent (0.005%) of the land south of the 60th parallel.

To recognize this troubled past and express a desire to establish new relationships with Indigenous peoples, many organizations now start meetings, conferences and other events with a territorial acknowledgement, naming the Indigenous peoples on whose land they now live and work.

With a little research to fill in the blanks, your local can use this template for its own territorial acknowledgement:

"I wish to acknowledge this land on which our Local operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional territory of the _____. Today, this place is still home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land."

To find out which nations and treaties connect to your location, go to

native-land.ca. Simply enter the address of your workplace or local union office, and the interactive map shows you the names of nations, any applicable treaties, and the Indigenous languages traditionally spoken on that land.

If you are not sure how to pronounce a nation's name, you can:

- Respectfully ask someone from that nation or from a local organization such as a Friendship Center or Indigenous Student Center
- Check the nation's website, where 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
- Google "how to pronounce [name of nation]?"

Some locals may wish to add more to their acknowledgements. To thoughtfully prepare an in-depth acknowledgement requires time and thought. With leaders and activists, think about and discuss questions such as:

- Why are we doing this acknowledgement?
- How does this acknowledgement relate to the event or work we are doing?
- What are the impacts of colonialism in this territory?
- What is our relationship to this territory? How did we come to be here?
- What do we plan to do to dismantle colonialism, besides this acknowledgement?

Territorial acknowledgements can easily be a token gesture rather than a meaningful practice, unless they are part of a larger plan of action to take responsibility for our history and the legacy of colonialism.

(From USW's course: Unionism on Turtle Island. Includes text and ideas from native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/)