

Statement on Land Acknowledgements

Our nation is receiving a growing number of requests for territorial land acknowledgements. A land acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and names the Indigenous stewards of a specific territory. Land acknowledgements serve many purposes, including showing gratitude to Indigenous peoples or disrupting European-centric narratives. We are glad that residents of our territory are increasingly interested in the past and current relationship we have with our aki (land).

At the same time, land acknowledgements are complicated for Indigenous nations. The area that is now known as southern Ontario has been and continues to be the home of many Indigenous nations. A land acknowledgement from the perspective of one community may inadvertently silence or misrepresent the history of another. The configuration of Indigenous peoples who have lived with and cared for this land has shifted over time and may be difficult to pinpoint today. On the other hand, naming every possible Indigenous nation in an area as though their relationship to the land is the same can be harmful as we have different treaties, cultures and histories.

Land acknowledgements can also feel empty if they are not accompanied by action or relationship building. What does a land acknowledgement call on non-Indigenous peoples to do? What does it mean to live on Indigenous land today?

Before contacting us for input on a land acknowledgement, please consider if you can find the information you need through your own research, or if you plan to deepen that acknowledgement through relationship-building or collaboration with our nation. It takes significant time and effort for COTTEN staff to respond to one-off requests.

Rather than providing a land acknowledgement, we invite you to explore the links below on land acknowledgements and the Treaty information found here on our website. We will add more on the pre-Confederation Treaties as we develop the materials.

Chelsea Vowel (Métis) – “Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements” (2016)
<https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>

Hayden King (Anishinaabe) – “I regret it’: Hayden King on writing Ryerson University’s territorial acknowledgement” on CBC (2019)
<https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.4973371>

Laurier Students’ Public Interest Research Group – “Know the Land Territories Campaign”
<http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland/>

Native Land – mapping resource and article on acknowledgements
<https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/>

(Approved on July 4, 2019 by the Treaties, Lands and Environment Committee)