

# AVOIDING WORKPLACE TOKENISM



Indigenous  
Works

Tokenism refers to the practice of including a small number of members from an underrepresented group in order to give the appearance of diversity or inclusivity, while not genuinely addressing the broader issues of inequality and discrimination faced by that group.

Due to the typically limited representation of Indigenous individuals within non-Indigenous organizations, they are frequently called upon to offer insights on Indigenous issues that fall outside their primary job responsibilities. Furthermore, while some organizations have initiated the hiring of Indigenous relations roles, it's essential to recognize that no single individual can fully represent the diverse perspectives and experiences of all Indigenous people. Respecting your Indigenous colleague's autonomy and boundaries while inviting their input is crucial for fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment.

Here's how to respectfully ask if they want to provide input:

## CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE SETTING:

Find a quiet and private space where you can have a one-on-one conversation, ensuring that your colleague feels comfortable discussing the matter.

## EXPRESS APPRECIATION:

Begin the conversation by expressing your appreciation for their insights and perspectives. Let them know that you value their input.

## BE RESPECTFUL AND OPEN:

Approach the conversation with an open and respectful attitude. Be clear that you are interested in their input but not assuming they want to provide it.

## ASK FOR CONSENT:

Begin by asking for their consent to discuss the topic or project. For example, you can say, "I would like to discuss [the topic] with you. Would you be comfortable providing your input?"

## SHARE THE PURPOSE:

Explain the purpose of seeking their input and how it would benefit the project or initiative. Make it clear that their perspective is valued.

## RESPECT THEIR DECISION:

If your colleague declines, respect their decision without any pressure or judgment. Thank them for considering it, regardless of their choice.

## OFFER CHOICES:

Give them the option to participate or decline. Use phrases like, "It would be great to hear your thoughts if you're willing, but please don't feel obligated," to convey that their participation is voluntary.

## ENSURE NO BURDEN:

Emphasize that you do not want to burden them with any additional responsibilities but genuinely believe their insights would contribute positively.

## CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS:

If they agree to provide input, clarify the level of involvement and the time commitment expected. Ensure that they are comfortable with the terms.

## MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY:

If they choose to share sensitive information or personal experiences, assure them that their input will be kept confidential, as appropriate.

## PROVIDE CONTEXT:

Briefly provide context for the topic or project to help your colleague understand why their input is sought and how it fits into the broader goals.

## LISTEN ACTIVELY:

If they agree to provide input, actively listen to their thoughts, ideas, and suggestions. Show appreciation for their input throughout the conversation.

## EXPRESS GRATITUDE:

At the end of the conversation, express your gratitude for their willingness to provide input, regardless of whether they ultimately contribute or not.

**REMEMBER THAT THE KEY IS TO APPROACH THE CONVERSATION WITH RESPECT, SENSITIVITY, AND A GENUINE DESIRE TO COLLABORATE WHILE RESPECTING YOUR COLLEAGUE'S AUTONOMY AND BOUNDARIES.**