

## Allyship in Practice

Individual allyship starts with humility, consistency and action, not with self-identifying as a good ally. Allyship is ongoing work grounded in listening, relationship-building, respect for Indigenous sovereignty and challenging systems that create inequity.

### Begin with Local Learning

- Learn whose land you are on, which treaties are relevant to your area and which residential schools operated nearby.
- Learn about local First Nations, treaty relationships and regional Indigenous health priorities, not only national history. Good allyship is specific and local.

### Understand the Systems You Work In

- Mistrust exists because many systems have repeatedly harmed and failed Indigenous people.
- If you work in a hospital system you might want to learn about the legacy of Indian Hospitals, forced sterilizations and birth alerts.
- If working with Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, learn about forced relocations and how Indigenous people lost their Indian status through enfranchisement, therefore separating them from their community. Learn about the displacement caused by the Indian Residential School system.
- If you support people struggling with substance use or mental illness it's important to know all the above. These experiences contribute to higher rates of trauma, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide risk, and substance misuse in some Indigenous communities. It is important not to frame these issues as inherent to Indigenous identity, but as linked to historical and ongoing systemic harms.

### Listen More Than You Speak

- Do not assume expertise after reading a few resources or attending one training.
- Listen without defensiveness.
- Avoid centering yourself or debating lived experiences.
- Recognize that Indigenous peoples are not one homogeneous group. Nations have distinct beliefs, ceremonies, histories and practices.

### Respect Indigenous Leadership and Self Determination

- Support Indigenous-led priorities instead of deciding what communities need.
- Ask before acting and respect community protocols, timelines and the right to say "no".
- Avoid "saviour" behaviour. Saviour behaviour happens when someone tries to "help" a marginalized group in a way that centers themselves instead of the people they claim to support
- In workplaces or healthcare systems, this often means making room for Indigenous voices in decision-making rather than speaking for them. Actively seek Indigenous voices, ideas and perspectives.

## Challenge Stereotypes and Misinformation

Allyship includes interrupting harmful comments, misinformation, stereotypes, or dismissive attitudes when you encounter them. Some examples include:

- Correct misinformation about treaties or residential schools.
- Challenge racist jokes, comments and assumptions.
- Question policies and practices that exclude Indigenous perspectives.

This matters especially when Indigenous people are **not** in the room.

## Move from Acknowledgement to Action

Land acknowledgements alone are not enough.

- Ask which policies need to change, who faces barriers to access, who is missing from decisions and how Indigenous communities benefit from partnerships.
- In health and OHT work, action can include:
  - Culturally safer care
  - Transportation supports
  - Indigenous patient or client navigation
  - Compensation for engagement
  - Indigenous representation in governance
  - Access to Elders or Knowledge Keepers
  - Access to Indigenous medicines or healers.

## Accept Correction and Remain Accountable

- Everyone makes mistakes in this work. Apologize directly, learn, change your behaviour and do not ask people who were harmed to provide emotional reassurance.
- The goal is growth and accountability.

## Build Long Term Relationships

- Allyship is not an event, training certificate or awareness-month activity.
- Demonstrate consistency, reliability, trustworthiness, follow-through and a willingness to keep showing up. Trust grows when actions match words.

## Use Your Position Responsibly

- Use professional, social, institutional or educational influence to open doors, share opportunities, advocate for equitable policies, redistribute resources, amplify Indigenous expertise and remove barriers.
- Some of the most effective allyship happens quietly inside systems.

## A Practical Allyship Self Check

- Am I informed enough to speak on this?
- Have Indigenous voices already identified what is needed?

- Am I centering myself or the community?
- Who benefits from this action?
- Am I willing to stay engaged after the attention fades?

## Additional Allyship Resources

- Learn about the Mount Elgin Residential School which operated on Chippewa of the Thames First Nation from 1847-1946: [Mount Elgin Residential School history](#)
- Learn more about the County of Elgin's Diversity Equity & Inclusion Plan here: [County of Elgin Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan 2024 to 2026](#)
- United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) provides a framework for governments, institutions, and organizations to advance reconciliation and respect Indigenous rights. Learn more here: [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
- Follow this link to learn more about the history of residential schools in Canada: [Residential schools in Canada video](#)
- Learn more about the Mohawk Institute, a residential school that operated in Brantford from 1831-1970: [Mohawk Institute Residential School history](#)
- Follow this link to learn key phrases and terms to have respectful conversations as they relate to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: [UBC Respectful Environments Equity Diversity and Inclusion terms](#)