

INDIGENOUS ALLY TOOLKIT

STEP #1: BE CRITICAL OF ANY MOTIVATIONS

When getting involved in this kind of work, one should ask themselves:

Does my interest derive from the fact that the issue is currently "buzzing"?

Does my interest stem from the fact that the issue will meet quotas or increase chances of any funding?

Does my involvement hijack the message and insert my own opinions or values instead of respecting those of the Indigenous communities?

Am I doing this to feed my ego?

These movements and struggles do not exist to further one's own self-interest, nor are they there as "extra-curricular" activities.¹

TO BE AN ALLY IS TO:

Actively support the struggle.

Speak up, even when you feel scared.

Transfer the benefits of your privilege to those who have less.

Acknowledge that the conversation is not about you.⁴

HOW CAN I BE A GOOD ALLY?

REMEMBER:

Being involved in any kind of anti-oppression work is about recognizing that every person has a basic right to human dignity, respect, and equal access to resources.

At the end of the day, being an ally goes beyond checking actions off a list and it is not a competition. Being an ally is about a way of being and doing. This means self-reflection, "checking in" with one's motivations and debriefing with community members is a continual process; it is a way of life.

STEP #2: START LEARNING

Here are lists of terms that will help you get started on educating yourself on the history of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island.

Educating yourself is an ongoing process. Change will not be easy and you will never truly be an expert on Indigenous challenges and realities, but you can work in allyship.

A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself:

How can I use this new information in my everyday life?

What steps can I personally take to amplify marginalized voices that are too often silenced?

What do I have and how can that be leveraged?

How can I use my position & privileges to listen, shift power dynamics and take steps towards reconciliation-act?

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE THE EXPERTS OF THEIR OWN REALITIES & HISTORIES.

¹Opportunities for White People in the Fight for Racial Justice. (2016).
²As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance. (2017).
³Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing The Ally Industrial Complex. (2014).
⁴Guide to Allyship. (2016).
 Algonquin Territory, Indigenous title to land in the Ottawa Valley in an issue that is yet to be resolved. (2018).
 "Turtle Island: The Original Name for North America." (2007).
 Indigenous Wishes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada. (2016).
 "How We Find Ourselves: Identity, Development and Two Spirit Peoples. (1998).
 "Inuit get federal apology for forced relocation. (2010).



REMEMBER:

Indigenous people are grandparents, parents, children, & siblings. They are doctors, teachers, social workers, entrepreneurs, & artists – they are human beings. Indigenous people are present and thriving in a country that expected them to die off and that continues to enforce structures of oppression today – we are resilient.

Please be aware that these definitions are to give you a general idea. This is especially true when it comes to terminology relating to identity. Identities are complicated, are always evolving, and don't exist in boxes. When in doubt: never assume, ask!

FIRST NATION

The First Nations are the descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada. Various nations, beliefs, & languages exist within this group. There are 10 First Nations in Quebec.

M (M)ÉTIS

The Métis are a post-contact Indigenous People. Métis refers to people with roots in the Red River community or other historic Métis communities. While métis refers to people with mixed Indigenous ancestry.

INUIT & INUK

Inuit is the term for Indigenous peoples from Arctic North regions of Canada, Greenland and Alaska. Inuit is the plural form, while Inuk is the singular form.

ANISHINAABEG

This is what the Algonquin people refer to themselves as. Their ancestral territories include regions in Quebec, but subgroups have migrated further West into Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.¹ The word roughly translates to "the authentic people" or "real people".

TURTLE ISLAND

This is the name given to North America by some Indigenous Peoples, such as the Iroquois, Anishinaabeg, and other Northeastern nations.² The term originates from their various creation stories.

INDIGENOUS & ABORIGINAL

These are umbrella terms to include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Canada. Both terms are used internationally to define the original inhabitants of colonized countries, with Indigenous being the most favoured term. However, it is always respectful to be specific about the Nation you are referring to; use the term that they use to self-identify.

TERMS THAT ARE NOT OKAY FOR YOU TO SAY:

- Indian
- Savages
- Half-breed
- Red skins
- Eskimo
- Squaw

NDN

This term started off as online slang and is about First Nations reclaiming the word "Indian". Only Indigenous Peoples can use this term.³

KANIEN'KEHÁ:KA

This is what the Mohawk call themselves and roughly translates to "people of the flint". They are also one of the original nations that called the island of Montreal their territory (Tiohtiá:ke).

TIQHTIÁ:KE & MOONIIYAANG

The Kanien'kehá:ka call Montreal Tiohtiá:ke, which roughly translates to "where the boats/rivers meet". The Anishinaabeg word is Mooniivaang, roughly translating to "the first stopping place".

TWO-SPIRIT

Two-Spirit is an umbrella term that includes gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans/gender non-conforming identities and is what the "2S" stands for in LGBTQ2S. The term was intertribally adopted in Winnipeg during a gathering in the early 1990's. Traditionally, people who were Two-Spirit were thought as being "born in balance" and held specific roles within their communities. The term is an act of resistance against settler colonial forms of sex/gender, meaning that only Indigenous people can identify as being Two-Spirit.⁴

SETTLER

This term is used to describe people whose ancestors migrated to Canada and who still benefit from ongoing colonialism. This could be also applied to "settlers of colour" but doesn't apply when referring to people who are descendants of slaves, considering they did not come to this continent willingly. Keep in mind the various intersections of a person's identity and how this translates into the types of privileges they are either afforded or withheld.

POW WOW

A traditional First Nations gathering and celebration of dance, song, socializing and honoring of a rich heritage. Not to be used to describe a meeting or group of people.

THINGS NOT TO SAY

"CANADA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES" OR "OUR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES"

The Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island are not owned by Canada or by any individual, which is the way the language makes it out to sound. Try to say "the Indigenous Peoples of what we now call Canada" instead.

"YOU'RE INDIGENOUS? YOU MUST BE AN ALCOHOLIC"

This is incorrect, perpetuates false stereotypes, and is a generalizing and discriminatory view to have. Even if you are referencing a joke you heard, just avoid saying this altogether.

"CAN YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE FORGIVE MY PEOPLE FOR WHAT WE DID?"

Guilt should not be the main reason for why you want to be a part of ally work. On top of that, no one Indigenous person can forgive an entire population, nor are they the spokesperson for the entire Indigenous population. As you educate yourself, you may grapple with these feelings of guilt and that is completely normal but what are more important are the steps and actions that you take afterwards – not being forgiven.

"THE INDIGENOUS CULTURE"

This is too broad considering that hundreds of Indigenous communities, nations, languages and cultures exist within Canada. Instead of singular, try using plural forms instead. Even better, try being specific about the nation to avoid pan-Indigenizing. I.e. "My Kanien'kehá:ka friends from Kahnawake" or "the many Indigenous cultures."

"WHY DON'T YOU JUST GET OVER IT?"

Inuit were still being forcefully relocated well into the 1950's and First Nations were not allowed to vote in federal elections until 1960.⁵ The last residential school was closed in 1996.⁶ Today, Indigenous children make up over half of all children in child care.⁷ These recent acts of colonization did not happen hundreds of years ago and Indigenous people are still healing and dealing with oppressive structures. One does not recover from traumatic events overnight, much less systemic oppression that took place over hundreds of years and that continues to this day.

"YOU PEOPLE WERE CONQUERED"

Surviving genocide is a revolutionary act and by saying this you are both condoning and celebrating genocide.

STEP #3: ACT ACCORDINGLY

Educating one's self is only half of the work when being an ally. It is a lifelong process that is rooted in action and requires humility and ongoing critical self-reflection. Being an ally is not a badge of honour, it is a sign of privilege.⁸

To do this, it is crucial to establish a direct line of communication⁹. This could be through a friend directly involved or impacted by the struggles or through a volunteer position at a community organization.

WORKPLACES & ORGANIZATIONS CAN PRACTICE GOOD ALLYSHIP BY:

Hiring Indigenous people to be involved in the creation and ownership of initiatives that are made about them and/or for them. Properly remunerating and crediting Indigenous people for their knowledge & time.

"Passing the mic" to Indigenous people at events, in the arts, in music, in film, in theatre, and in making decisions that affect them.

Recognizing that Indigenous Peoples have ownership, control, access, and possession of their information, knowledge, experiences, and stories.¹⁴

⁵Mapping the Legal Consciousness of First Nations Voters: Understanding Voting Rights Mobilization. (2009).
⁶An Overview of the Indian Residential School. (2013).
⁷Living arrangements of Aboriginal children aged 14 and under. (2011).
⁸"Leaving In" as Imperfect Allies in Community Work. (2013).
⁹The First Nations Principles of OCAP. (1998).
¹⁴I Need An Accomplice, Not An Ally. (2017).

ACKNOWLEDGING the fact that you are a guest on this land

RECOGNIZING that multiple nations exist within Turtle Island

RESPECTING any cultural protocols and traditions

THE DO'S

- Listen to the experts
- Ask what you can do
- Build relationships based on mutual consent & trust
- Research to learn more about the history
- Continue to support & act in meaningful ways

This could entail calling others out and holding them accountable when they are displaying oppressive behaviours because when it comes down to it, being a good ally is about risking your voice to elevate others.¹¹

If you're interested in supporting local organizations that aim to meet the needs of the urban Indigenous population in Montreal, email us about available volunteer placements:

info@reseamtnetwork.com

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