

How to be an Ally

A Toolkit for Aspiring
Indigenous Allies



*Legacy
of Hope
Foundation*



Introduction

Around the world and throughout history, there have been many acts of aggression from one group on another. One of them is **systemic** and **systematic** discrimination against minority groups like Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

In this case, the Canadian Government has created laws that target Indigenous Peoples to eliminate their rights, lands, and resources through legislation such as the *Indian Act* (which still exists today), which have devastated communities and families when they took away their children and forced them into Residential and Day Schools and into the Child Welfare System. Seven generations were robbed of familial relationships, love, affection, safety, empathy, kindness, their language, and their ability to grow up in their territories, culture, traditions, and using their spiritual practices.

Not only were these acts difficult for generations of children to experience, but additionally many children also experienced physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual abuse at the hands of those entrusted to care for them. These aggressive acts continue to impact Indigenous communities today.

To make meaningful changes in society that will foster equity for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, great efforts need to be made, and concrete steps need to be taken. Action must be taken, sometimes as an individual and sometimes as a group. Indigenous Peoples cannot do it alone, but together we can make progress towards Reconciliation, by practicing allyship.

This Guide has been developed by the Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) to walk you through some suggestions on how to be a great ally. Feel free to use it to start your journey towards becoming an advocate for Reconciliation and addressing ongoing injustice. The cover page of this Toolkit represents two key symbols that are important for us as Indigenous Peoples and teachings that we want to share.

1. **The buffalo.** It embodies one of the 7 Grandfather Teachings, respect. The buffalo provided Indigenous Peoples with everything they needed to survive: hides for warmth and shelter, meat for eating, muscle for sinew, and bones for tools. The buffalo reminds us to respect all living things, and in doing so we achieve a balance that keeps us alive.¹ Respect is key to being a good ally.

2. **The mountains.** Indigenous Peoples have lived in and around the Canadian mountains and ranges for thousands of years and have amassed complex Traditional Knowledge of the land throughout the seasonal changes and understand the sacredness of living in harmony and have been protecting the environment and every fish, bird, four-legged within it.² Mountains remind us Indigenous Peoples are the experienced stewards of the lands and its many resources. Allyship requires working collaboratively and legally by engaging with, and learning from, Indigenous Traditional Knowledge.

Some key terms...

Indigenous Peoples: The original peoples of North America and their descendants. There are three groups included in that term: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, and the "s" on the word Peoples demonstrates that there are more than 50 Nations of Indigenous within Canada and we are not one group with one language, culture, lifestyles, practices and teachings.

First Nation(s): This term replaces "Aboriginal" and "Indian," which are considered by some to be outdated, to represent the First Peoples to occupy what is now called Canada for more than 15,000 years as demonstrated by archaeologists, and much longer according to most Nations.

Inuit: In Canada, Inuit are a culturally distinct group of Indigenous Peoples who live primarily in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, northern parts of Quebec, and throughout most of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Inuit have occupied the vast territory from the shores of Russia, across Alaska and Canada and the southeastern coast of Greenland for at least 5000 years.

Métis: Historically, the Métis are the descendants of First Nations women, largely (but not exclusively) from the Cree, Saulteaux, Ojibwa, Dene, and Assiniboine Nations, and fur traders, largely (but not exclusively) of French, Scottish, and English ancestry. The Métis developed distinct communities, with their own Méchif language, and teachings based on their sense of distinctiveness. The Métis Nation today is comprised of people that descend from the early Métis. Today, although they may or may not share a connection with the historic Métis Nation, a growing number of Canadians of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry often self-identify as Métis.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE

- At the LHF, we always use the term 'Indigenous Peoples' as opposed to 'indigenous people' to represent the large diversity of Indigenous Nations, histories, languages, and traditions that exist because governments will often apply a 'one-size-fits-all' approach that is irrelevant to some based on the differences that exist.
- We always capitalize the "I" and "P", just as you would for Canada, to honour Indigenous Nations for who they are - a Nation, distinct from others.
- We generally do not use the term "Indian" as it is factually incorrect because the Settlers were wrong when they thought they arrived in India (except for when talking about the *Indian Act* and other Canadian legislation that uses the term).
- Do not forget the accent on the "é" for "Métis."
- Inuit means 'the people' in Inuktitut, and it is already in the plural form. An 's' should not be added at the end to pluralize it.

The language used and the reasons behind it are really important when it comes to expressing your allyship. Feel free to ask questions if you aren't sure.



WHAT IS AN ALLY?

Being an ally is about disrupting oppressive spaces by educating others on the realities and histories of marginalized people.³

An ally:

- Does not project their own perceptions and goals onto the Indigenous Peoples they are working with, but instead takes a supportive role, taking cues on how best to help.
- Has self-awareness of their own identity, privilege, and role in challenging oppression and realizes there are times when an ally is best suited to engage other allies.
- Is continually learning about the impacts on Indigenous Peoples from generations of colonial oppression and what actions can be done to address Indigenous history in a positive way.

WHO CAN BE AN ALLY?

Everyone!

Anyone has the potential to be an ally. Allies recognize that though they are not a member of the underinvested and oppressed communities they support, they make a concerted effort to better understand the struggle every single day.

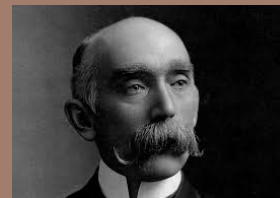
Because an ally might have more privilege and recognizes this privilege, they are powerful voices alongside oppressed ones.⁵

Key facts about allyship:

- > Being an ally is not a self-appointed identity and requires you to show your understanding through actions, relations, and recognition by the community.
- > Being an ally does not necessarily mean you fully understand what it feels like to be oppressed. It means that you are willing to take action to help improve existing injustices.⁴
- > Being an ally is more than just a word, it is an everyday action.
- > Being an ally is intentional, and it is hard work and it means speaking out against racism and stereotypes.
- > Being an ally looks different for everyone.
- > Being an ally exists at different levels of actions (individuals, family/friends, communities, corporations, Nations).

Example of powerful allyship to Indigenous Peoples: Peter Henderson Bryce

Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce was a man of conscience who knew that what was happening in the Residential Schools was wrong. He was also a man who displayed an extraordinary capacity for commitment, for persistence, and for courage. He spoke truth to power regardless of the consequences. His commitment to fighting for sanitary living conditions and proper health care for Indigenous children in the schools, and for all Indigenous Peoples, inspires us as we summon the commitment needed to demand change and true reconciliation in our day.⁷



The LHF has an exhibition on this topic. It is available to borrow for free. For more information, contact exhibitions@legacyofhope.ca.

³ https://www.segalcentre.org/common/sitemedia/201819_Shows/ENG_AllyToolkit.pdf

⁴ <https://guidetoallyship.com/#what-is-an-ally>

⁵ <https://guidetoallyship.com/#what-is-an-ally>

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

It matters because the impacts of the Residential School System, the Indian Day School System, the Sixties Scoops, and other acts of discrimination led against Indigenous Peoples continue to affect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families – people from vibrant cultures who were and continue to be vital contributors to Canadian society.

It matters because the impacts and trauma inherited from this history are one of the major causes linked to addiction, trauma, self-harming and self-defeating behaviours, poverty, homelessness, depression, violence, and suicide among Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

It matters because we share this land. We may not be responsible for what happened in the past, but we all benefit today from what First Nations, Inuit, and Métis have had to experience and relinquish over generations at the hands of church and government representatives and individuals tasked with “killing the Indian in the child.”⁶

It matters because it all happened here – a land considered to be a world leader in democracy and human rights and has remained Canada’s hidden history for over a century.

Reconciliation

= Two or more different individuals or groups building a new, healthier relationship. It requires establishing relationships that are built on mutual respect and appreciation, critical reflection, and continuous action to keep improving Canada.

Reconciliation cannot happen without understanding. It is through understanding that critical reflection can occur, and that you can identify what meaningful action means in the context of the relationship in Canada between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This understanding builds a recognition of agency, as well as providing some of the methods for being good allies.

Reconciliation is about the whole Canadian society: it also involves newcomers in Canada and immigrants. Although not having been in Canada for their whole lives, it is important that they know about Indigenous Peoples since they are an essential part of Canada’s history. By being equipped with such knowledge, they will be able to advocate for Indigenous rights and develop healthy relationships with Indigenous Peoples while efficiently dismissing stereotypes and generalizations that are harmful to them. It is important that the Canadian Government provides newcomers and immigrants in Canada with a complete picture of Canada and its history, including the injustices and abuses against Indigenous Peoples along with Indigenous contributions to this country.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples need to heal from the history and experience of the Residential and Day School Systems, the Sixties Scoop, and the traumatizing worldviews that justified those actions. As a part of this, non-Indigenous Peoples need to identify pre-conceived, harmful beliefs where they exist, and unlearn racist teachings, as well as simply learn about Indigenous Peoples, their history and contributions, and existence in Canada today.⁷

Together, as allies, we can build new relationships and ways of interacting with one another. Through positive interactions, learning to treat one another respectfully, and having all people working together for a more just society, we can alter the future of this country for everyone in it for the better.⁸



Calls To Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) started in 2008, as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). The IRSSA recognized the suffering and trauma experienced by Indigenous students at Residential Schools and provided financial compensation as legally required to the students for their abuses. The TRC performed many tasks: it created a national research center, collected documents from churches and government, and held events where students told their experiences. Also, it did research about Residential Schools and issued a final report, containing 94 Calls to Action, calling on all levels of government to work together to repair the harm caused by Residential Schools and begin the process of Reconciliation.⁹ The TRC travelled with the LHF's exhibitions when they went across Canada to engage Survivors.

The Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) began in 2000 as a not-for-profit, Indigenous, charitable organization, arm's length from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), so that work would continue on Reconciliation after the AHF closed its doors. The LHF develops K-12 curriculum on Indigenous history to educate children in schools across Canada because teaching Indigenous history is not mandatory in schools. The LHF offers 30 exhibitions that educate through art and first-person Testimonies from Survivors and other resources to learn about Indigenous history for the Canadian public which are free to borrow and host in your work. The LHF has podcasts, projects, workshops, available for Survivors and Canadians alike. We are constantly looking for new ways to foster learning, healing, and Reconciliation.

Check out the LHF's Activity Guide, *Ravens: Messengers of Change* for some examples of how you can apply the Calls to Action to your daily life.

Orange Shirt Day and NDTR

Orange Shirt Day, which takes place annually on September 30th, was first held in Williams Lake, British Columbia in 2013 to commemorate the First Nations children who attended Residential Schools. Phyllis Webstad, a Survivor who had her new orange shirt taken away on her first day at Residential School, launched the day as a reminder of the traumatic experiences endured by Indigenous children in these schools and to remind Survivors that they and their experiences matter.

Wearing orange shirts has become a prominent symbol of remembrance, and the phrase 'Every Child Matters' is often used during commemorations of the day, particularly with the uncovering of thousands of children who were found buried in unmarked graves surrounding the schools, so that we always remember that every child matters including those taken from us while in school away from their family.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR) was established on September 30th, 2021, following the discovery of numerous unmarked graves at former Residential School sites and in response to the interest and need generated from Orange Shirt Day.¹⁰ It is a day to remember and honor the Survivors and victims of the Residential and Day School System, as well as to take committed action towards Reconciliation.

The NDTR offers a chance to "decolonize social memory" in Canada by allowing citizens to unlearn false histories and discover the truth of the country's past. Rather than exclusively celebrating progress, events and conversations on this day should focus on honouring Residential and Day School Survivors. The day provides a specific time each year for Canadians to learn about past and present colonialism, hold the government accountable for systemic discrimination, and redistribute resources as necessary.

Canadians should not expect Indigenous Peoples to participate or guide their learning, as the day may instead be a time for Indigenous communities to mourn and heal. September 30th should be considered the minimum standard for Canadians to consider their responsibilities in the process of Reconciliation.

If you would like to purchase an orange t-shirt with this design, visit the LHF's website at www.legacyofhope.ca



⁹ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-plain-language-summary>

¹⁰ Extracts from the LHF's upcoming exhibition *The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: Commemoration and an Annual Report Card*.

HOW TO BE AN ALLY?

There are many ways for you to practice your allyship, on many different levels. The following are just a few suggestions that you may follow - but we encourage everyone to develop their own critical understanding of allyship to come up with actions that make sense to them. Allyship will look different for everyone.

The following list is intended as a guide for helping you think through possible categories of action, ranging from the Self to Nation. The Self for the most part is focused on your own individual efforts that mostly affect you. Nation would be a category where you are still engaged, but instead your efforts affect other people, potentially at a very broad and national level.¹¹

Self

I can learn more about _____ and educate myself by getting facts from www.legacyofhope.ca.

I can start following Indigenous news sources, like the LHF on all their social media pages. I can share posts that I find interesting to raise awareness within my networks regularly, and not just on September 30th.¹²

I can listen to Indigenous Peoples' teachings, and Survivors' testimonies to better understand acts of resistance and agency.¹³

Family/Friends

I can share what I have learned about _____.

I can let my friends and family know that they can also get facts and educate themselves by checking out the LHF at www.legacyofhope.ca.

I can dispel myths and speak out against stereotypes and generalizations, and inform others about Indigenous history and contributions, including the history of injustices and discrimination to better inform others and to address racism and foster empathy and understanding of Indigenous Peoples.

Community

I can reach out to an Indigenous organization or community to see if there are opportunities to work with them or show them support in some way.

I can start or join a community group to partner with an Indigenous organization/community/etc., on a project that _____.

Corporation

I can borrow and host an exhibition from LHF in my workplace.

I can contact an Indigenous organization like LHF to partner and promote awareness in my workplace.

I can donate to an Indigenous charity like the LHF so that they produce more educational resources that raise awareness and promote respect among all people in Canada. Charitable number 863471520RR0001.

Region

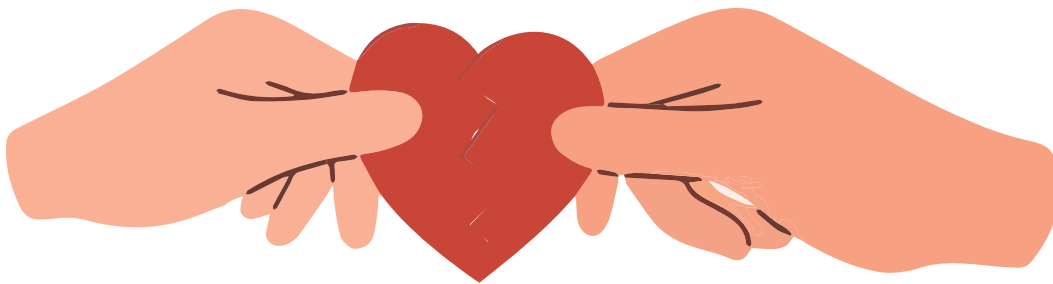
I can contact my Member of Provincial Parliament to find out what they are doing on a specific issue that impacts Indigenous Peoples and send them a list of concerns.

I can ask them what they are doing to address five top issues that will improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples. I can demand action now!

I can research what Indigenous groups are saying to get ideas about their priorities. These may include topics such as _____.

Nation

I can contact my Member of Parliament Federally to find out what they are doing on specific issues that directly impacts Indigenous Peoples.



PLEASE TAKE NOTE

Be Careful to avoid Performative Allyship

Performative allyship, in contrast with authentic allyship who has been promoted throughout this guide, is where those with privilege, profess solidarity with a cause in a way that is usually vocalized, disingenuous and potentially harmful to marginalized groups.¹⁴

For example, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is threatening to be another performative action of lip service on the part of the Federal Government and Canadians, instead of a true day of commemoration and remembrance. In fact, it has quickly devolved for some as a day to perform allyship and enjoy a free day off, or worse as another avenue for profit.

To avoid performative allyship, you should:

- **Always** prioritize education;
- Commit to your intention of being an ally **consistently**, not just once, not just for a day;
- Keep asking yourself questions, be ready to listen, unlearn and **continuously** re-evaluate your knowledge;
- **Call out racism**, and be ready to have difficult conversation with your friends, family, and sometimes, strangers.¹⁵

Now that you have explored this guide, ask yourself...

*What does it mean for me to be an ally?
How can I become a better ally?*

What can I do, at different levels of action, to better support Indigenous rights and the work of Reconciliation?

¹⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carmenmorris/2020/11/26/performative-allyship-what-are-the-signs-and-why-leaders-get-exposed/?sh=3694960822ec>

¹⁵ <https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/how-to-be-an-ally/>

About Us



We are a national, Indigenous-led, charitable organization that has been working to promote healing and Reconciliation in Canada for over 23 years. Our goal is to educate Canadians about the history and existing intergenerational impacts from attending the Residential and Day School and /or being involved in the Child Welfare System on Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) Survivors, their families, and communities to promote hope and healing in Canada. The LHF encourages people to address discrimination and injustices in order to contribute to the equality, dignity, and respectful treatment of Indigenous Peoples and to foster Reconciliation.

The LHF has more than 30 educational exhibitions that promote awareness of Indigenous history that are free to borrow, and LHF is currently working on making these exhibitions available online. LHF also has curriculum for K-12 and for adults, along with Activity Guides, Workshops and Training, Podcasts, all designed to educate Canadians about Indigenous history and the shared history of Residential and Day Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and other acts of colonization. The LHF works to develop empathy and understanding to eliminate racism against Indigenous Peoples.

Contact us at:

Legacy of Hope Foundation
1427 Ogilvie Road, Suite 4B
Gloucester, ON K1J 8M7
T: 613-237-4806 or 877-553-7177
info@legacyofhope.ca
www.legacyofhope.ca

The Legacy of Hope Foundation has educated and inspired thousands of people across Canada and, with your generous support, we will reach thousands more. To donate, please visit:

www.legacyofhope.ca
Charitable number: 863471520RR0001

If you would like to know more about hosting an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training session, a Workshop, or an Exhibition in your workplace, please contact mdubus@legacyofhope.ca.



**EVERY
CHILD
MATTERS**



Legacy of
Hope Foundation
www.legacyofhope.ca

Thank you for using this guide!

Meegwetch, Nia:wen, Marsi Cho, Miigwech, Ni nâskomitin, tiawenhk, Tshinashkumitin, We'lalioq, Woliwon, Wopida, Marcee, Chi-miigwech, Wado, Nakurmiik, Thank you, Merci.