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IndigenEYEZ

ALLYSHIP 101: A HANDOUT FOR PARTICIPANTS

“What is the purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Report; to arm reasonable people of Canada who are ready to do something.” ~ Murray Sinclair

“Education is the key to reconciliation.” ~ Murray Sinclair

Action Steps Suggestions for Allies

- Identify the territory you are in.
- Learn how the First Peoples where you live prefer to be identified.
- Have a kitchen table conversation about what you are learning regarding Canada’s history, reconciliation and the kind of Canada you want to live in.
- Share, share, share, what you are learning.
- Listen to Indigenous voices (watch Indigenous TV programming, movies, radio shows, and books etc.
- Wear an orange shirt on September 30th to promote awareness about the Indian residential school system and the impacts this system had and is still having on Indigenous communities in Canada. Learn why it’s called that.
- Dedicate 94 days to watch the #94DaysForReconciliation videos on You Tube.
- Choose one of the 94 ‘Calls to Action’ and commit to taking steps that reflect it.
- Be informed about historical, socio-political, socio-economic context that frames our interactions with Indigenous peoples.
- Support Indigenous artists, authors and businesses.
- Practice active, and empathetic listening.
- Take a decolonization or anti-oppression training course.
- Attend protests, MMIW memorials with a humble, helping spirit.
- Read the Truth and Reconciliation Report which is downloadable for free at www.TRC.ca.
- Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.
- Honor and uplift Indigenous people.
- Give space for marginalized voices to be heard.
- Learn about UNDRIP.
- Donate to Indigenous cultural projects, language programs, and/or arts programs.
- Invite (or attend) an Indigenous speaker to come talk to your community about the TRC and/or related topics. (research the proper protocols)

- Learn the names of key Indigenous figures who have and are making significant contributions to the conditions faced by Indigenous people.
- Hold the federal, provincial, and municipal government accountable to implement the 94 TRC Calls to Action – write letters. (visit the National Council for Reconciliation website for more information)

Websites to visit to learn more:

- www.reseautnetwork.com - Indigenous Ally Tool Kit
- www.trc.ca
- www.umanitoba.ca/nctr
- www.ictinc.ca
- www.legacyofhope.ca
- www.canadianroots.ca
- www.guidetoallyship.com
- www.kairosblanketexercise.org
- www.projectoftheheart.ca
- www.reconciliationcanada.ca
- www.orangeshirtday.org
- www.witnessblanket.ca

Protocols for Respectful inclusion of the Syilx First Nation

How to Do a Territorial Acknowledgement

It is considered respectful to acknowledge and give thanks to the traditional territory upon which you are holding your meeting or gathering. It's a tradition that has dated back centuries for Indigenous people, but for many non-Indigenous Canadians, officially recognizing the territory or lands we stand on is a fairly new concept. There are many ways to do this, it's a matter of finding what feels natural and right for you.

Karyn Recollet, an associate professor at the University of Toronto's Women and Gender Studies Institute, says it is important to see the territorial acknowledgement as an activation of Indigenous culture. "To think about land activation and land acknowledgement is to remember that there are these rich Indigenous governances that still exist, that are ongoing and that will go into the future," she said.

"Its purpose is to recognize that we, as settlers and as people who are not part of First Nations or Indigenous groups, are here on their land," said Alison Norman, a research adviser in the Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and a researcher at Trent University. Norman says land acknowledgements have become increasingly common in non-Indigenous spaces in the last few years, especially since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on residential schools released its 94 calls to action in 2015. "Many organizations, libraries, governments and school boards are all thinking about what we need to do to respond to the TRC," she said. "It's about thinking about what happened in the past and what changes can be made going forward in order to further the reconciliation process."

How do you do it properly?

Ideally the territorial acknowledgement is spoken by the first person to speak at the gathering. The goal is to give grounding to everyone in that space, by recognizing the land and the history upon where you

are gathering. The key to an acknowledgment is knowing and being authentic about what you're saying. Do some research, take time to learn about the people of the territory that you're gathering on.

Here in the Okanagan we are called the Suqnaquinx, (Suke-anok-can...Okanagan is the anglicized version) or Sqilxw, or Syilx (Seal-ilk) people. (The word "**Syilx**" takes its meaning from several different images. The root word "Yil" refers to the action of taking any kind of many-stranded fiber, like hemp, and rolling it and twisting it together to make one unit, or one rope. It is a process of making many into one. "yil" is a root word which forms the basis of many of our words for leadership positions, as well. Syilx contains a command for every individual to continuously bind and unify with the rest. This command goes beyond only humans and encompasses all strands of life that make up our land. The word Syilx contains the image of rolling or unifying into one, as well as the individual command which is indicated by the "x" at the end of the word which indicates that it is a command directed at the individual level. The command is for every individual to be part of that stranded unified group, and to continue that twisting and unification on a continuous basis. It is an important concept which underlies our consideration of the meanings of aboriginal title and rights.)

The Okanagan is situated on unceded territory, which means there are no treaties and it is stolen land. If you have taken time to understand the meaning of this part of BC's history, then you could include that word in your acknowledgement - "I'd like to acknowledge the unceded territory of the Syilx peoples upon which we are meeting today". If you haven't read about and learned about what this word really means, then best not to use it until you do so.

Example: "Before we begin our meeting, conference, ...we would like to acknowledge the land on which we are gathered today is the traditional, unceded territory of the Okanagan/Syilx people who lived, loved, worked, played, and learned on this land for time immemorial (or 1,000's of years) and many descendants of these people still live here. Then, share what it means to you personally to live in this place of the Syilx peoples. Speak from your heart. Keep it short.

Do your best to learn how to pronounce the names. It's not easy, so you're bound to make mistakes, but it's the effort and courage to make mistakes that speaks volumes.

Elder Invitation

If you have invited a local Okanagan Elder to welcome /bless your gathering/say a prayer; you would then introduce her/him:

"I would like to invite Ms./Mr. _____ from the Okanagan First Nation to come forward and share a few words; say a prayer/blessing; or a welcome."

Remember to:

- Spend a few minutes with the Elder or representative to determine how they would like to be introduced and make sure you pronounce their name correctly.

- Share your expectations with the Elder or rep when you invite them to speak so that they know there is a time frame and whether you want them to say a blessing/prayer or welcome.
- Thank them for joining your meeting for the opening and invite them to stay for coffee or the meal.
- Provide a gift the Elder - give them money. They are probably on a pension and would appreciate that more than another mug or gift. For a politician, a small gift would be fine. The difference is that doing this type of opening is part of their role as a representative of the Okanagan Nation or Band. Never give a gift of alcohol (or a blanket). It is seen as a tool of oppression and colonization and has caused immeasurable harm to our nations.
- If you are not sure about something; ask one of the allies you are working with.

This is the territory of the Okanagan First Nation, therefore, it is best to ask an Okanagan Elder to open the meeting. It would not be considered appropriate to ask Elders or representatives from other tribes or groups to offer the welcome to the territory.

21 Things you may not know about the Indian Act

The Indian Act was created by the Canadian Government in 1876. This act defined Indian status and consolidated previous legislation in regard to the 'Indian problem' and gave the Superintendent (we refer to him as the Indian Agent) administrative powers over many aspects of the daily life of Indians. This act led to divisions within the families, establishment of the Indian Residential School system, enfranchisement of many people and the creation of non-status Indians.

1. Denied women status
2. Introduced residential schools
3. Created reserves
4. Renamed individuals with European names
5. Restricted First Nations from leaving reserve without permission from Indian Agent
6. Enforced enfranchisement of any First Nation admitted to University
7. Could expropriate portions of reserves for roads, railways, and other public works, as well as move an entire reserve away from a municipality if deemed expedient
8. Could lease out uncultivated reserve lands to non-First Nations if the new leaseholder would use it for farming or pasture
9. Forbade First Nations from forming political organizations
10. Prohibited anyone, First Nation or non-First Nation from soliciting funds for First Nation legal claims without a license from the Superintendent General. (This 1927 amendment granted the government control over the ability of First Nations to pursue land claims)
11. Prohibited the sale of alcohol to First Nations
12. Prohibited the sale of ammunition to First Nations
13. Prohibited pool hall owners from allowing First Nations entrance
14. Imposed the 'Band Council' system

15. Forbade First Nations from speaking their native language
16. Forbade First Nations from practicing their traditional religion
17. Forbade western First Nations from appearing in any public dance, show, etc., wearing traditional regalia
18. Declared potlatch and other cultural ceremonies illegal
19. Denied First Nations the right to vote
20. Created permit system to control First Nations ability to sell products from farms
21. Created under the British rule for the purpose of subjugating one race – Aboriginal peoples

Note: Major amendments were made to the Act in 1951 and 1985. In 1951 amendments banning dances and ceremonies and the pursuit of claims against the government were removed. In 1985, Bill C-31 was introduced. For more on this Bill see “Indian Act and Women’s Status – Discrimination via Bill C-31 and Bill C-3.

Narrative: “Why don’t they just get over it?”

Have you ever heard these words spoken in conversations around our First Nations Peoples?

Here is an informative reply:

“Recent acts of colonization did not happen hundreds of years ago. Indigenous people are still healing and dealing with oppressive structures. One does not recover from a traumatic event overnight, much less heal from systemic oppression that took place over the span of hundreds of years and which continues to this day.”

Or you could ask, did you know...

- That First Nations were not allowed to vote in federal elections until 1960.
- That the last residential school was closed in 1996.
- That today, Indigenous children make up over half of all children in child care.
- That today, 27.4 percent of the prison population in Canada is Indigenous yet they make up only 3 per cent of Canada’s population

Terminology: that may or may not be politically correct.

What should you call me?

- Indigenous - is defined as living or growing naturally in an area, native:
- An Indian – is defined in the Indian Act as a person who pursuant to this Act is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian

- A Native - is a person born in a country or place in the case of our people created to live in a certain place;
- First Nations – are the original people of the land, the original inhabitants;
- Okanagan/Okanogan – is the anglicized version of Suqnaquinx, most of us prefer to be referred to by our First Nation name.

There are 3 Distinct Groups that make up Indigenous people:

- 1) First Nations** – largest most varied group.
- 2) Inuit** – Maritime circumpolar people of Canada
- 3) Metis** – descendants of First Nations and European settlers; refers to a specific geographical location originating in southern Manitoba.

~~Aboriginal~~—a term primarily used to refer to Australian aborigines, not used in Canada anymore.
 Indigenous – is an internationally used term. It’s preferable to be specific when referring to a particular nation/band. If you don’t know then ask how they self-identify.

Rule of thumb: Be as specific as possible. If you are referring to one person or community then name them. If more than one community, use the broader term, like First Nation, Metis or Inuit. Different groups together then say Indigenous.

10 Steps to Better Relations

Given our history and ongoing discrimination that many Indigenous people encounter in our daily lives, it is not uncommon for settlers to be starting at a deficit. As one Syilx workshop participant said, “It is in our nature to mistrust you the moment we meet.” Fortunately, there is plenty you can do to change this. Here are 10 practical, on-the-ground tips for building better relationships.

Step 1. Learn More

This website, and the resources here, are good starting points. Here are other ways to learn more about the Syilx people.

- Visit the Okanagan Nation Alliance [home page](#) to find out about upcoming events.
- Visit the Nk’Mip Desert [Cultural Centre](#) at Spirit Ridge Resort in Osoyoos to learn more about Syilx culture and experience the desert nature trails.
- Arrange a tour or visit the [En’owkin Centre](#) in Penticton for a first-hand look at Syilx arts and education.
- Tour the [Secwepemc Museum](#) and Heritage Park in Kamloops on the site of the old residential school.

Step 2. Be Okay with Silence

Generally speaking, Indigenous people are more comfortable with silence. Interrupting another person is a sign of disrespect in Syilx culture.

The first step to building trust with Indigenous people is to learn to be comfortable with silence. Slow down. Realize that silence isn't about being rude or offensive, it's a cultural norm. Try it out – start with ten seconds. Then try 20 seconds. If you wait, you might find that the silent client will speak up. Once they do, it is important to let them speak freely, since listening is a sign of respect.

Sometimes silence comes from a place of anger or deep resentment. If so, it is critical to realize that it is not about you, personally. It is the legacy of a history of oppression and colonization that every Indigenous person has inherited.

Step 3. Listen

Spend more time listening – less time talking. A common refrain among Syilx participants in focus groups was: “They don't hear me.” Don't assume a nodding head means agreement. By seeing ourselves as removed in some way from the privileged group, we may be all the more deaf to our silencing of people of colour.

Step 4. Use Plain Language

Specialized terms or jargon may make your life easier, but they are meaningless to the average person. Technical terms increase social distance. Jargon makes clients feel stupid and insignificant.

Step 5. Practice Self-Reflection

When you meet with Indigenous people, take a moment to reflect on any assumptions you may have been making about them. See each interaction as an opportunity to learn. Think about how you can make them feel more at ease, and more enabled to work together with you.

Step 6. Collaborate

Don't make decisions for everyone. If you wish to collaborate with Indigenous people on any project, do not impose your ideas and expect Indigenous partners to ‘come be a part of what we're doing syndrome’. If you want to truly create works together, it means building a plan together right from the start. Do not expect them to add their ideas to yours. Listen, be respectful and inclusive.

Step 7. Embrace the Family

Family is central to Syilx culture and we generally need our extended family to be involved as part of our healing process. Invite your client to bring a family member or friend along for support. They will help the client understand difficult information and can provide a second memory of the visit. The client might also be more open and forthcoming with a friend or family member there. It's also a good idea to engage family members – find out from them exactly what they will need to support your client.

Step 8. Respect Traditional Practices

Recognize and respect Indigenous peoples right to beliefs and practices that differ from western norms. Become aware of Syilx wellness practices and facilitate their inclusion whenever possible.

Step 9. Create a Welcoming Environment

Take a good look at your office. How would it look through an Indigenous person's eyes? Consider putting up a piece of artwork by a Syilx artist. Or add some children's books from [Theytus Books](#), a successful Syilx press.

Step 10. Spread the Word

Encourage others in your workplace to talk about cultural safety. Ask your clients for their input. Offer cultural safety training to your frontline staff. There are a number of online programs. [Indigenous Cultural Competency Training](#) is available through Interior Health. Free online modules are available [here](#).

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

This is a resource shared by Dr. Evan Adams, Chief Medical Officer of the First Nations Health Authority, which describes aspects of cultural safety, cultural humility and Ally-ship in a nice neat acronym.

Rapport: Build relationship, connect on a social level without prejudice, stereotyping or bias

Empathy: Seek understanding, listen, be present

Support: Help overcome barriers

Partnership: Be flexible with regards to issues of control, work together

Explanation: Check in often for understanding, use verbal clarification techniques

Cultural Competency: Respect cultural beliefs of others and be aware of own biases

Trust: Take the time necessary to establish trust