



# INDIGENOUS ALLY TOOLKIT



# “SO YOU WANT TO BE AN ALLY.”

- Lamont, A. *Guide to Allyship*.

When it comes to **creating a positive & sustainable impact** on the lives of Indigenous Peoples living in Montreal, it is important to understand the role that an individual occupies and plays within the collective experience.

The term ally has been around for some time, and recently many critics <sup>3, 15</sup> say that it has lost its original meaning. Instead of being used to identify one's role within a collective struggle, it has come to symbolize a token identity – a kind of “badge” that people wear to show they are one of the “good guys”.

There are multiple terms a person can use when identifying the role that they actively play within anti-oppressive work. Neither is better than the other and regardless of what you call yourself, **each role plays an important part** in this kind of work. Many want to be an ally, which is why this pamphlet focuses on that term. However, being an ally is not a self-appointed identity and requires you to show your understanding through actions, relations, and recognition by the community.

## ALLY

*Being an ally is about disrupting oppressive spaces by educating others on the realities and histories of marginalized people. <sup>1</sup>*

## ACCOMPLICE

*An accomplice works within a system and “directly challenges institutionalized/systemic racism, colonization, and white supremacy by blocking or impeding racist people, policies, and structures”. <sup>1</sup>*

## CO-RESISTOR

*Being a co-resistor is about standing together, as an ensemble, in resistance against oppressive forces and requires constant learning. It is combining theory and practice by establishing relationships and being deeply involved within a community that informs how one listens critically, understands an issue and influences the way they go about disrupting oppressive institutions and systemic systems. <sup>2</sup>*





## 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.<sup>3</sup>

## 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.<sup>4</sup>



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 **reconcili-action**?



### 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**.



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



<sup>1</sup> Opportunities for White People in the Fight for Racial Justice. (2016).

<sup>2</sup> As we have always done: *Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. (2017)

<sup>3</sup> *Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing The Ally Industrial Complex*. (2014).

<sup>4</sup> *Guide to Allyship*. (2016).

<sup>5</sup> *Algonquin Territory: Indigenous title to land in the Ottawa Valley is an issue that is yet to be resolved*. (2018).

<sup>6</sup> *Turtle Island: The Original Name for North America*. (2007).

<sup>7</sup> *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada*. (2016).

<sup>8</sup> *How We Find Ourselves: Identity Development and Two Spirit People*. (1996).

<sup>9</sup> Inuit get federal apology for forced relocation. (2010).

### TERMS THAT ARE NOT OKAY FOR YOU TO SAY:

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



**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

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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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 habitants 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.

## NDN

This term started off as online slang and is about First Nations reclaiming the word "Indian". Only Indigenous Peoples can use this term.<sup>7</sup>

## 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 (*Tiohtià:ke*).

## TIOHTIÀ:KE & MOONIYAANG

The Kanien'kehá:ka call Montreal *Tiohtià:ke*, which roughly translates to "where the boats/rivers meet". The Anishinaabeg word is *Mooniyaang*; 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.<sup>8</sup>

## 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.

## “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 Kanién’kehá:ka friends from Kahnawà:ke” or “the many Indigenous cultures.”

## “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.

## “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.<sup>9,10</sup> The last residential school was closed in 1996.<sup>11</sup> Today, Indigenous children make up over half of all children in child care.<sup>12</sup> 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.**

## “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.

## “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.<sup>13</sup>

To do this, it is crucial to **establish a direct line of communication**<sup>3</sup> – 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.<sup>14</sup>

**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.**<sup>15</sup>

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@reseaumtlnetwork.com](mailto:info@reseaumtlnetwork.com)

NEXT STEPS

<sup>10</sup> Mapping the Legal Consciousness of First Nations Voters: *Understanding Voting Rights Mobilization*. (2009).

<sup>11</sup> An Overview of the Indian Residential School. (2013).

<sup>12</sup> Living arrangements of Aboriginal children aged 14 and under. (2011).

<sup>13</sup> "Leaning In" as imperfect Allies in Community Work. (2013).

<sup>14</sup> The First Nations Principles of OCAP®. (1998).

<sup>15</sup> I Need An Accomplice, Not An Ally. (2017).



**RÉSEAU**  
pour la stratégie urbaine  
de la communauté  
autochtone à Montréal

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