



BRAIDING TRUTH INTO ACTION

A Guide Towards Indigenous
Allyship at Western University

Office of Indigenous Initiatives

AUGUST 2025



Indigenous
Initiatives



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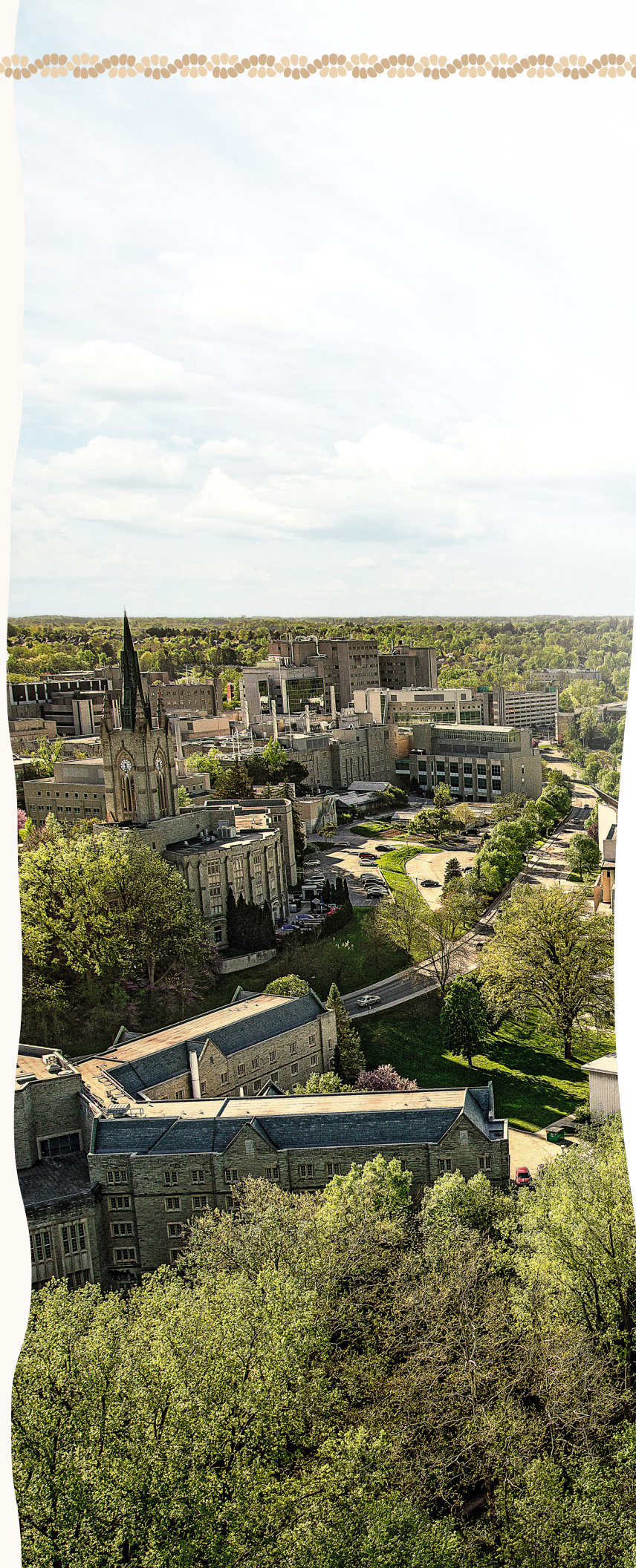
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TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This document was created at Western University, located on the ancestral territories of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, and Lūnaapéewak Nations.

The lands The University of Western Ontario (Western) and City of London occupy, draw life and sustenance from Deshkan Ziibing (Antler River), part of a system of waterways that connects to Nayano-nibiimaang Gichigamiin (The Great Lakes) and all our relations within it. The City of London is tied to the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796, the Longwoods Treaty (1819) and the stewardship of the Great Lakes region is encoded by the Dish with One Spoon and Silver Chain Covenant between the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy in this region also holds the Confederacy Hiawatha Wampum as well as the Two Row Wampum with the Dutch.

Western acknowledges in our strategic plan, [Towards Western at 150](#) (2020), that Reconciliation is a priority and is integral to the university's operations, and that there is much work to be done towards building relationships with Indigenous Nations, as well as building understanding of our roles and responsibilities within this mandate.

In our land acknowledgment, when we say, “we acknowledge the historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada,” we are generalizing the complex and nuanced reasons Indigenous Peoples face injustices. If we do not critically reflect on the explicit causes, such as dishonoured Treaty agreements and anti-Indigenous policies imposed by governments and institutions, we are glossing over the ways people can strengthen their Allyship by critically interrogating oppressive systems and structures. We envision that this guide is one way in which colleagues at Western can reflect on ways they can “accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous Communities through our teaching, research and community service” (Office of Indigenous Initiatives, n.d.).

By acknowledging we are located on Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaape lands connected to Indigenous-Crown Treaties made with the Deshkan Ziibing Anishinaabek (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation), and Indigenous Treaties such as the Dish with One Spoon, Western makes explicit our responsibilities to equity and justice for all Indigenous Peoples, Reconciliation, and our ongoing commitment to strengthen and build relationships.

Executive Summary

The *Guide Towards Indigenous Allyship at Western University* is a living document that has been evolving since April 2022. It was developed to support the broader Western University community in building capacity for meaningful Reconciliation Initiatives and deepened collaboration with Indigenous faculty, staff, students, as well as local Indigenous communities and organizations.

The Guide is rooted in the understanding that allyship is not a title or credential to be claimed, but an ongoing relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, one marked by humility, learning, and accountability. True allyship is not defined by public declarations or accolades, but by whether Indigenous communities themselves recognize your support as meaningful. You do not need to know whether you “are” an ally to begin this work – where you struggle or feel discomfort may offer important insight into how your allyship practices need further attention and care.

The Guide introduces *10 Principles for Indigenous Allyship*, each aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Principles for Reconciliation* (TRC, 2015c, p. 16). Every principle includes brief readings, reflection prompts, and additional resources to support deep and sustained engagement. Readers are encouraged to take their time, sit with discomfort, and revisit sections over time. This is not a linear journey, but one that calls for ongoing reflection, return, and recommitment.

The *10 Principles for Indigenous Allyship* are presented in a structure based around three stages of Allyship development from *Towards Braiding* by Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, and Sharon Stein (2019):

01 SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING

Readers begin by examining the historical and systemic harms experienced by Indigenous Peoples. The four principles in this section ask allies to confront difficult truths and explore how these legacies shape present-day realities.

02 SECTION 2: A COMMON LANGUAGE

This section supports allies in deepening their understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Readers are invited to notice how power and privilege operate, and how allyship can be practiced in ways that respect Indigenous sovereignty and leadership.

03 SECTION 3: COMMITMENT

The final section emphasizes sustained, principled action—even and especially when things get difficult. These principles guide readers in building long-term relationships of accountability and working toward systemic change.

Section 3 also includes a reflective conclusion that outlines common missteps on the allyship journey, offering guidance for staying grounded when the work feels overwhelming or uncertain.

This Guide was developed through collaboration between the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII), Sisco & Associates Consulting Services Inc. (SISCO), Indigenous community members, and many Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, faculty, and students at Western. It is intended to be used in concert with *Western’s Guide to Allyship in Indigenous Research*. A shared glossary supports the use of both guides.



ABOUT THE GUIDE

This Guide was co-authored through the collaborative efforts of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contributors, and many other Western University faculty, staff, students, and community members. Special acknowledgment goes to Sara Mai Chitty for her significant contributions to this work. This Guide was also developed with support from [*Sisco & Associates Consulting Services Inc.*](#)

Acknowledging our Contributors and Reviewers

Chi Miigwech, Anushiik, Yaw^ko (thank you) to the Indigenous and allied staff, faculty, students, and community who supported this important work through participating in online interviews, focus groups, and an online survey. Thank you to both the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) and the Office of Faculty Relations. We would like to extend a special thanks to Dr. Christy R. Bressette, Vice-Provost/Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives), and Dr. Margaret McGlynn, Vice-Provost for Academic Planning, Policy & Faculty, for their vision to make this resource a reality.

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About the Office of Indigenous Initiatives

Western's Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives) lead system-wide change required to advance Truth and Reconciliation, achieve equitable outcomes for Indigenous Peoples, and implement Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan. The Office is committed to building and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities locally, provincially, nationally and internationally, and to fostering an academic environment where everyone experiences the university as a welcoming environment in which Indigenous languages and ways of knowing, being and doing are respected and supported.

THE OFFICE'S PRIORITY AREAS ARE:

- Strategic planning and implementation
- Communications and reporting
- Community engagement
- Policy development and practice
- Space planning and management
- Curriculum and training development
- Student affairs, access and recruitment strategies
- Faculty and staff recruitment and retention strategies
- Research and scholarship strategies

BACKGROUND TO THE CREATION OF THE GUIDE

This Guide has been a work in progress since April of 2022, when the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) and the Office of Faculty Relations hired Sisco & Associates Consulting Services Inc. (SISCO) to prepare a guide on Indigenous Allyship to support non-Indigenous faculty, staff, students, and community members in respectful engagement with Indigenous faculty at Western. However, informed by a comprehensive environmental scan and literature review, together with results of a broad consultation process, it became apparent that the Guide should evolve to provide support for engaging with Indigenous students, staff, and community members, as well as faculty. To inform the Guide, Sisco conducted an environmental scan and engaged thirty-one (31) students, faculty, staff, and community members, including through:

- Interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty (8) at Western,
- An online focus group with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives staff (10), and
- An online survey of Western faculty, staff, and students (13).

Further input on the guide was obtained directly from trusted allied non-Indigenous staff identified by the OII and Western Research. As a result, the current iteration of this guide draws on the personal experiences of the Indigenous staff, faculty and students at Western who were engaged. The themes that emerged correlated strongly with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) report Volume 6, *What Have We Learned: Principles for Reconciliation* (2015c, p.16). Through our review processes, in response to feedback from allied and Indigenous scholars, non-Indigenous and Indigenous staff at Western, the Guide has been revised by the OII into a living document grounded in ten principles towards Indigenous Allyship .

The recommendations offered herein have been made in good faith with a genuine interest in supporting Western University's stated desire and commitment to enhancing Indigenous Allyship at Western. The 10 Principles and Framework outlined in this Guide are non-exhaustive and are intended as a starting point in an ongoing learning journey that should be extended to include independent learning, engagement, and action.



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Purpose of this Guide: Building and Strengthening Relationships

This guide, although not exhaustive, is intended to support anyone at Western in building meaningful, reciprocal collaborations with Indigenous colleagues and community members through an Indigenous lens of relationality (See “*Building and Strengthening Relationships*” section below). Looking towards Allyship praxis as the foundation for Truth and Reconciliation and Decolonization work, consider this Guide’s Indigenous ten Allyship Principles as a tool for ongoing reflection, relationship- and capacity-building.

To move people towards action, the Indigenous Allyship Principles are embedded within a Decolonizing framework, with an overarching goal to support the broader Western community in two key areas:

1. Grow capacity for Reconciliation Initiatives and Deepen Collaboration with Indigenous Faculty, Staff and Students, as well as Local Indigenous Organizations and Communities.

This support will help ease the pressure that many Indigenous people experience at Western when they are approached inappropriately (e.g. being asked questions that are easily researchable) or over-engaged. While the work of Indigenization, Reconciliation and Decolonization in the academy needs to be Indigenous-led (‘nothing about us without us’), the support, collaboration, and contributions of allies towards equity and justice in the implementation of these processes are imperative.

2. Provide guidance in the work of Reconciliation at Western, and supporting Indigenous colleagues, through Allyship.

Not surprisingly, individuals have a broad range of understanding about our roles and collective responsibilities toward the work of Reconciliation and support of Indigenous initiatives at Western. Sometimes, the confusion about how and where to help, or the fear of making a mistake, can become obstacles to meaningful engagement in this work. This guide can support critical self-reflection as part of building equitable partnerships and collaborations. As we grow, build and strengthen relationships and understanding, the roles and responsibilities of allies will become clearer.

The Guide is a non-exhaustive resource and is intended to be a prerequisite document to other Allyship resources including the *Guide to Allyship in Indigenous Research* (2025).

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE?

The Guide is written as a living document, moving allies through *10 Principles Towards Indigenous Allyship*. Corresponding Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Principles for Reconciliation* (TRC, 2015c, p. 16) are listed alongside these Allyship Principles. As mentioned above, we consider these Allyship Principles essential to Truth and Reconciliation and Decolonization work:

1. Accept Truth Before Jumping into Reconciliation
2. Cultivating Treaty and Indigenous Literacy
3. Committing to Unsettling and Creating New Pathways Together
4. Building Reciprocal Relationships in the Spirit and Intent of Treaties
5. Honouring Indigenous Sovereignty and Self-Determination in Decision-Making and Relationship-Building Processes
6. Using Power, Resources, and Privilege to Advocate for and Support Indigenous-Led Initiatives
7. Nurturing Culturally Inclusive and Trauma-Informed Learning Environments
8. Respecting Indigenous Community Leadership, Protocols, Processes, and Approaches
9. Supporting the Reclamation of Indigenous Knowledges, Systems, and Lands through Indigenous-Led Cultural Resurgence and Language Revitalization
10. Closing Gaps, Removing Barriers, Decolonizing, and Dismantling Oppressive Systemic Structures.

Framework for this Guide

While explanations of other critical tools and frameworks such as 'ethical space' and 'Two-Eyed Seeing' are included in later sections, it is important to recognize that this Guide seeks to support people in creating space to work collaboratively across cultures, worldviews and understandings. Some pathways toward this type of collaboration have been conceptualized within an institutional context in *Towards Braiding* by Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, and Sharon Stein (2019). Their work provides a framework for this Guide.

01 SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING

In order to work collaboratively with Indigenous peoples "a deep understanding of historical and systemic harms and their snowball effects needs to become "common sense," and not something to be avoided, dismissed, or minimized out of fear of hopelessness, guilt, or shame" (p. 22).

02 SECTION 2: A COMMON LANGUAGE

This guide will help allies build a common "language that makes visible the generative and non-generative manifestations of bricks and threads needed to be developed, without becoming rigid, prescriptive or accusatory" (p. 22).

03 SECTION 3: COMMITMENT

In order to engage in decolonizing, Indigenizing and Reconciliation processes "a set of principled commitments toward the 'long haul' of this process needs to be in place, including a commitment to continue the work even/especially when things become difficult and uncomfortable" (p. 23).

NAVIGATE THIS GUIDE BY:

1. Completing or revisiting the short readings
2. Carefully responding to the provided prompts and reflection questions
3. Exploring suggested videos, readings, or other resources
4. Revisiting each section, as needed



Created for 'when things fall apart', *Towards Braiding* describes Indigenous paradigms as 'thread sensibilities' and Euro-Western paradigms as 'brick sensibilities.' Doing so helps to visualize where both paradigms, even when used through a Two-Eyed Seeing framework, do not fit together perfectly (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein, 2019).

Towards Braiding's 'three long steps,' required before braiding can begin, are a useful framework for the Indigenous Allyship context at Western. These three long steps form the structure for this guide: Section 1) Understanding; Section 2) A Common Language; and, Section 3) Commitment (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein, 2019). Through these three long steps, this guide walks allies and aspiring allies through the 10 principles that make up Indigenous Allyship at Western (p. xi).

Existing and aspiring allies using this guide are encouraged to move through each section, at their own pace, in four ways: by completing the short readings; by carefully responding to the provided prompts and reflection questions; by exploring suggested videos, readings, or other resources; and, by revisiting each section as needed. Each of the three sections asks you to reflect on the Indigenous Allyship Principles shared within it and consider how they work together to help you engage in Reconciliation and relationship-building. Prior to moving on to the next section, you are encouraged to explore the videos, readings, and reflection questions listed to help you deeply reflect on the Allyship Principles and understand how they support your decolonization journey. Many of the provided reflection questions may be difficult to answer, or you may feel as if there is no answer. The provided prompts are intended to be sat with, mulled over, and revisited as you move through the phases, with the understanding that your answers will likely evolve over time. If you are someone who likes to see progress, consider writing down your answers and revisiting them again to see how they've evolved.

TIPS FOR USING THIS GUIDE:

- Questions may come up – take note of them
- Read the entire section. Many definitions and information are included at the end of some sections, to support your learning within that phase
- If you do not know what a word or concept means, check the resource list to learn more
- Complete the "Transforming Power and White Privilege" (2022) module created by Western's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) before you begin.

A Note on “Heart-Work”

A part of the process of Decolonizing is connecting the heart and the mind. While navigating the Guide, some content may feel unclear, or cause you feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, guilt, or disbelief.

We encourage you to pause and to explore the provided resources to deepen your understanding and to help you move through these emotions. You can then pick this guide back up in a productive way.

Principles for Indigenous Allyship



TO SUPPORT THEIR USE OF THIS GUIDE, ALLIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

- Create communities of practice in their unit or office;
- Read the Truth and Reconciliation (2015a), MMIWG Reports (2019), *Calls to Action* (2015b), and *Calls for Justice* (2019);
- Engage with the supplementary resources as a group or individually, to learn about local Indigenous Communities;
- Critically reflect on their positionality, including privilege afforded to non-Indigenous people living on Turtle Island (which may include settler-colonial privilege), the benefits it affords, and how maintaining that privilege supports the continuance of colonialism;
- Work through unsettling processes;
- Build treaty literacy to critically assess the Treaties and Wampums, and whether the commitments they represent have been upheld;
- Establish respectful relationships with Indigenous people and/or communities;
- Interrogate personal biases and commit to continued learning; and,
- Evaluate how they can continue their journey of Allyship in a good way



The longest journey we will ever make as human beings is the journey from the mind to the heart.

— Chief Darrell Bob, St’at’imc Nation, quoting Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq (Kalaalit Nunaat, Greenland) (Cultural Survival, 2017).

Figure 1 - Principles for Indigenous Allyship, Western University (2025)

Who is this guide for?

This Guide is for anyone at Western and Affiliate Colleges who is, or plans on, collaborating and working with First Nations, Métis or Inuit staff, students, faculty and/or local First Nations communities. This includes those Western University and Affiliate College community members enacting Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan (2016), or Theme 2 of Western's institutional strategic plan, Towards Western at 150 (that of Advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous Communities; Western University, 2022). It is specifically created within the context of Allyship with First Nations Peoples of Turtle Island, in a way that contributes to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015).

While this Guide emphasizes building meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities in a broad sense, it is important to ground Allyship work in local First Nations context. Before engaging with this Guide, it is essential that readers understand how their own social identities and positionalities can impact their Allyship journey (See: "To Support Their Use of This Guide," pg xiii). This work will help aspiring allies understand that, while they may not have a direct relationship with Indigenous people and communities in their personal and professional lives, by virtue of living and working in London and surrounding area, on Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Lūnaapéewak lands, a relationship with Indigenous Peoples and communities already exists.

This relationship, however, does not have to remain mysterious. The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report in 2015 and the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) have generated *Calls to Action* (2015b) and *Calls for Justice* (2019). These calls help Canadians understand the impacts of ongoing settler-colonization on Indigenous Peoples and encourage actions that will contribute to healing and generative paths forward for all. Former Senator Murray Sinclair, who passed away in 2024, said that in order to realize balanced Indigenous-settler relationships, the process of Reconciliation will take seven to ten generations of intentional healing and collaboration (Waddell, 2021).

This Guide is not intended to convince anyone to become an ally. While this Guide can serve as a resource for supporting people who are pursuing a journey towards Indigenous Allyship at Western, for many it might be a starting point. But Allyship is an ongoing commitment, and individuals should ensure they are doing the foundational work outlined in this guide to unlearn and learn prior to taking any concrete actions. While allies and aspiring allies of differing positionalities may use this Guide in a similar way, their actions, independent learning and critical self-reflection may look very different, depending on the individual's unique lived experience and their professional role at Western University.

“
Reconciliation is a
process of regeneration
that will take many
years to accomplish.

– Leanne Simpson
(2011, p. 22)

STARTING ONE'S JOURNEY TOWARD ALLYSHIP:

- Identifying Indigenous-created resources, especially those made freely available, that can support learning about local context and communities;
- Attending Indigenous events or learning opportunities on campus, where invitations are extended to the Western community;
- Building an understanding of one's positionality and Treaty responsibilities; and,
- Making a commitment to unsettling, and finding ways to support learning and growing.

IN LEVERAGING THIS GUIDE FOR LEARNING AND ACTION, ALLIES CAN:

- Develop an understanding of the need for Indigenous Allyship at Western;
- Reflect on relationality, relational accountability, reciprocity, responsibility, and respect within their work with Indigenous people and communities;
- Reflect on ways to action the *Calls to Action* (TRC, 2015b) and the *Calls for Justice* (MMIWG, 2019) in their professional and personal lives;
- Assess their positionality and identify the historical and contemporary impacts of their field/discipline(s) on Indigenous people;
- Build Indigenous solidarity;
- Engage in meaningful Reconciliation;
- Develop or strengthen their decolonial lens;
- Practice humility through the uncomfortable unsettling process;
- Learn about and apply locally relevant Treaties and Wampum covenants to Allyship practice;
- Recognize potential mistakes they may make; and,
- Understand what Allyship looks like, based on the guidance provided.

Building and Strengthening Relationships, Relationality & Relational Accountability

Concepts of relationality differ among Indigenous cultures, but there are common threads of understanding of an interconnectedness, interrelatedness and relationality that extend beyond human-to-human relationships – such as ‘all my relations’ – which can be understood as “a way of acknowledging our interconnectedness as people, plants, animals, everyone and everything” (Winnipeg School Division, 2024). Encoded in these relationships are principles of respect, reciprocity and responsibility. At its heart, embodying Indigenous Allyship as an action emerges from this relationality – “the way in which something is done becomes very important because it carries with it all of the meaning. This meaning is derived from context including the depth of relationships with the spiritual world, elders, family, clans, and the natural world” (Simpson, 2011, p. 91).

There are many reports and frameworks that have been developed by Indigenous Nations, organizations and communities, the Canadian government, Indigenous scholars, institutions and allies, often through collaboration, to guide Reconciliation, Decolonization and Indigenization work. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) outlines 10 *Principles for Reconciliation* represented alongside the Principles for Indigenous Allyship that are threaded within a framework towards decolonizing, below (TRC, 2015c). Overarchingly, this guide is grounded in TRC Principle #6, though every single principle is crucial in this process.



“
All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.

– TRC, 2015c, p. 4

THE MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS AND 2SPIRIT INQUIRY'S REPORT (MMIWG, 2019) OFFERS 231 CALLS FOR JUSTICE, INCLUDING CALLS FOR JUSTICE FOR ALL CANADIANS THAT SHARE SIMILAR SENTIMENTS AROUND RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING:

15.7 – Create time and space for relationships based on respect as human beings, supporting and embracing differences with kindness, love, and respect. Learn about Indigenous principles of relationship specific to those Nations or communities in your local area and work and put them into practice in all of your relationships with Indigenous Peoples (MMIWG, 2019b, p. 199).



SECTION ONE: UNDERSTANDING



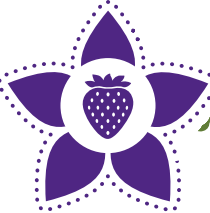


SECTION ONE: UNDERSTANDING

This guide has been divided into three sections, following the three long steps articulated by Jimmy, Andreotti, and Stein (2019). These sections are anticipated places where aspiring allies will learn, step away from, and then revisit the different Allyship Principles outlined within that section.

Section 1 focuses on fostering a deep understanding of historical, ongoing, systemic harms that is an essential foundation for Allyship work (Andreotti et al., 2019). The resources listed in this section support allies and aspiring allies in acquiring essential background knowledge.

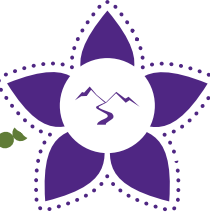
THIS SECTION INCLUDES THE FIRST THREE ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLES, ENCOURAGING READERS TO:



Accept truth before jumping into reconciliation



Cultivate treaty and Indigenous literacy



Commit to unsettling, and creating new pathways forward together



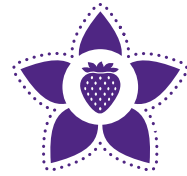
Truth comes before reconciliation

– Atlohsa Family Healing Services

CORRESPONDING TRC PRINCIPLE #3:

"Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public Truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms."

– TRC, 2015c, p. 3



ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Accepting Truth Before Jumping into Reconciliation

Many people are still learning and familiarizing themselves with the historical and ongoing legacies of colonization in Canada, despite the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report on Indian Residential Schools in 2015.

Universities, as public and government-funded institutions, are deeply entrenched within colonial constructs and policies, creating institutional and systemic gaps and barriers for Indigenous (and many other) people (Stein, 2018). Research is emerging to demonstrate how Western University, through its affiliation with Huron University, is connected to Indian Residential Schools and colonial legacies (Cross & Peace, 2021). Many Western community members are intergenerational Indian Day and Residential School survivors, and/or experience the impacts and fallout from genocide and ongoing settler-colonial policy in a diversity of ways. Acknowledging this ongoing colonial violence, and the oppression that shapes the realities of Indigenous colleagues, their families, friends, and communities, is crucial before we can engage in true collaboration (Jimmy et al., 2018).

Critical self-reflection enables potential allies to make space for unpacking and understanding how settler-colonialism has come to be. This pre-work relieves the Indigenous people they are working with from retelling traumatic experiences and explaining why this context is important, and often allows you to 'jump right in.'

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ACCEPTING TRUTH BEFORE JUMPING INTO RECONCILIATION:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- Western University's [Guide for Working with Indigenous Students](#)
- Western University's [Indigenous Teaching & Learning Series: Module 1 - Decolonize the Academy](#)
- First Nations University of Manitoba's [4 Seasons of Reconciliation](#) (subscription required; Western community members can request access through the Office of Indigenous Initiatives)
- N'Vision's [The Path](#) (subscription required; Western community members can request access through the [Office of Indigenous Initiatives](#))
- University of Alberta's [Indigenous Canada: A Massive Open Online Course](#).
- Western University's School of Advanced Studies in the Arts and Humanities (SASAH)'s [N'Satung Film Project](#)
- University of Toronto OISE's Understanding Indigenous Perspectives module: [What is Reconciliation?](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report](#)
- Stolen (Season 2) podcast: [Surviving St. Michaels](#)
- [National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Two-Spirit+ Final Report](#)
- Western University's [Engaging with the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation at Western Toolkit](#)

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What does 'accepting the Truth' in this context look like for me? What is resonating? What is challenging me?
- How do I understand settler-colonialism, in Canada, or otherwise? How has it impacted me? What are the implications?
- Have I taken the time to learn about local Indian Residential Schools and the ongoing and historical impacts of Indian Act policies and colonization on Indigenous Peoples who also live where I live, and beyond? Why or why not?
- Have I relied on Indigenous colleagues to educate me on these topics? How can I increase my own knowledge and understanding?
- How do I understand Reconciliation in Canada?
- What might my roles and responsibilities be, or not be, in Reconciliation? Why or why not?
- Are my intentions self-serving, or do they come from a desire to build a just future for all?
- What biases or stereotypes do I hold about Indigenous people? What can I do to critically examine them?
- What intersections and connections can I draw between the oppression I've experienced myself, or my family has experienced? How can I build solidarity across these connections? How can I build solidarity without having shared experiences?

Local Context: Settler-Colonialism & Reconciliation at Western University

Western's founding college, Huron University College, was initially established as a school for Anglican Clergy aiming to, "raise up a succession of Clergy Indigenous to the soil, men of the country to do the work of the country," (Cross & Peace, 2021, p. 24). It was named after the Huron (Wendat) Nation, even though the Wendat had been driven out of this territory by that time, and there were existing relationships between the church and the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee – including evangelical visits to surrounding First Nations to generate interest and donations to the establishment of the university. This appropriation of names is seen as an early move toward the replacement of Indigenous influence, histories, and power with those of Christianity (Cross & Peace, 2021).

Western's founder, Bishop Hellmuth, visited Bkejwanong Unceded Territory (also known as Walpole Island First Nation) in 1881 to confirm two Indigenous congregates in the church, where he left with a \$50 donation from the community towards the new school. A missionary named Keshegowene (John Jacobs) reported on Hellmuth's visit to them and wrote: "'When the Western University is opened,' the bishop told the congregation, 'Indians from different parts will continue to avail themselves of the grand privileges of obtaining a University education'" (*Dominion Churchman*, 1881, p. 367). Keshegowene noted in his coverage that these words had generated significant interest in the congregation (Cross & Peace, 2021).

While Bishop Hellmuth's intention may have seemed noble, the introduction of the Indian Act in 1876 created significant barriers for Indigenous people to attend post-secondary school. To do so, they had to enfranchise and give up their 'Indian Status,' a practice that did not end until 1951 (Joseph, 2018). "As Hellmuth's 1881 visit to Walpole Island illustrates, Indigenous Peoples played an important role in shaping his vision for the university and [...] tied the university directly to the same ecclesiastic and financial networks that underpinned and supported the beginning of the Anglican Church's involvement in the residential school system" (Cross & Peace, 2021, p. 23). Within ten years of the establishment of Huron College, a graduate of the College "opened the Shingwauk Industrial Home in Bawaating (Sault Ste. Marie)" (Cross & Peace, 2021, p. 24), where Indigenous children would be assimilated through industrial training. Eventually Western was established through the foundation of Huron College, and the Shingwauk Home was "re-labeled a residential school" (Cross & Peace, 2021, p.25). This relationship illustrates how settler education and colonial education were developed and used, in conjunction, as tools for Indigenous dislocation and assimilation (Cross & Peace, 2021).

More details and clarification about Western's settler colonial history can be found through reading the full article: "'My Own Old English Friends': Networking Anglican Settler-Colonialism at the Shingwauk Home, Huron College, and Western University" by Natalie Cross and Thomas Peace (2021).

“
Settler colonialism is different
from other forms of colonialism
in that settlers come with the
intention of making a new home
on the land, a homemaking that
insists on settler sovereignty
over all things in their
new domain.

– Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 5



ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Cultivating Treaty and Indigenous Literacy

Beyond learning about the impacts of ongoing and historical settler-colonialism on Indigenous Peoples, it is essential to learn and unlearn with and from Indigenous Peoples and communities about their local histories, languages, governance, treaties, and cultures, in order to cultivate cross-cultural literacy.

In the University of Manitoba's *Working in Good Ways Framework Guide* (2021) they identify Indigenous literacy as "a framework through which we can understand what we see, hear, and feel while in community, and repeated engagement will give us the sense of trust and belonging that allows us to repair any missteps that we may make" (University of Manitoba, 2021, p. 23). They identify a lack of Indigenous literacy in this context as the root of hesitation and fear people may have around engaging with Indigenous people and communities.

Indigenous Nations are not monolithic, and collaborating effectively with groups and organizations requires familiarity with their diverse customs, priorities, realities, and/or governance. Indigenous students are more likely to succeed in post-secondary education when they have access to culturally relevant curriculum and supports (Brunette-Debassige & Richmond, 2018, Cameron et al., 2024). Similarly, Indigenous faculty, and by extension Indigenous staff, "do not leave their identities as Indigenous persons at the door of the university" (OCAV/RGAE Joint Working Group, 2020). It is important to seek out existing resources, like this one, that have been developed by or in collaboration with local Indigenous Peoples, as they are experts on their own cultures and histories.

Additionally, when working with local Elders, community members, and colleagues, it is respectful to learn who they are and the Nations they are from, because not everyone is necessarily from the same community, or speaks the same language (e.g., pan-Indianism, or amalgamating diverse Indigenous cultural practices together as if they are one). For example, there are three Indigenous languages spoken in the area surrounding Western University – Lunaape, Ojibwe and Oneida – and we have many students from across Turtle Island who speak different Indigenous languages and dialects attending the university.

Treaties, meanwhile, are nation-to-nation relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the Crown, managed by the federal government (Government of Canada, 2024). Without Indigenous-Crown and Indigenous Wampum treaties, Canada could not have formed Confederation (Borrows, 1997). As a foundation for this nation-to-nation relationship, these Treaties affirm Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Reviewing treaty history, and how Canada broke treaty agreements, supports deeper understanding of the systemic efforts that persist to this day, to displace Indigenous Nations and extinguish title to land. Deepening cultural literacy on the relationships between land, language, governance and Indigenous Nations, also enhances your ability to advocate for and honour treaties and restore and revitalize land in collaboration with Indigenous people. Taking the time to learn about the Indigenous Peoples with whom you are seeking to engage and build meaningful relationships can help to support a positive relationship building experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CULTIVATING TREATY AND INDIGENOUS LITERACY:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- Rachel Chong (2022) [Indigenous Information Literacy](#)
- Western University's [More than Words: Guide to Land Acknowledgments at Western](#)
- Western University's [Indigenous Teaching & Learning Series](#)
- Western University's [Connecting for Climate Change Action](#) (Online course)
- Western's Office of Indigenous Initiatives [Treaties Recognition Week 2020 Speakers Series](#)
 - [Episode 1](#)
 - [Episode 2](#)
 - [Episode 3](#)
- Ontario Institute for Studies on Education (OISE)'s – Online Modules
 - [We Are All Treaty People](#)
 - [A Short History of Indigenous Education](#)
 - [Indigenous Ways of Knowing](#)
 - [Indigenous Worldviews](#)
 - [Power and Representation: Stereotypes](#)
 - [What is reconciliation?](#)
- Yellowhead Institute's
 - [Land Back Report & Online Course](#)
 - [Cash Back Report](#)
- [Indigenous Students, Indigeneity & Experience in Universities](#)
- Assembly of First Nations' [Treaties & Why They're Important](#)
- Assembly of First Nations' [What is cultural competency?](#)
- Centennial College's [Our Stories: First Peoples in Canada](#)
- Kory Wilson and Colleen Hodgson's [Pulling Together: Foundations Guide](#)

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE 2: REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- On whose land do I live, work and play?
- Am I a settler? As a settler, am I a Treaty person?
- How do I understand responsibilities as a Treaty person?
- How do I understand my personal and collective relationship to Indigenous lands and Peoples on an ongoing basis?
- What is my relationship to the land?
- How do I understand Indigenous Peoples' relationships to land? Are there tension points?
- What is 'Land Back'? How do I understand it? How does it make me feel? How do I move through discomfort?
- What is Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination?
- What more do I still need to learn about treaties, Indigenous cultures, histories, and Peoples? What do I want to learn more about?

“We may feel worried about saying something offensive or doing the wrong thing, and this may prevent us from developing meaningful relationships or engaging with Indigenous communities at all.”

– Ferland et al 2021, p. 23

TRC PRINCIPLE #10:

“Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, treaties, and Indigenous rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples to Canadian society.”

– TRC, 2015c, p. 4



Colonization is an ongoing process

While Reconciliation has become an access point for correcting historical and contemporary injustices against Indigenous Peoples, it is not the same as decolonization. Reconciliation is an institutional commitment to actioning the TRC's *Calls to Action* (2015b) and restoring relationships with Indigenous people, while decolonization involves "the dismantling of colonial power structures, be they political, epistemic, or social, with the ultimate goal of" (Wakeham n.d.) "repatriati[ng] ... Indigenous land and life" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1).

This is best understood by reading Tuck and Wang's *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor* (2012) in its entirety, but here is an excerpt below:

“

Within settler colonialism, the most important concern is land/water/air/subterranean earth (land, for shorthand, in this article.) Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation. This is why Patrick Wolfe (1999) emphasizes that settler colonialism is a structure and not an event. In the process of settler colonialism, land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property. Epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land are interred, indeed made pre-modern and backward. Made savage [...] For the settlers, Indigenous peoples are in the way and, in the destruction of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous communities, and over time and through law and policy, Indigenous peoples' claims to land under settler regimes, land is recast as property and as a resource. Indigenous peoples must be erased, must be made into ghosts.”

– Tuck and Ree, forthcoming, p. 56

“

In order for the settlers to make a place their home, they must destroy and disappear the Indigenous peoples that live there.

– Tuck & Wang, 2012, p. 6

Sisco and Associates' survey of Western faculty and staff, conducted in preparation of this Guide, highlights some of the ways ongoing settler-colonialism manifests within university structures, systems, and interpersonal interactions, and connects with evidence shared in Western's Indigenous Curriculum & Learning Subcommittee's Report *Maamwi Gizekewag* (2022) as well as the *Lighting the Fire: Experiences of Indigenous Faculty in Ontario Universities Report* (2020).

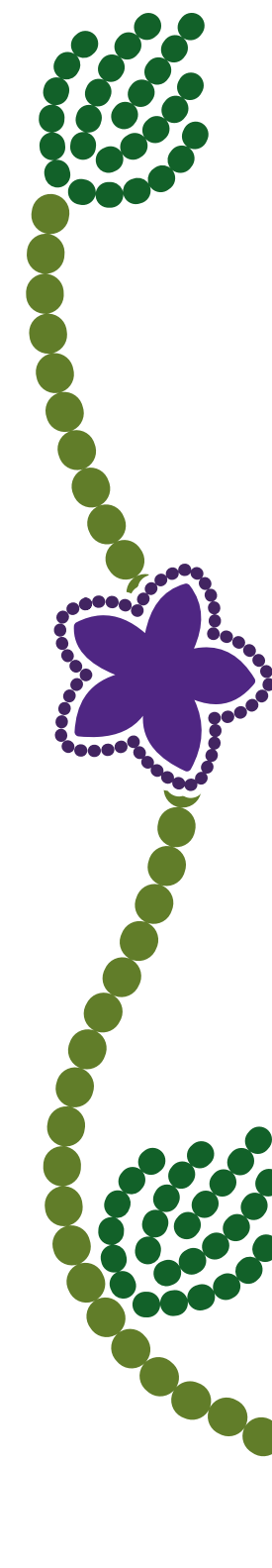
TOGETHER, THESE REPORTS IDENTIFY THAT MODERN-DAY COLONIALISM CAN LOOK LIKE THE FOLLOWING:

- Limited Indigenous literacy of staff, faculty, and students at Western
- Placing the responsibility of Reconciliation, Indigenization and decolonization solely on Indigenous people employed at Western
- Anti-Indigenous racism (individual, institutional, and internalized) and microaggressions
- Erasure and marginalization of Indigenous epistemologies and perspectives within curriculum and pedagogies across disciplines and professional programs
- Need for a critical mass of Indigenous faculty, leadership, & staff to inform these processes
 - Tokenism of the Indigenous staff, faculty and students that are at the institution and beyond
- Extractive engagement with Indigenous community members, staff, and faculty
- Chronic underfunding of Indigenous programs and initiatives
 - Consideration for funding for Reconciliation and Indigenous Initiatives is not built into the budget planning and allocation process at the department/unit level; considered an afterthought or not "core" budget
- Culturally unsafe practices and environments
- "Performative or public-relations campaigns that make statements and promises without deep commitments embedded in university-wide strategic plans, faculty strategic plans, and budget processes" (Maamwi Gizekewag, 2022)
- Conflation of Indigenization with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), as well as internationalization
- Limited progress on answering TRC *Calls to Action* (2015) or MMIWG's *Calls to Justice* (2019)
- Absence of meaningful treaty-based consultation with Indigenous partners and First Nations, especially around educational sovereignty, climate change policies, land management and stewardship

For many people, imagining their place of work, or their own complicities in these systems of oppression, can evoke feelings of anger, guilt, shame and denial. Often the burden to 'prove' the need for policies and practices to affect change, systematically remove barriers to equity, justice, and engage in Reconciliation at the academy, falls on Indigenous staff, faculty, and students requiring significant amounts of emotional labour (Brunette-Debassige, 2024).

The Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective offers a summary of the four kinds of denial that allow colonial logics to persist, that require critical self-reflection:

1. "The denial of systemic violence and complicity in harm (the fact that our comforts, securities and enjoyments are subsidized by expropriation and exploitation somewhere else);
2. "The denial of the limits of the planet (the fact that the planet cannot sustain exponential growth and consumption);
3. "The denial of entanglement (our insistence in seeing ourselves as separate from each other and the land, rather than 'entangled' within a living wider metabolism that is bio-intelligent), and
4. "Denial of the depth and magnitude of the problems that we face: the tendencies 1) to search for 'hope' in simplistic solutions that make us feel and look good; 2) to turn away from difficult and painful work (e.g. to focus on a 'better future' as a way to escape a reality that is perceived as unbearable)." (Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective, n.d.)





ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Committing to Unsettling and Creating New Pathways Forward, Together

Undergoing the process to ‘unsettle yourself’ has been described as “a way to be able to capture and talk about what we’re experiencing in Canada and the things you can do to support reconciliation in your community for the benefit of current and future generations” (Yaghujaanas & Geiss, 2022, para. 1).

It is about learning (Allyship Principle 2), recognizing the harms done (Allyship Principle 1), and then committing to action. Individuals can “apologize for those harms, help support healing, make ethical actions to change the beliefs of your family, community, organization, and take part in events that are designed to combat racial injustice” (Yaghujaanas & Geiss, 2022, para. 18).

Making a commitment to unsettle biases, norms, and conventions by continually unlearning (discarding ideas that are racist and inaccurate), learning, reflecting and connecting (with Indigenous Peoples and communities) is foundational and ongoing for an ally. The use of decolonial frameworks to critically analyze systems, processes, and structures that create social inequity and injustice, must be accompanied by working with Indigenous people to disrupt and rebuild towards justice and Reconciliation – or we risk replicating harm. Unsettling and decolonizing are lifelong learning processes wherein mistakes will be inevitable. Grounding actions in justice, equity, Reconciliation, and reparations encourages us to develop new relationships oriented towards collective healing.

Since Reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization are novel processes to many people working at Canadian universities, many interventions have never been considered and actioned before. When sentiments such as “... that’s just how it is...” and “...you’ll have to work around it...” are presented as the only options, it creates more labour for the Indigenous people who must now create solutions to work around structural barriers, which are often impossible feats without administrative and leadership support (Brunette-Debassige, 2024). Examining and changing policies or procedures so the next person doesn’t have to figure out their own “workaround” creates the systemic change we aspire towards in Allyship Principle #3. Committing to the lifelong work of unsettling and decolonizing is some of the “heavy lifting” that allies can do to support Indigenous colleagues.

“We have described for you a mountain; we have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing.”

– Senator Murray Sinclair

TRC PRINCIPLE #4:

“Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Indigenous peoples’ education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.”

– TRC, 2015c, p. 3

“...an unsettling pedagogy is therefore based on the premise that settlers cannot just theorize about decolonizing and liberatory struggle: we must experience it, beginning with ourselves as individuals, and then as morally and ethically responsible socio-political actors in Canadian society”

– Regan, 2010, pp. 23- 24

“Decolonizing benefits everyone, not only Indigenous people. It creates space to hear all voices.”

– Dr. Christy R. Bressette

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR COMMITTING TO UNSETTLING:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- Paulette Regan’s [Unsettling the Settler Within](#)
- Ontario Institute for Studies on Education (OISE)’s Online Module - [Power & Representation: Stereotyping](#)
- Confederation College’s [Diversity, Equity & Indigenous Lens](#)
- Western University’s EDID Anti-Oppression Certificate Program
 - [Anti-Indigenous Racism Module](#)
 - [Historical Review of Racism in Canada](#)
 - [Bias & Microaggressions: Impact, Prevention and Intervention](#)
- Stryker Calvez’s [Indigenizing Academia](#) (University of Saskatchewan)
- Canadian Geographic’s [Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada: Racism](#)
- Canadian Race Relation’s [Anti-Indigenous Racism in the Education System](#) Module Series (video)
- Wilfred Laurier University’s [Indigenous Allyship: An Overview](#)
 - See pg. 13 “[Oppression & Privilege](#)”
- Assembly of First Nation’s: [Impacts of Contact: Meaning of Culture](#)
- Susan Manitowabi’s [Historical & Contemporary Realities: Movement Towards Reconciliation](#)

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE 3: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is my positionality?
- What is my family’s history? How did I or my ancestors arrive here? What is my relationship to the settler-state? How does that impact how I navigate Euro-Western systems and structures?
- What intersections and connections can I draw between the oppression I’ve experienced myself, or my family has experienced? How can I build solidarity across these connections?
- What biases or stereotypes do I hold about Indigenous people? What can I do to critically examine them?
- Are you able to summarize the concepts of unsettling, and anti-racist lenses or pedagogies you learned in this section?
- Where do I see opportunity to unsettle?
- Where do I see opportunity to be anti-racist?
- How do you usually respond to having your assumptions challenged? (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein, 2019)
- What does decolonization look like in my life? In my field/discipline?
- What decolonial or unsettling approaches can I start to implement right away? What approaches need time and consideration before implementation?

A Note on “Performative Allyship”

In this Guide, performative Allyship refers to instances in which non-Indigenous people claim to be supporting Indigenous People through actions that are often self-serving and unhelpful, or even harmful, to Indigenous communities. Examples include:

- asking an Indigenous person to provide an opening at a meeting without engaging the broader Indigenous community for input;
- providing a scripted land acknowledgement without understanding and taking action to fulfill treaty obligations; or,
- doing work to support the Indigenous Community with the expectation of receiving praise or a reward (Phillips, 2020; Roberts, n.d.).

Individuals may be practicing performative Allyship for different reasons, but it often stems from self-interest or feelings of guilt associated with privilege and colonial history, which can manifest in “a sort of ‘saviour complex’ whereby acting out Allyship becomes a way to rid oneself of guilt” (Francois, 2018). Tuck and Yang (2012) refer to this as “settler moves to innocence” (p. 10), whereby settlers undertake performative Allyship to alleviate settler guilt and complicity and ensure their privilege is maintained. An example of this is when allies feel an overwhelming obligation to say or do something often in response to awareness-raising events.

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP SHOULD NOT BE MOTIVATED BY:

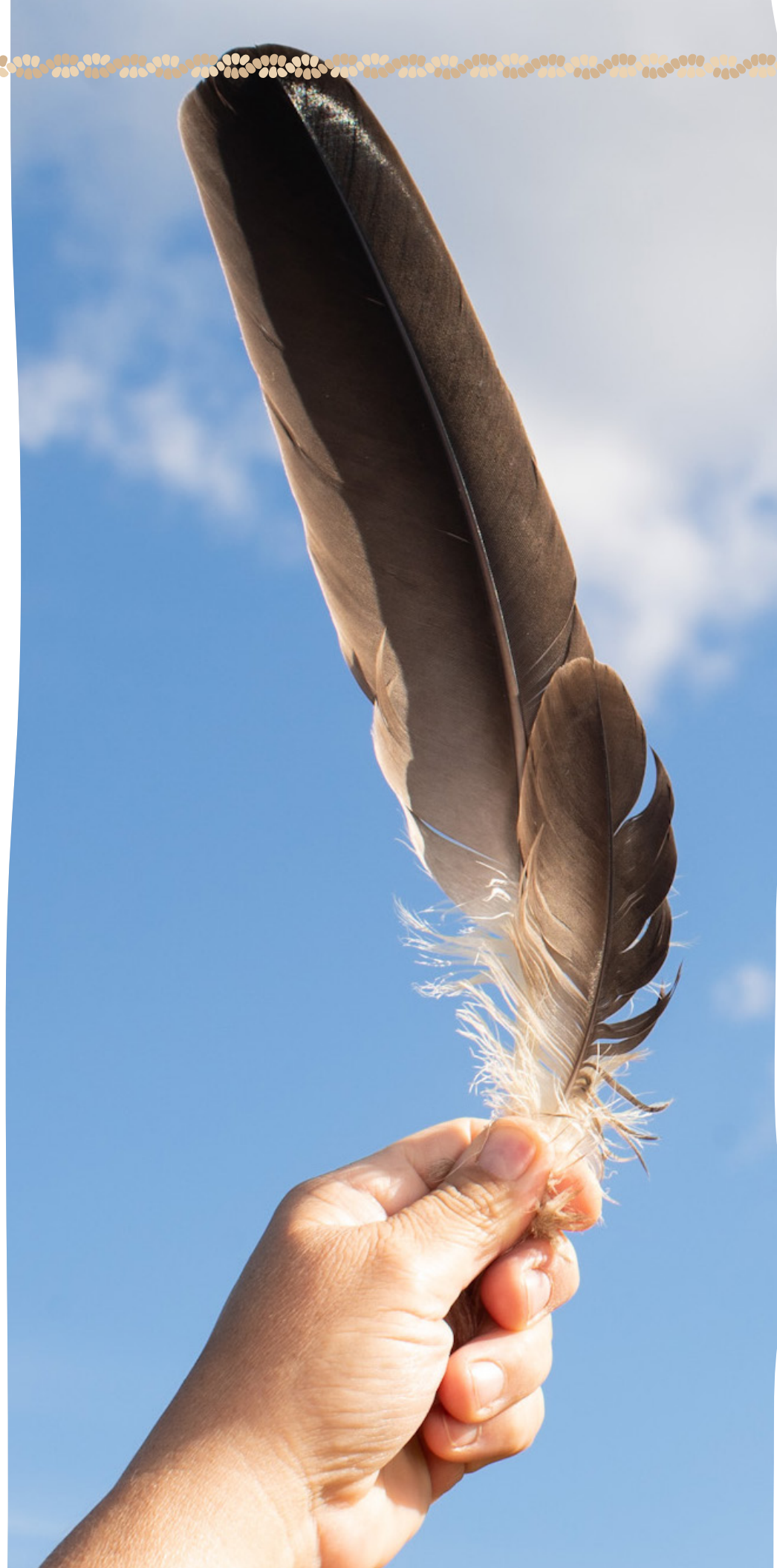
- Self-serving interests (e.g., to look good on a resume)
- Funding requirements or opportunities
- Guilt or shame, or to “clear” your conscience
- A desire to “save” Indigenous people

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP SHOULD BE MOTIVATED BY:

- Curiosity and desire for reciprocal intercultural collaboration
- A genuine desire for equity and justice for all peoples
- An understanding that everything and everyone is interconnected - including the recognition that all oppression is systemic and interconnected
- Solidarity with oppressed peoples, whether you share their struggles or not

REFLECTION QUESTIONS TO SAFEGUARD AGAINST PERFORMATIVE ALLYSHIP

- What compelled you to pick up this guide? What is motivating your learning?
- What does Indigenous Allyship mean to you? What does it look like, sound like, or feel like to you?
- How do you currently embody Allyship in your practice? How do you understand the intersections and/or interconnections between Allyship with Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized peoples (including from your own experience, where applicable)?
- Where do you feel you are at in your own learning/unlearning journey in supporting Indigenous Peoples’ rights, implementing UNDRIP (United Nations, 2007), and the TRC Calls to Action (2015b)?
- In this current moment, what is your Indigenous literacy level?
- Do you know what Indigenous-Crown Treaties and Wampum Treaties are?
- Do you understand the impact of major policies and institutions such as Residential Day Schools, the Sixties and Millennium Scoop, and the Indian Act on Indigenous Peoples?
- What does Indigenous solidarity mean to you?
- Do you see opportunities for you to actively play a role in building Reconciliation?
- Are there responsibilities you feel compelled towards in relation to Indigenous-Crown Treaties and Indigenous solidarity?



SECTION ONE: FINAL REFLECTION

- 01 How did this section make you feel?
- 02 What do people or groups need in order to work together respectfully and responsibly? How does this work happen when these groups have difficult or painful histories between them?
- 03 How can you move through any feelings of discomfort, guilt, shame, outrage and/or denial?
- 04 What ideas caused discomfort for you? What ideas resonated?
- 05 What have you inherited, and where have you benefitted, from ongoing colonial systems? What parts of your identity or comfort rely on these systems?
- 06 How might collaboration help us imagine and create a better and wise futures?



SECTION TWO: A COMMON LANGUAGE



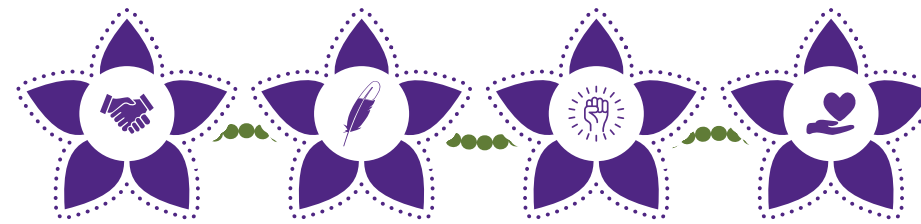


SECTION TWO: A COMMON LANGUAGE

This guide has been divided into three sections, following the three long steps articulated by Jimmy, Andreotti, and Stein (2019). These sections are anticipated places where aspiring allies will learn, step away from, and then revisit the different principles outlined within that section.

Section 2 focuses on new learning, where aspiring allies come to deeply engage with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, with the goal of building a “common language that makes visible the generative and non-generative manifestations of bricks and threads needed to be developed, without becoming rigid, prescriptive or accusatory” (Jimmy, Andreotti, & Stein, 2019).

SECTION 2 ASKS ALLIES AND ASPIRING ALLIES TO ENGAGE WITH THE NEXT FOUR ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLES, THOSE OF:



Building reciprocal relationships in the spirit and intent of treaties

Honouring Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination in decision-making and relationship-building processes

Using power, resources and privilege to advocate for and support Indigenous-led initiatives

Nurturing culturally inclusive and trauma-informed learning environments



ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Building Reciprocal Relationships in the Spirit and Intent of Treaties

Relationality is a core tenet in the cultures of many Indigenous Nations in this territory. Visiting, engaging with, and listening to Indigenous people and communities is a relational process that takes time and is intentional. The more you spend time with Indigenous people, you will come understand your own roles and responsibilities in moving towards Reconciliation. Consider ways to build reciprocity into these relationships. Just like treaties, reciprocity is not embodied as a direct exchange of lands, services, or goods. Reciprocity is a recognition of the value of collaboration through equity and centering mutual benefits – while also ensuring that the net benefits of non-Indigenous partners are not gained at the expense of the well-being of Indigenous communities and lands and vice versa. This may include leveraging power and privilege to create space for Indigenous frameworks and approaches, or re-allocating resources (see Indigenous Allyship Principle #6). Beyond financial compensation, which is important for valuing time, Gifting and Reciprocity are important Indigenous practices to learn about and honour (Simpson 2014).

Strong cultural literacy and relationships are critical when designing programs, resources, or services for Indigenous people and ideally, these programs, resources and services are designed and led by Indigenous people. Engaging and consulting with Indigenous people and communities ensures relevancy to the needs and desires of those communities. These kinds of collaborations should be initiated with the support of relevant Indigenous people on campus but this can take time. Sometimes desired timelines, the availability of people being ready to help, or grant deadlines, do not always line up with the capacity of the First Nations, Indigenous organizations, or Indigenous colleagues you hope to collaborate with. You may need to set the project aside or hold off on applying to funding to respect the capacity of the colleagues who would support this work. Sometimes this might also look like consultation with those colleagues on whether hiring someone external to the university to initiate or complete the project.

Relationship building and asking questions can be helpful in determining how one can engage with Indigenous Peoples in a good way. This relationship building should be approached in a manner that aligns with the expressed goals and aspirations articulated by the Indigenous person or Peoples. In seeking out continued learning opportunities, it is important to learn from the Indigenous communities, Nations, and organizations with which you are, or hope to be, working. Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers bring knowledge that has been gained over a lifetime, which should be recognized as expertise. Indigenous Peoples are not under any obligation to offer their values or wisdom to help others learn, especially without any compensation. If they are faced with additional burdens of work or are not being engaged in a reciprocal way, they may be less inclined to become involved.

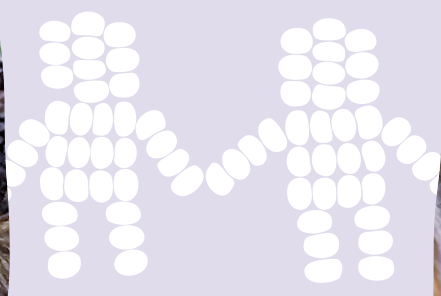
INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do I typically engage Indigenous people in my work?
- How do I understand reciprocity? What are Indigenous understandings of reciprocity? Where do these understandings overlap, or not line up?
- How can I maintain relationships after projects or initiatives have come to a close?
- How can I protect the time and energy of Indigenous colleagues who are frequently engaged?
- Consider the following questions from Jimmy, Andreotti and Stein's *Towards Braiding*:
 - “Do you recognize that it may be only through long-term engagement and relationship building that difficult and uncomfortable, but meaningful and important conversations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people might become possible?”
 - Do you intend to develop such a long-term engagement, or are you more interested in a one-off transactional relationship?” (2019, p. 48).



“
Relationality is a concept, practice, and way of being that maintains deep, reciprocal relationships to place and to each other.
 – Smith, 2021

TRC PRINCIPLE #6:
 “All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.”
 – TRC, 2015c, p. 4



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR BUILDING RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SPIRIT AND INTENT OF TREATIES:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- Western University's [Guideline for Working with Indigenous Community Members](#)
- Western University's [Guideline for Working with Indigenous Students](#)
- Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti and Sharon Stein's [Towards Braiding](#)
- Assembly of First Nation's Learning Modules: [Engaging the Community](#)
- University of Manitoba's [Working in Good Ways Toolkit](#)
- Rauna Kuokkanen's [Reshaping the University](#)
- Leanne Simpson's [Dancing on Our Turtle's Back](#); Ch 6
- Concordia University's [Dewemaagannag/My Relations](#)

GUIDING OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Wampum Belts

Wampum belts are a mnemonic and storytelling device that pre-date Euro-Western settler colonialism and were used to represent many things, among them treaty agreements. Wampum serves as reminders of the relationships, promises, and responsibilities to which each party commits. Indigenous Peoples recognize that all living beings are sovereign and there is a need for shared commitments among all parties, including all of Creation. Wampum belts were also used to record stories, histories, laws, and traditions (Assembly of First Nations, n.d.; Chitty, n.d.). There are two Wampum Belts that are particularly relevant to this area and the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee and Lunaape, including the Dish with One Spoon and Two Row.

DISH WITH ONE SPOON WAMPUM

The Dish with One Spoon (or *Gdoo Naaginaa*) is a pre-contact Treaty that is utilized to govern overlapping harvesting and hunting rights, established between Indigenous Nations in the Great Lakes region since at least 1142 AD (Mann & Fields, 1997). It was famously invoked in 1701 between the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacies during the Great Peace of Montreal.

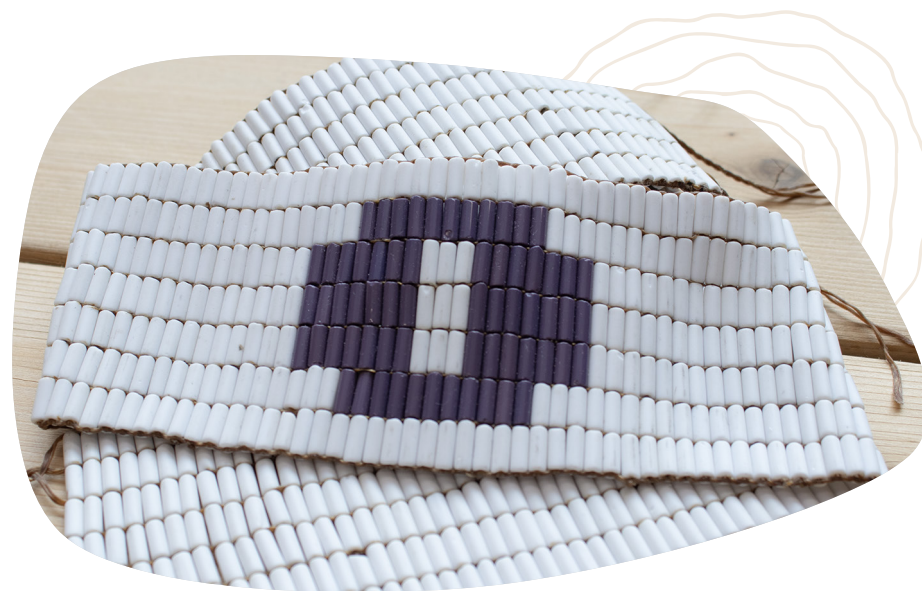


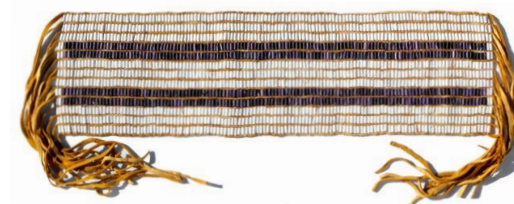
Figure 2 – Dish with One Spoon Wampum

In this context, the Wampum describes the sharing of the land known as ‘beaver hunting grounds,’ which includes Southwestern Ontario as represented by the bowl in the middle of the belt (See Figure 2). This also acknowledges the finite resources of the territory, while invoking shared principles around taking only what you need.

The spoon laying across the centre serves as a reminder that we must take only what we need, and with equity and reciprocity in mind. By encoding this relationship in the Dish with One Spoon Wampum, all parties agree to share equally with one another, and care for the territory so that the resources will remain for future generations (AFN, n.d.; Chitty, n.d.).

TWO ROW WAMPUM

The Two Row Wampum (or *Kaswentha*) is foundational to today’s Indigenous-Crown relationships, and is a Treaty made between the Dutch settlers and Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) in 1613. This Wampum was meant to govern the spirit and intent of the relationship between the Indigenous Nations and settlers (or non-Indigenous peoples) in Turtle Island forever (AFN, n.d.; Borrows, 1997). The white beads in the belt symbolize the “peace, friendship and respect” (Sinclair, 2013, p. 126) as well as “equality...dignity and a sharing of the river we travel on” (Sinclair, 2013, p. 126). The two purple rows symbolize two vessels travelling down the river (of life), one a birch bark canoe in which First Nations Peoples travel, and the other a ship in which the Europeans travel, each with their own values, customs, and laws. (Borrows, 1997.)



THE TWO ROW TEACHES US THAT INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SHALL:

- be equals (described as brothers, in contrast to the paternalistic relationship imposed by the crown)
- remain distinct (in their own vessels) and self-determined, without interference over one another’s lifestyles and affairs
- co-exist harmoniously, and interdependently

While Haudenosaunee in origin, the Two Row Wampum is seen as the foundation for all relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Nations, as it holds the principles of working together in a good way. “Kaswentha emphasizes the distinct identity of the two peoples and a mutual engagement to coexist in peace without interference in the affairs of the other” (Vowel, 2018, p. 245). However, it is clear that there is more work to be done before this Wampum is realized.

“

The Two Row Belt [...] depicts the *Kaswentha* relationship in visual form via a long beaded belt of white wampum with two parallel lines of purple wampum along its length – the lines symbolizing a separate-but-equal relationship between two entities based on mutual benefit and mutual respect for each party’s inherent freedom of movement – neither side may attempt to “steer” the vessel of the other as it travels along its own, self-determined path.

– Vowel, 2018, p. 17

Figure 3 - *Kaswentha* (Two Row Wampum). Photo by Darren Bonaparte, 2000.

4Rs Approach: Guide for Working with Indigenous Students

Instead of demanding that Indigenous students assimilate into dominant university culture, the 4R's framework shifts responsibility onto institutions and their representatives to learn about Indigenous Peoples and to reflect upon and dismantle ethnocentric bias. University communities must develop relationships with Indigenous Peoples and better understand how processes of colonialism and dominant Euro-Western norms are embedded in Canada's educational system.

"Dr. Michelle Pidgeon (2016, 2008) has tailored the 4Rs Framework in a way that privileges Indigenous ways of being and knowing. This framework recognizes the holistic and interconnected nature of Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous learners" (Brunette-Debassige & Richmond, 2018, p. 3).



Figure 4 - Guide for Working with Indigenous Students (Pidgeon, 2008)

FROM THE GUIDE FOR WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS STUDENTS:

RESPECT	RELEVANCE	RECIPROCITY	RESPONSIBILITY
For perspectives that Indigenous students bring into the learning environment, for Indigenous thought and scholarship in academic discourses, and for Indigenous ways of knowing as valid in the academy.	Means that Indigenous students' interests and diverse learning needs are considered in the development and delivery of university curriculum, policies, practices, programs, and services.	Involves establishing mutually beneficial relationships between local Indigenous Peoples and the university and between and among faculty, staff, and Indigenous students.	Entails taking critical and meaningful action at personal and institutional levels that contributes to removing systemic barriers and to engaging all students and communities in the long-term processes of reconciliation.

(Brunette-Debassige & Richmond, 2018, p. 3)

TWO-EYED SEEING & ETHICAL SPACE

Meaningful collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can also benefit from being grounded in an ethical space and Two-Eyed Seeing framework, as demonstrated by Figure 5.

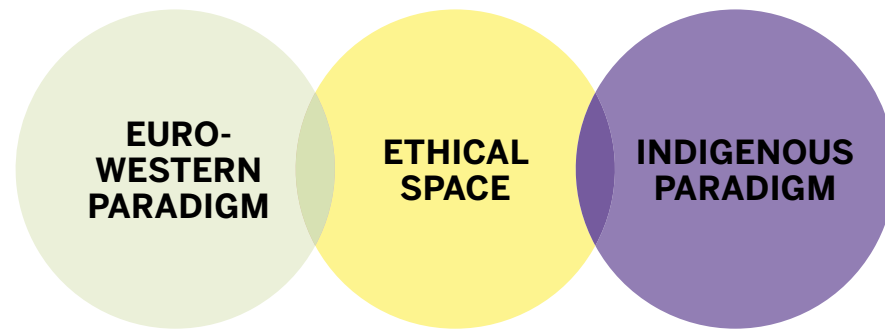


Figure 5 – Ethical Space. Adapted from Ermine, 2007.

Two-Eyed Seeing, or *Etuaptmumk* is a popular Indigenous research methodology in science, shared by Mikmaw Elder Albert Marshall, that has been adapted by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and educators from diverse disciplines engaging in collaborative work. Two-Eyed Seeing "refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all" (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012, p. 335). A Two-Eyed Seeing framework recognizes Indigenous epistemologies as contemporary, evolving, distinct and whole, equal to Euro-Western epistemologies, and requires nuance and context to determine when to weave back and forth between diverse knowledges (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012). At its core, Two-Eyed Seeing is about relationality – the focus of this Allyship Principle – or the relationships between diverse worldviews and the act of creating space for the power imbalance that colonial paradigms impose on Indigenous Peoples' knowledges to be dismantled.

Creating space for a Two-Eyed Seeing approach involves interrogating the ways that colonial paradigms assert that Euro-Western epistemologies and ontologies take precedence over Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, on Indigenous lands. Developing the nuance and depth of understanding required to weave between Indigenous and Euro-Western contexts and paradigms can benefit from drawing on another framework, Willie Ermine's conceptualization of Roger Poole's ethical space (2007). Ermine writes that "a schism still exists in understanding between Indigenous Peoples and Western society [...] although more complex than presented here, the historical dimension of these relations can be envisioned as a repeating pattern of connect and disconnect, of engagement and disengagement, of union and rupture" (2007, p. 196). Ermine asserts that the impacts of colonization on Indigenous-Settler relationships are incredibly complex, and our knowledges are so "entangled and enmeshed [...] we continue stumbling about trying to create clarity of the transcultural issues that confront us without any thought given to what the rules of engagement might be between these two human communities" (Ermine, 2007, p. 197). Intentionally navigating these 'rules of engagement' within ethical space can equip Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with a common language (Andreotti et al., 2019) to explore where the paradigms align, and where tensions emerge.

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

- In your work with Indigenous colleagues and/or communities, have you encountered Wampum, Two-Eyed Seeing, Ethical Space, or Towards Braiding lenses and frameworks?
- What is your understanding of the lenses and frameworks? Do you need to deepen your understanding?
- How do these frameworks enhance your understanding of previous Allyship Principles, especially those presented in Section 1?
- How will you navigate your relationships with these frameworks in mind? How can you apply these frameworks more intentionally going forward?





ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

TRC PRINCIPLE #1:

The United Nations' "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" provides the framework for Reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.

– TRC, 2015c, p. 3

Honouring Indigenous Sovereignty and Self-determination in Decision-Making and Relationship-Building Processes

The TRC Reconciliation Principles instructs governments and institutions to invoke the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* or UNDRIP (United Nations, 2007), as "the framework for Reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society" (TRC, 2015a, p. 21). UNDRIP and the many other recommendations and reports, including the *Calls to Action* and *Calls for Justice*, emphasize the importance of honouring the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous Nations (United Nations, 2007).

Activating this principle requires consideration around the ways in which solutions and ideas are generated. Often, people are eager to help and have an idea or solution, but the solutions and ideas should be generated through collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and Communities – this is self-determination. Indigenous people are not idle or passive in building and shaping their communities, and often there is a plethora of work already done that has created a strong foundation for the work that you are about to do. Drawing on past initiatives, and experiences of those engaged creates unique opportunities to drive ideas and solutions towards new directions with the support of people who have led the work in the past. In some cases, Indigenous groups, organizations, communities or Nations might have already begun work on an initiative or solution, and it becomes frustrating for Indigenous people already engaged in the work when another group starts a similar initiative that draws on the same grants, resources, and people. Scarcity mindsets risk situations of lateral violence. At the same time, it is important to recognize that reinventing wheels can contribute to over-engagement, burnout, and disengagement by Indigenous collaborators, and create unnecessary tensions between community members.

In instances where non-community members, or people new to the work, present ideas and solutions that are already underway or have been tried, it can come across as condescending at best, and ignorant at worst. Ways to circumvent this is to follow the Allyship Principles outlined in this guide: build relationships first, conduct informal and formal environmental scans in partnership, and work with the Indigenous Peoples impacted by the issue for which you are trying to create solutions. It is often more generative to find out what work is already being done and how you can contribute.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HONOURING INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION IN DECISION-MAKING & RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING PROCESSES:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

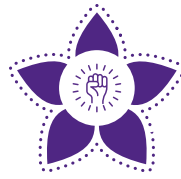
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#)
- Sharon Stein and Jan Hare's [The Challenges of Interrupting Climate Colonialism in Higher Ed](#)
- Global Indigenous Data Alliance's [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](#)
- University of British Columbia Library's [Indigitization Toolkit: Managing Digital Information](#)
- [The Native Governance Center](#)
- Chiefs of Ontario [Understanding First Nations Sovereignty](#)
- Assembly of First Nation's [Promoting the Enforcement of International Standards to Protect the Human Rights of First Nations People in Canada](#)
- Yellowhead Institute's [Indigenous First Sovereignty in Ontario](#)
- Charlotte Cote for National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health's [Indigenous Food Sovereignty](#) (video)
- Melissa Oskineegish and Leisa Desmoulins's [A Vision Towards Indigenous Education Sovereignty in Northwestern Ontario](#)
- Vanessa Anthony-Stevens's [Cultivating Alliances: Reflections on the Roles of Non-Indigenous Collaborators in Indigenous Educational Sovereignty](#)
- National Indian Brotherhood/ Assembly of First Nations' [Indian Control of Indian Education](#) (policy paper)
- Tahu Kukutai and John Taylor's [Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an Agenda](#)

CONSIDERATIONS AROUND INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY AT THE UNIVERSITY MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Educational sovereignty
- Data sovereignty
- Governance
- Cultural sovereignty
- Land stewardship

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is my familiarity with the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)? How does it inform my work?
- How do our policies align with UNDRIP? What opportunities exist to increase alignment?
- What do I understand about Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination? What assumptions might I be making?
- What is Indigenous data sovereignty? Indigenous educational sovereignty? Indigenous food sovereignty? Indigenous knowledge sovereignty? If you do not know, how will you find out?
- Where on campus, in the community, municipality, province, or nationally, do I see examples of Indigenous sovereignty/self-determination being exercised?
- How can I strengthen my support/advocacy of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination on campus and in the broader community?
- When proposing solutions for issues faced by Indigenous people or communities, am I considering who asked for ideas or support? How have I consulted Indigenous people and communities? How will Indigenous people lead this project?
- Am I comfortable with my ideas or solutions taking new forms as I engage with Indigenous people?
- Am I willing to listen and adapt my thinking to ensure I am prioritizing Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination in decision-making processes?
- What existing projects are Indigenous people leading and creating in my unit/faculty/department/institution, that I can support on campus and/or beyond?
- Before I start a project, have I investigated what work is already being done, and who is already engaged, so I do not cause over-engagement?
- What are some ways that I can share space and resources for Indigenous Peoples to come together to collaborate with each other?



ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Using Power, Resources and Privilege to Advocate for and Support Indigenous-Led Initiatives

According to your positionality (intersecting social identities and resulting proximity to power and privilege), this principle will look different for everyone. Allies stand behind, and advocate for, Indigenous-led initiatives by listening and amplifying Indigenous Peoples' needs and concerns.

You can respect and support Indigenous leadership by waiting until you are invited to ask questions and making sure that you are not interrupting conversations, teachings, and activities – especially ceremonies. Creating space for, speaking up, and advocating for Indigenous leadership is especially important when Indigenous Peoples have been excluded, included in a tokenistic way (or as an afterthought), ignored, or undermined. Even when projects and initiatives have Indigenous leadership and oversight, often tensions can emerge when the expectations of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people involved do not necessarily align, or the leadership is tokenistic and the power dynamic is not equal.

In *Towards Braiding* (2019), Vanessa Andreotti and Elwood Jimmy explain that “the cycle of relationship fractures is a pattern that is systemic in nature. This means that the problem is not an individualized problem but rather is rooted in historical and colonial structural patterns that are normalized (perceived to be natural) and rewarded in society” (p. 55). This resource offers some guidance for ‘when things fall apart,’ such as thinking through ways to shift how we relate to one another in settler-colonial institutional structures and hierarchies. Sometimes, relationships or projects fall apart because the accountabilities embedded in the outcomes prioritize the needs of institutions over the needs of the Indigenous people with whom we are collaborating. Utilizing power and privilege, to ensure accountability for long-term processes such as Reconciliation, is also crucial to sustaining long-term relationships.

TRC PRINCIPLE #9:

Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust-building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.

– TRC, 2015c, p. 4



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR USING POWER, RESOURCES AND PRIVILEGE TO ADVOCATE FOR AND SUPPORT INDIGENOUS-LED INITIATIVES:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#)
- Sharon Stein and Jan Hare's [The Challenges of Interrupting Climate Colonialism in Higher Ed](#)
- Western University's Office of EDI Online Module [Transforming Power and White Privilege](#)
- [In Their Moccasins](#) (open online game and resource)
- Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, and Sharon Stein's [Towards Braiding](#)
- University of Manitoba's [Working in Good Ways Practitioner Workbook](#) (pp. 48-51)

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is my sphere of influence?
- How does my positionality affect my sphere of influence?
- What is privilege? What relationships to power and privilege do I hold?
- What needs have I heard from Indigenous colleagues and/or community members that I can learn more about? How can I bring these needs forward to my team?
- How can I ensure I am advocating and amplifying, not speaking on behalf of?
- What biases or stereotypes do I hold about Indigenous people? What can I do to critically examine them?
- What does advocacy for and supporting Indigenous initiatives look like?
- What Indigenous initiatives are already occurring around me that I can support?

What are my Roles and Responsibilities in Reconciliation, Decolonization, and Indigenization?

Contributing to decolonization, Indigenization and Reconciliation at the university is a collaborative, interdisciplinary, iterative, and critically self-reflexive process. It is important to note these terms should not be conflated, and it is through strengthening and building relationships that roles and responsibilities within these processes become clearer. There are many resources available to help aspiring allies understand the different approaches and initiatives that contribute to decolonization, Indigenization, and Reconciliation. If you are unsure what these distinctions are, return to resources outlined in Section 1 of this guide, including the Office of Indigenous Initiatives' [Key Terms sheet](#) or the *Indigenous Teaching and Learning* modules (2022) developed by Dr. Candace Brunette-Debassige. This guide will become more effective when you understand the distinctions and where the processes might overlap.

We often hear the message 'Reconciliation is everyone's responsibility,' but one's responsibilities towards Reconciliation depend on positionality. As the *Calls to Action* (2015) and *Calls for Justice* (2019) advocate, it is the responsibility of everyone who lives in Canada to learn the truth and not stand in the way of Reconciliation, justice, or equity (TRC, 2015a; MMIWG, 2019). However, the 'work' of Reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization looks different for everyone. The chart below (Table 1) is intended to help you begin to visualize where you might make an impact as an ally to Indigenous people at Western. As you review it, consider:

- Who is already doing this work and how can I support them?
- What Indigenization, Decolonization, and Reconciliation work is already underway?

WHAT IF THE ANSWER IS 'NO'?

For those questions in Table 1 where you find it difficult to answer, or where your answer is 'no', consider revisiting earlier phases of this guide, particular the resources listed in Section 1. As noted throughout this guide, Allyship is a complex journey that does not easily map onto traditional academic work.

WHO	WHAT	RECONCILIATION	DECOLONIZATION	INDIGENIZATION
Scholars	Research	Is my research responding to <i>Calls to Action</i> or <i>Calls For Justice</i> ?	Does my research and/or methodologies reinforce colonial logics? Does my research data respect Indigenous data sovereignty?	Do I have strong community partnerships? Do I know how to center Indigenous community needs? If not, how can I utilize the Western Research Allyship Guide , Guide for Working with Indigenous Students , and Guidelines for Working with Indigenous Community Members in my scholarship?
Educators	Curriculum	How are we teaching about Reconciliation?	Do students have the opportunity to interrogate Euro-Western canon and disciplines using a decolonial lens?	Does program curriculum reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and being in ethical and respectful ways? Do we utilize the Guide for Working with Indigenous Students ?
	Pedagogy	How are we responding to relevant <i>Calls to Action</i> ?	How do we engage in decolonized pedagogies?	How do I respectfully and ethically engage Indigenous pedagogies? How do I build in flexibility in my courses to allow students to attend ceremony and important cultural events? If I do not, have I engaged with available Truth and Reconciliation resources?

WHO	WHAT	RECONCILIATION	DECOLONIZATION	INDIGENIZATION
Leadership	Policy	How are we responding to relevant <i>Calls to Action</i> ? How is Western embedding the Calls into policy?	How do our policies reinforce colonial logics? How do we ground our policies in Euro-Western paradigms?	Are Indigenous people engaged in leadership of policy initiatives? Are policies reflective of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing?
	Administrative Processes	Are financial processes in place to efficiently pay honoraria to Indigenous community members? Is there sufficient budget allocated to do this work ethically and respectfully? Are administrative processes efficient? Are they timely?		
	Institutional & Space Planning	How are we responding to the relevant <i>Calls to Action</i> and the <i>Calls for Justice</i> ?	Have we interrogated the ways that Western has taken up space on Indigenous lands?	How do our spaces, campus, and the land we occupy, reflect, and/or incorporate Indigenous pedagogies and epistemologies? How do we engage Indigenous places and land-based pedagogies in our curriculum? How do our land management policies and practices prioritize native species and Indigenous land management practices?
Administration	Departments / Programs	Do our programs respond to relevant <i>Calls to Action</i> ? Do our programs account for the impact of colonization in the field/discipline on Indigenous people?	Do our programs make space for decolonial theory and praxis? How has the discipline contributed to upholding colonial logics?	Are our programs responsive to the needs of Indigenous communities?
	Staffing	Is there a baseline understanding of Reconciliation and what that means for our work at Western?	Do we give staff time and resources to learn/unlearn? Are staff trained adequately to do this work? Do strategic and operational plans identify decolonization as a priority?	Do we have a strong Indigenous staff/faculty complement?
Staff	Services	Do our services respond to the <i>Calls to Action</i> or <i>Calls for Justice</i> ?	Do our services reinforce colonial logics? Are they accessible to Indigenous people?	Are our services culturally relevant and appropriate?
Human Resources	Employee Supports	Are our supports trauma-informed for Indigenous people?	How do we support Indigenous staff and faculty experiencing racism or microaggressions?	Do we offer culturally relevant and appropriate employee supports and opportunities?
Student Groups	Student Supports	Do our services respond to the <i>Calls to Action</i> or <i>Calls for Justice</i> ?	Do our services reinforce colonial logic? Are they accessible to Indigenous people?	Are our services culturally relevant and appropriate?



A Note on the Complexity of Reconciliation

Sometimes Reconciliation becomes exclusively focused on the impact of Residential Schools on Indigenous Peoples, despite many of the *Calls to Action* (2015) applying beyond that legacy. Many Indigenous scholars have critiqued the way that Reconciliation has become institutionalized (Simpson, 2011) and made into a 'spectacle' (Daigle, 2019). By narrowly defining 'Reconciliation' as "focused only on residential schools rather than the broader set of relationships aimed at assimilation and political genocide, legislation, and practices, there is a risk that Reconciliation will "level the playing field in the eyes of Canadians" (Simpson, 2011, p. 14). In this light, it is also important to critically reflect on the ways that "colonial power gets reproduced through spectacles and good-feeling reconciliation mandates implemented by Canadian postsecondary institutions" (Daigle, 2019, p. 708).

While many Indigenous people and scholars see value in Reconciliation, the *Calls to Action*, and working collaboratively in institutional settings, Simpson questions: "Are we participating in a process that allows the state to co-op the individual and collective pain and suffering of our people, while also criminalizing the inter-generational impacts of residential schools and ignoring the larger neo-assimilation project to which our children are now subjected?" (Simpson, 2011, p. 21). This query is something that Indigenous colleagues may be grappling with as they participate in relevant work of the university, such as helping to draft strategic plans, organize events and learning opportunities, among other activities.



ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Nurturing Culturally Inclusive and Trauma-Informed Learning Environments

This Allyship Principle builds on Western’s existing commitment to create positive, safe working and learning environments for everyone. Trauma-informed practices account for an individuals’ complex identities and relationships to the topics being discussed.

This can look like posting culturally appropriate helplines for emotional and mental support during the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR) or intervening in conversations when allies notice an Indigenous student or colleague is emotionally impacted. It can also look like asking Indigenous colleagues if they have capacity to help you understand nuance around something, such as identity or residential schools, before launching into the topic.

Creating ‘safe’ emotional and mental spaces can be difficult, because we can’t predict whether people will say or do harmful things, we can only control how we respond to them. Unpacking bias, stereotypes, and harmful misconceptions is emotionally intensive labour. Many people are not aware that something they’ve said or done is offensive, and in the spirit of collegiality, and relationality, Indigenous colleagues do their best to help people understand their missteps in an effective way. This often creates a dynamic where Indigenous colleagues are expected to divorce their own feelings of discomfort to attend to the discomfort of non-Indigenous colleagues when explaining difficult nuances. This can leave Indigenous people, especially those with a direct relationship to the topic at hand, open to re-traumatization. As educators, as well as staff and leadership in an educational institution, we have a responsibility to provide accountable learning environments for ourselves and our students. This means that while we recognize everyone is on their own unlearning journey, we must consider the impacts on each other and account for that emotional labour.

Creating inclusive spaces for Indigenous ways of knowing and being to flourish, or for Indigenous perspectives to be heard, requires actioning many of the principles in this document. Creating culturally-inclusive space is strengthened through Indigenous cultural literacy (Allyship Principle #2) and looks like addressing barriers to Indigenous cultural expression, such as requiring advanced permission to burn medicines (e.g., smudging). Cultural or Indigenous literacy is also being cognizant to avoid ‘pan-Indianism’ (amalgamating diverse Indigenous cultural practices together as if they are one), as not all Indigenous people practice aspects of their culture or spirituality in the same way. Sometimes a culturally inclusive space for one Indigenous group may not be the same for another. For example, in some First Nations cultures, owls are not typically utilized in artistic designs because of the stories and teachings they carry, while Inuit utilize owls in their art and designs because of the stories and teachings they carry in their culture.

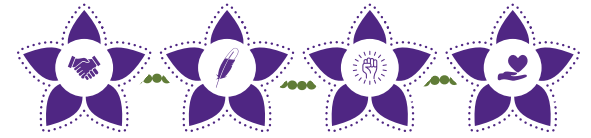
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR NURTURING CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE AND TRAUMA-INFORMED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- Brianna Olsen’s [Trauma-Informed Interventions through an Indigenous worldview](#) (webinar)
- Suzane Method’s [A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching the Colonization of the Americas](#)
- Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti and Sharon Stein’s [Towards Braiding](#)
- York University’s [Indigenous Cultural Competency and Trauma-Informed Training](#)

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What can I do to cultivate trauma-informed environments?
- What can I do to be more inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, cultures, and perspectives?
- What kinds of approaches, frameworks, and tools can I engage with in situations where I observe something that is culturally insensitive, racist (i.e., microaggressions), or that disregards trauma-informed frameworks?
- How do you usually respond to being called out on harmful practices that are perceived as normal?
- How equipped are you to have difficult conversations without relationships falling apart?
- “If you hear something that triggers you or makes you upset, what strategies and group dynamics might help ground you so that you can return to a more generative space, and how can you ensure these strategies don’t rely on Indigenous Peoples’ emotional labour?” (Jimmy, Andreotti, & Stein, 2019, p. 50)
- Are you able to engage with and hold space for multiple competing, or even contradictory Indigenous perspectives among Indigenous Peoples?
- Individual Indigenous people, like all people, are also complex and contradictory. Are you able to engage with and hold space for the full, complex humanity of the Indigenous individuals you work with?



SECTION TWO: FINAL REFLECTION

- 01 How did this section make you feel?
- 02 When have you seen (or performed) Allyship that seemed generous on the surface but upheld power structures?
- 03 What ideas in this section caused discomfort for you? What ideas resonated?
- 04 Are you only open to Indigenous perspectives that make sense to you? How much do you expect those perspectives to be explained in ways that you’re already comfortable with? (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein, 2019)
- 05 How might your desire for clarity, certainty, or progress interfere with genuine relationship-building?
- 06 Are you willing to be genuinely changed by what you encounter and learn on your journey to Allyship?



SECTION THREE: COMMITMENT



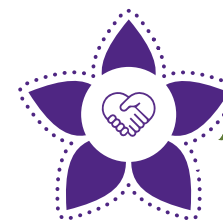


SECTION THREE: COMMITMENT

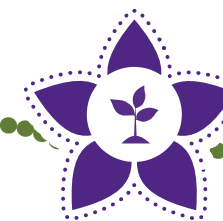
This guide has been divided into three sections, following the three long steps articulated by Jimmy, Andreotti, and Stein (2019). These sections are anticipated places where aspiring allies will learn, step away from, and then revisit the different principles outlined within that section.

Section 3 focuses on Commitment, where allies and prospective allies move from performative support to principled, accountable, and sustained relational practice. In order to engage in decolonizing, Indigenizing and Reconciliation processes “a set of principled commitments toward the ‘long haul’ of this process needs to be in place, including a commitment to continue the work even/especially when things become difficult and uncomfortable” (Jimmy, Andreotti, & Stein, p. 23).

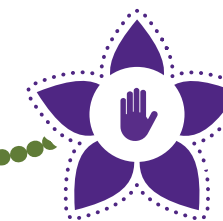
IT IS IN THE COMMITMENT SECTION THAT READERS ARE ASKED TO WORK THROUGH THE FINAL THREE ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLES:



Respecting Indigenous community leadership, protocols, processes, & approaches



Supporting the Reclamation of Indigenous knowledge systems & lands through Indigenous-led cultural resurgence & language revitalization



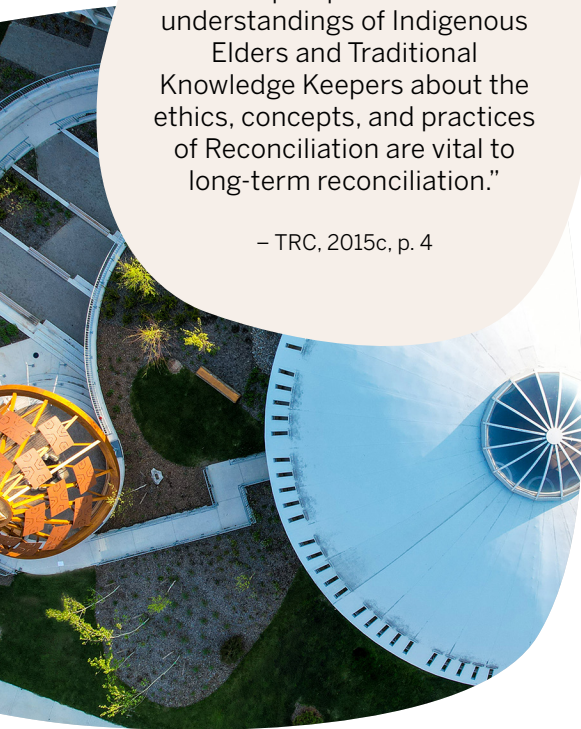
Closing gaps, removing barriers, decolonizing; & dismantling oppressive systemic structures



TRC PRINCIPLE #7:

“The perspectives and understandings of Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers about the ethics, concepts, and practices of Reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.”

– TRC, 2015c, p. 4



IF YOU ARE REQUESTING KNOWLEDGE SHARING AT AN EVENT, OR SEEKING KNOWLEDGE THAT CAN ONLY BE GAINED THROUGH AN ELDER OR A KNOWLEDGE KEEPER, YOU SHOULD:

- be mindful of which community or Nation the information is relevant for;
- develop a relationship with the respective community; and,
- offer an honorarium or compensation for the Knowledge Keeper's time.

If you are engaging in an independent learning journey, you should seek out Indigenous sources such as:

- American Indians in Children's Literature Blog: <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com>
- Unsettling Canada by Arthur Manuel: <https://unsettlingcanada.com>

ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Respecting Indigenous Community Leadership, Protocols, Processes, and Approaches

Indigenous leadership is often non-hierarchical, collaborative, and consensus-building. Engaging Indigenous people meaningfully in projects and initiatives from conceptualization to projected outcomes reduces the risk of harm in the relationship and in outcomes. For some projects, such as land use and development, “Free, Prior, and Informed” consent is critical, and aligns with Canadian and international law (United Nations, 2007).

The concept “nothing about us, without us” is often shared by Western's Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President Indigenous Initiatives, Dr. Christy R. Bressette. When it comes to decisions that impact Indigenous communities, students, and people, Indigenous people need to be a part of not only the decisions, but the processes leading up to them. This relational work can take time and should “move at the speed of trust” (Brown, 2017, 31).

This also means developing a thorough understanding of Indigenous governance and concepts of Indigenous leadership, and the nuances between consulting with Indigenous people as individuals, versus entire Indigenous communities/Nations, or formal or informal Indigenous leadership. For example, Indigenous leadership are not limited to, but can include Elders, Youth, members of Assemblies or Tribal Councils, Chiefs Associations, Treaty Organizations, Confederations, Clan Leaders, Hereditary Chiefs, Band-Elected Chief and Council and/or members of various Indigenous organizations. Who to engage and when can be difficult to navigate and might even require the support of hiring a navigator, coordinator, or advisor to support the work.

In many communities Indigenous leaders seek to represent consensus from their Nation, or the Nations/Peoples they are elected or appointed to lead, but the impact of colonialism means this is not always the case. Recognizing when to engage Indigenous experts, conduct Indigenous community engagement and engage Indigenous leaders is part of honouring Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination in decision-making, and relationship-building processes. In many cases, solely engaging one leader, or a specific type of leadership, does not give a full representation of the community's needs and/or desires.

For example, for some communities, engaging both the elected band council and Clan Mothers (matriarchal leaders) can create a more fulsome picture of the community's needs/desires. Considering all the other principles listed in this resource, if actions and projects circumvent Indigenous leaderships' autonomy and oversight, there is a risk of reproducing colonial harm.

Additionally, Indigenous Nations have their own distinct protocols and processes surrounding community engagement, consensus-building, knowledge-sharing, research, governance, and education. Sometimes these timelines do not line up with academic calendars or grant deadlines. When collaborating, make sure you create achievable timelines with Indigenous collaborators, that account for the needs they identify which may involve steps including, but not limited to visiting, engaging Knowledge Keepers, relationship-building, understanding cultural protocols, and establishing a collaborative process or framework.

In terms of Allyship recognition, Indigenous communities are best positioned to determine their own allies, since self-declaring can be a form of performative Allyship and is commonplace. Recognition of allies may be explicit through use of a term or may be implied through a request for collaboration or willingness to work together. It is also important to accept the 'right to refuse' collaboration or engagement by Indigenous People(s) and take this as a learning opportunity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR RESPECTING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, PROTOCOLS, PROCESSES AND APPROACHES:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- Rachel Chong (2022) [Indigenous Information Literacy](#)
- Western University's [More than Words: Guide to Land Acknowledgments at Western](#)
- Western University's [Indigenous Teaching & Learning Series](#)
- Western University's [Connecting for Climate Change Action \(Online course\)](#)
- Western's Office of Indigenous Initiatives [Treaties Recognition Week 2020 Speakers Series](#)
 - [Episode 1](#)
 - [Episode 2](#)
 - [Episode 3](#)
- Ontario Institute for Studies on Education (OISE)'s – [Online Modules](#)
 - [We Are All Treaty People](#)
 - [A Short History of Indigenous Education](#)
 - [Indigenous Ways of Knowing](#)
 - [Indigenous Worldviews](#)
- Yellowhead Institute's
 - [Land Back Report & Online Course](#)
 - [Cash Back Report](#)
- [Indigenous Students, Indigeneity & Experience in Universities](#)
- Assembly of First Nations' [Treaties & Why They're Important](#)
- Assembly of First Nations' [What is cultural competency?](#)
- Centennial College's [Our Stories: First Peoples in Canada](#)
- Kory Wilson and Colleen Hodgson's [Pulling Together: Foundations Guide](#)

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE: REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Am I familiar with the cultural and governance protocols of Indigenous colleagues/organizations/Nations I work with?
- How will I gauge what is appropriate protocol?
- Am I able to accommodate processes and timelines of Indigenous colleagues/ collaborators? Why or why not?
- What is Indigenous leadership generally? What is Indigenous leadership culturally, to the Peoples of the lands on which I work/teach and/ or create?
- Who can be considered an Indigenous leader? Who determines this? How do I understand leadership, culturally? How does this align or diverge from my own cultural or political concepts of leadership?
- Am I seeking engagement with specific kinds of Indigenous leadership, while ignoring others, based on my own cultural understandings? Who are local Indigenous leaders I should be aware of?
- How do I engage with Indigenous leadership?
- Have I engaged Indigenous leadership/ collaborators in a tokenistic way in the past?
- How can I shift this practice for next time?
- Who are the leaders/champions of Indigenousization and/or Reconciliation, and/or Decolonization, in my field/ discipline/unit/department/faculty? Are they Indigenous? How does this reflect Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination? How are they accountable to Indigenous communities if they do not share that positionality? What mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability?
- How can I support and integrate Indigenous protocols and processes, while critically reflecting on cultural appropriation?



ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Supporting the Reclamation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Lands Through Indigenous-Led Cultural Resurgence and Language Revitalization

Many Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers have visited Western over the years, sharing their knowledges and stories, such as the *Great Law of Peace* (pg 43) and *Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings* (pg 44). Often, cultural teachings like this require context that is best provided by Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers who are recognized by their Nations and communities as carriers of the knowledge to provide these teachings. Engaging Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members, and inviting them to speak and share knowledge at Western is one way the university is observing protocols around knowledge-sharing. By supporting Indigenous-led cultural resurgence and language revitalization at Western, we are strengthening intergenerational cultural transmissions.

For many Indigenous people, reconnecting to strengthening their connections to languages, cultures, and knowledges is a significant part of their healing and reconciliation process. Though processes of Indigenization and incorporating Indigenous languages and knowledges into all facets of the university are a part of our mandate and strategic plans, we sometimes take for granted how hard Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers work to gain that knowledge, and how much they fought for it. The reality is, due to colonization, a lot of Indigenous people have not had opportunities to know and embody their culture, governance, or language; or have relationships to Elders and Knowledge Keepers in their Nation.

Since many Indigenous communities are revitalizing and reclaiming their ways of knowing and being, allies can support their goals and desires by ensuring Indigenous people are prioritized in the development of learning opportunities around Indigenous ways of knowing and being. We need to consider how Indigenous colleagues need time and opportunities to connect with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to maintain relationships and continue to provide their holistic cultural lens that their work requires, before making this knowledge widely available to the non-Indigenous Western community.



THE GREAT LAW OF PEACE

This law shares the story of the Peacemaker who was sent to help the Haudenosaunee People when they were experiencing a time of feud and violence between each other. In this teaching, the Creator sends a message to the people through the Peacemaker, who went to speak to each of the five Haudenosaunee Nations about creating peace. The five Nations all eventually agreed to come together, each maintaining their own independent leadership, and the Great Law of Peace was solidified, forming the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. (Haudenosaunee Confederacy, 2019; Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, n.d.). This story is integral to Haudenosaunee ways of being and helps to guide people in living in harmony and peace with one another.

TRC PRINCIPLE #8:

“Supporting Indigenous Peoples’ cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the Reconciliation process are essential.”

– TRC, 2015c, p. 4

ENGAGING ELDERS & KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Elders and Knowledge Keepers play vital roles in their communities, Clans, and Nations in the transmission of cultural knowledge and language. When they offer their knowledge for a class or event, they are taking time that could be spent with their communities, which is often a full-time occupation that supports their livelihood. Their time and expertise should be valued through appropriate compensation in places like post-secondary institutions. As such, it is a good practice to provide an honorarium to recognize the contributions of Indigenous Peoples through various engagements. [As per direction provided by Western’s Office of Indigenous Initiatives](#), these are typically provided at the time of engagement, by cash or cheque, and at minimum should be at a rate of \$100 per hour; \$350 for a half day; and \$700 for a full day. Travel and mileage expenses should also be covered, in addition to an honorarium. Honoraria are not applicable for those employed by Western.

THE SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS

The Seven Grandfather Teachings include Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility, and Wisdom. These teachings are gifts that Indigenous Peoples implement in pursuit of a “good life.” The Creator gifted these teachings to the Anishinaabe People, as guidance on how-to live in harmony with all living things, including one another (Seven Generations Education Institute, 2021).



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING THE RECLAMATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND LANDS:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- Western University’s [Guidelines for Working with Indigenous Community Members](#)
- Western University’s [Procedure for Burning Traditional Medicines on Campus](#)
- Western University’s [Indigenous Days of Significance](#) (i.e., June is Indigenous History Month; June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples’ Day; and September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation).
- Sogoreate’ Land Trust’s [Rematriation Resource Guide](#)
- The Canadian Encyclopedia’s [Cultural Appropriation & Indigenous Peoples of Canada](#)
- Indigenous Corporate Training’s [Why Cultural Appropriation is Disrespectful](#)
- Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)’s [Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being](#)
- Simon Fraser University’s [Think Before you Appropriate: A Guide for Creators & Designers](#)
- First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC)’s [Understanding the First Nations Principles of OCAP](#)
- Leanne Simpson’s [Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back](#)

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE: REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What do I think I know or understand about Indigenous cultures and knowledges? How did I come to learn that?
- Have I unintentionally engaged in cultural appropriation? How can I learn from this and move forward in a good way?
- Do I have awareness of local/national days of significance to Indigenous Peoples?
- Where do I see myself supporting Indigenous-led reclamation and/or revitalization?
- When I invite Indigenous people to speak or collaborate, do I ask if there are any protocols to be observed?
- When is it appropriate to offer tobacco to an Indigenous person?



ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE

Closing gaps, removing barriers, decolonizing, and dismantling oppressive systemic structures

Like other post-secondary institutions across Turtle Island, Western University occupies Indigenous land, and as an “arm of the settler state,” reproduces colonial “logics of elimination, capital accumulation and dispossession” (Grande, 2018, pp. 47, 51) that perpetuate settler power & privilege.

This means Western’s institutional structures are based in the same ideas used to justify colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples, including the theft of Indigenous lands, languages, cultures, identities, and children. Dismantling these oppressive systems and structures is an ethical imperative for those with power and privilege. An important part of this is witnessing (listening to and observing) these systems in action and believing Indigenous Peoples when they share their experiences. We can also critically interrogate the systems and structures that perpetuate violence against Indigenous Peoples by engaging a decolonial lens and moving toward embodying a decolonial praxis. Like lifelong learning, decolonizing is also a process with no definitive end.

If you are not sure where to start identifying systemic structures and barriers, there are many reports and recommendations available that examine the gaps, barriers, and oppressive systems and structures Indigenous Peoples face. Familiarity with ones relevant to your field/discipline can help you to create opportunities to dismantle them.

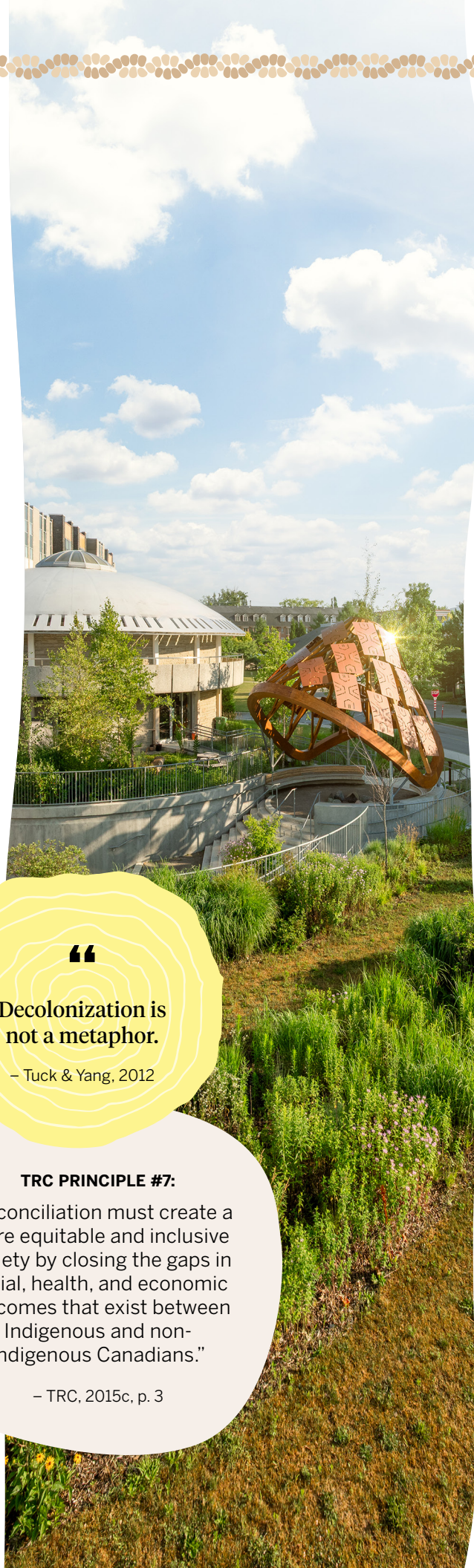
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CLOSING GAPS, REMOVING BARRIERS, DECOLONIZING; AND DISMANTLING OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMIC STRUCTURES:

Use the resources listed below to support your understanding of this principle:

- Western University’s
 - [Maamwi Gizekewag: Indigenous Curriculum & Learning Subcommittee Report](#)
 - [Towards a Decolonizing Pedagogy](#) (Module 2, Indigenous Teaching and Learning Series)
- National Indian Brotherhood/ Assembly of First Nations’s [Indian Control of Indian Education](#)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s [Final Report and Calls to Action](#)
- Government of Canada’s [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#)
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)’s [Report and Call to Justice](#)
- Chiefs of Ontario’s
 - [Health Portal Reports and Policy Recommendations](#)
 - [Decolonizing Education Modules](#)
- Assembly of First Nations’ [Resolutions](#)
- Association of Iroquois & Allied Indians’ [Resolutions and Policy Areas](#)
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami’s [Strategies and Policy Guidelines](#)
- Indigenous Climate Action’s [Decolonizing Climate Policy in Canada](#)
- Yellowhead Institute’s
 - [Calls to Action Accountability 2023 Status Update](#)
 - [How Do We Solve Structural Racism: A 5X5 Review](#)
- Tuck and Yang’s [Decolonization is not a Metaphor](#)
- Adrienne Marie Brown’s [Emergent Strategy](#)
- Candace Brunette-Debassige’s [An Indigenous Pedagogy for Decolonization](#)
- [Sandy Grande’s Refusing the University](#)

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP PRINCIPLE: REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What are some of the barriers or gaps that Indigenous People face, that are relevant to my work? If I do not know, how would I find that out?
- What is my familiarity with Indigenous-focused reports, Calls to Action, Calls for Justice, and Strategic Plans? What are some tangible actions I could consider working towards individually?
- What are the barriers I personally experience to doing Reconciliation and decolonizing work? How can I address them?
- What is decolonization? What is a decolonizing lens?
- How can I apply a decolonizing lens in my field? Discipline?
- How can I make time to learn more, if I am interested?
- What opportunities are there in my everyday roles at work to apply a decolonizing lens?
- Who is doing this work in my unit, faculty, or department that I can collaborate with? Support?



“
Decolonization is not a metaphor.
– Tuck & Yang, 2012

TRC PRINCIPLE #7:
“Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.”
– TRC, 2015c, p. 3



SECTION THREE: FINAL REFLECTION

- 01 How did this section make you feel?
- 02 What does Commitment look like if there is no recognition, reward, or resolution?
- 03 What are you willing to give up—not just offer—in the service of reciprocal relationships?
- 04 What ideas in this section caused discomfort? What resonated?
- 05 What responsibilities does our organization have to the land it is on? What are your personal responsibilities?
- 06 What does it mean to respect and honour the traditional Indigenous custodians of this place? What should we, as representatives of our organization, be doing to build a respectful relationship with the land and its original caretakers?



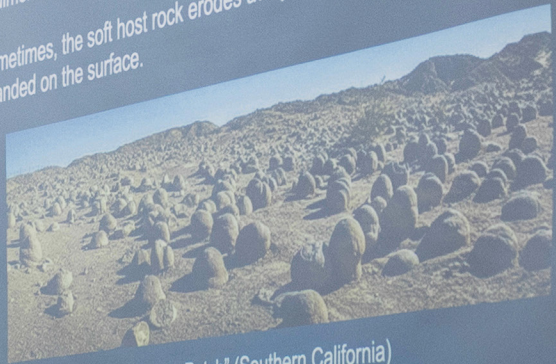
Concre...

The geologic term for the hard, cemented spheres observed at Kettle Point is "concretion."

Great, so what are concretions?

Concretions are hard, mineral-cemented masses that form within softer sedimentary rocks such as shale and sandstone.

Sometimes, the soft host rock erodes away, leaving the harder concretions stranded on the surface.



Anza Borrego "Pumpkin Patch" (Southern California)
Weathered from Miocene sandstone (~20 million years old)

**CONCLUSION:
HOW DO I KNOW
IF I'M AN ALLY?**



Conclusion: How Do I Know if I'm an Ally?

Even if you don't think of yourself as an ally, Indigenous colleagues might see you that way – but Allyship is not a bar that is only met by achieving the Principles for Indigenous Allyship. It's a relationship, and relationships are messy.

Mistakes happen, and learning is ongoing. Allies are not often recognized for their efforts and commitment to supporting the Indigenous community in large, ostentatious ways. Both Indigenous and allied faculty, students, and community members who engaged in the development of this guide said that it is more important to be recognized by Indigenous communities as an ally than to self-declare. Ultimately, Indigenous communities are best positioned to determine their allies. Knowing or not knowing whether you are an ally should not stop you from engaging with this guide or the principles outlined within it – but where you get stuck in these processes and critical self-reflections might help you understand where your Allyship praxis might need some extra support and attention.

There are some indicators that may be helpful in gauging one's efforts to be an ally. When an Indigenous person or community engages with non-Indigenous colleagues and asks for support, this can mean that trust is being established, and that the individual has been recognized as taking on a good supporting role. Further, by inviting individuals to attend different meetings, events, or ceremonies, an Indigenous community or person may be recognizing the individual is making meaningful contributions or is in a good position to learn.

Remember that transformational growth is challenging, and mistakes are inevitable along the way. What is important is that individuals acknowledge their mistakes, reflect on what they could have done differently, and apply this new knowledge to advocate for and support Indigenous Peoples.

How can I strengthen my allyship praxis?

Understand challenges and ask how to be supportive

Allyship requires the use of active listening and learning. While this is important to one's personal Allyship journey, it is critical that individuals are mindful of how they are engaging with Indigenous Peoples. Of particular importance, it is necessary to recognize that many Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous staff, faculty, and students at Western, experience work overload and are over engaged. Requesting engagement from already over engaged staff members is an example of a disingenuous and one-sided relationship, as priority is placed on the knowledge to be gained, while the wellbeing of the Indigenous individual sharing the knowledge is discounted. While it is positive that there are increased motivations to include Indigenous engagement, it is common for the Indigenous employees to be overly engaged. This often occurs when they are the only Indigenous contacts.

Further challenges arise when people pursue engagement with the belief that any Indigenous individual is a knowledge expert on all topics related to Indigenous Peoples. It is important for allies to be mindful of these challenges and identify ways that they can learn and grow, while being supportive to the Indigenous community.

Meaningful and respectful engagement should include providing opportunities for Indigenous people to engage in conversations outside of Indigenous issues. Indigenous Knowledge and the values and perspectives that Indigenous Peoples bring should be considered and included in all types of conversations. It is also important to understand that unnecessary expectations or forced participation do not embody meaningful and respectful engagement. Indigenous Peoples should not be required or expected to engage and share their views in all instances.

It is also important to be mindful of the appropriateness of the types of engagement requested from Indigenous Peoples. Oftentimes, Indigenous People are called upon to address topics or requests on issues that require significant levels of emotional labour, often with quick turnaround times. Emotional labour refers to "situations when someone needs to manage or suppress their own emotions while at work" (Willow, 2019, para.2). Many Indigenous Peoples will agree to engage, despite the associated emotional labour, because they do not want to miss the opportunity for Indigenous engagement. Further, allies can be mindful of the ongoing impact of intergenerational trauma and the other challenges Indigenous Peoples face within colonial society. Specifically, many Indigenous Peoples face profoundly negative impacts through intergenerational trauma caused by the Residential and Day School systems (Gaywsh & Mordoch, 2018). It is common for Indigenous Peoples to experience different stress triggers, family and cultural disconnection, lack of confidence, as well as identity challenges (Gaywsh & Mordoch, 2018). It is important that allies are mindful of these traumas, as well as further challenges created by the current school system, which were designed to support the settler colonial agenda (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018).

Certain discussions can be triggering to Indigenous Peoples and their peers, so work should be done to identify these, and allies should always show compassion and offer support. When planning engagements, individuals should seek guidance from appropriate resources, such as Western's Office of Indigenous Initiatives (or through the online resources listed in this guide), to determine potentially triggering content. If you are unsure if content is sensitive, it is best to include a content/trigger warning and appropriate resources. Every Indigenous person has a unique history and will respond to sensitive topics differently. During engagements, it is important that Indigenous Peoples have space and time to take breaks when needed and have access to culturally appropriate resources, such as support hotlines or counselling, when required.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON BEFORE ENGAGING AN INDIGENOUS PERSON WITH A REQUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE:

- Can I find this knowledge myself through existing resources?
- Is this knowledge the person holds (is it their area)?
- Am I providing this person enough time to reflect and engage?
- Is this ask going to involve emotional labour and, if so, how can I support this person?
- Is this a safe space and time to ask?
- How will I engage reciprocity (i.e., appropriate compensation) to acknowledge this work?

Making unintended mistakes when your intentions were coming from a good place is not a bad thing or reason to stop pursuing allyship.

THESE SHOULD BE SEEN AS OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND GROW.

FOR EXAMPLE, TO ENGAGE AN INDIGENOUS PERSON, STAFF MEMBER, OR STUDENT IN A MEANINGFUL AND RESPECTFUL WAY, ONE SHOULD:

- evaluate the topic and request for potential distressing themes or information and provide content warnings and support accordingly;
- reflect on whether the topic is relevant to the person being asked to speak (e.g., do not ask an Anishinaabe person to speak to Haudenosaunee history; do not assume every Indigenous person carries the Indigenous Knowledge you seek);
- ask if they have the time or resources to support your request, while appreciating that they may say no;
- provide advance notice of engagement and requests, including providing any materials for review;
- seek Indigenous Knowledge engagement in broad areas (e.g., sciences, math, engineering, law, etc.)

When engaging, depending on the content or experience, it is important to ensure Indigenous Peoples, and their needs are considered. This may include planning considerations such as accessibility or providing Indigenous specific and culturally relevant resources. Additionally, where requests require emotional labour, such as input into discussions related to language loss, Residential Schools, or Indigenous identity, individuals should be provided sufficient time to review and after feedback. Indigenous individuals should be permitted to review materials and provide input at a

time that is convenient for them, recognizing that they need to take breaks from the content and are balancing existing workloads. Given the emotional difficulty of this work, sufficient time should be provided for reflection and feedback

PARTICIPATE IN INDIGENOUS SPACES, EVENTS, AND CEREMONIES IN RESPECTFUL AND ETHICAL WAYS

Typically, Indigenous spaces, events, and ceremonies vary, and not all of these will be open to non-Indigenous peoples. But when invitations are extended, these should be treated as opportunities to build relationships and learn. The best way to learn about cultural practices and protocols is through engagement with Indigenous Peoples. It is important to ensure your intentions for meeting are clear and that you are wanting to engage with respect. Those who are invited to an event or ceremony have been welcomed to participate and should use this as an opportunity to observe, learn, build relationships, and ask questions when appropriate.

BEFORE YOU VISIT AN INDIGENOUS SPACE/ CEREMONY/EVENT:

- 1. Check event promotions or if the space or event has a website for protocols and/or instructions for attending:** For example, sometimes ceremonies ask participants who feel comfortable doing so to wear long skirts. This is not a requirement and is intended to be as inclusive as possible. Non-Indigenous participants are not expected to have a ribbon skirt, but might choose to wear a long skirt regardless. Some people

are sensitive to smoke and may not feel comfortable attending a ceremony where medicine burning is occurring. Other protocols may include bringing tobacco or a “feast bundle” (which is reusable plates and cutlery).

- a. If unclear, ask questions:** When your intentions come from a curious, respectful, and honest place, individuals should not be afraid to ask questions and learn about the role they can take in the event or ceremony. Individuals should try to ask questions about the event or ceremony in advance whenever possible. On campus, staff in spaces like the Wampum Learning Lodge and the Indigenous Student Centre are familiar with answering questions in advance of, and during, events to support those who have not engaged before.

2. Ask if it's ok to participate, but also ask if it's ok to observe, rather than participate:

Sometimes Indigenous people have closed practices where participation may be limited to specific people of that cultural group. Alternatively, you may be invited to participate but feel uncomfortable doing so – and that is totally ok. While participation is not mandatory in any circumstance, keep in mind how observing, rather than directly participating, may make Indigenous attendees feel uncomfortable, tokenized, or feed into concerns around ceremony or events becoming a “spectacle” or something participants consume, rather than embody. Lastly, it is disingenuous to portray opportunities to observe as something you participated in. For example, teaching your class about ‘participating’ in a ceremony that is typically a closed practice that you were invited to observe.

3. While visiting an Indigenous event or space:

- a. Be attentive and aware of your surroundings; listen to Masters of Ceremonies and event leads for instructions:** For example, while attending an event or ceremony, individuals should ask before taking pictures or videos. It may not be appropriate to take pictures or videos at certain times, such as during ceremonies, or at all, so asking questions in advance when appropriate will be important.
- b. Take note of what is around you:** Learning through observation can help you to understand cultural practices and protocols, which can be applied in future engagements. For example, Elders and youth are often invited to take food first. Other observations may include how to smudge or offer tobacco in a fire. If you are unsure in the moment, always ask questions to clarify.
- c. Avoid touching things:** Medicines, regalia and other cultural objects are not to be touched unless the person is invited to.
- d. Never assume:** Do not assume that all ceremony and event protocols are the same. Different Knowledge Holders and facilitators have different teachings and may conduct things differently than you have observed in the past.

INDIGENOUS SPACES ON WESTERN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

In response to Western’s Indigenous Strategic Plan (2016), Indigenous spaces have been created on campus in consultation with Indigenous staff, students and faculty, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Some of these spaces, such as the Wampum Learning Lodge (1137 Western Rd, Suite 1200) and the Indigenous Student Centre (Western Student Services Building, Room 2100, 1151 Richmond Street) have limited access, and are accessible to Indigenous students, staff and faculty via registration with the Indigenous Student Centre. Part of the mandate of the Wampum Learning Lodge is to provide a place of connectivity for everyone at Western who shares a common interest in advancing Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge exchange and the needs of Indigenous communities. Non-Indigenous Western staff, faculty and students can book spaces within the Wampum Learning Lodge for events and classes relevant to Reconciliation, decolonization and Indigenous Peoples. Due to the capacity of the Wampum Learning Lodge staff, and prioritization of Indigenous faculty members’ courses, Indigenous student needs, and community bookings, the space cannot accommodate bookings in all circumstances.

BEFORE ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS SPACES ON CAMPUS (AND BEYOND), CONSIDER:

- Have I connected with a staff member before visiting?
- Am I familiar with the space’s protocols?
- Am I requesting access to the space beyond its mandate?
- Am I visiting to use these spaces appropriately, and as they were intended?

The Wampum Learning Lodge is not a dedicated event space with event staff but relies on the availability and capacity of Office of Indigenous Initiatives, all of whom have full portfolios.

These spaces respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015a) and MMIWG Inquiry Calls for Justice (2019) by providing culturally safe and appropriate spaces for Indigenous people on campus. A 2020 research report by Fanshawe College's Institution for Indigenous Learning on Indigenous Spaces thoroughly outlines literature and reports that inform the need for Indigenous-specific spaces on

campus in section five, including the need for physical and mental spaces where:

- Indigenous cultural safety is prioritized, where students, staff and faculty are not required to perform intellectual and emotional labour;
- Intercultural exchange as well as dialogue around Truth, Reconciliation and decolonization is culturally and trauma-informed and;
- Indigenous knowledges, stories, connections to land and communities are centered.

Some considerations for being an ally in, and to, Indigenous spaces on campus:

While having Indigenous spaces increases visibility of Indigenous people on campus, and fosters a sense of belonging, sometimes this increased visibility can expose Indigenous staff, faculty and students to microaggressions and racism. To foster cultural safety, respect the intentions of Indigenous spaces to look and operate different than the other buildings and gardens throughout campus, as many cultural objects and medicines live there, and cultural events happen there.

EXAMPLES OF INAPPROPRIATE ENGAGEMENT	SOLUTION
Treating these spaces as "drop in" to access Indigenous staff and knowledges.	Make an appointment or connect with staff before your visit. Review event calendars for events that are open to all.
Unauthorized use of the Ceremonial Arbour and firepit (i.e., after-hours consumption of substances in the medicine garden/fire pit area; eating lunch and leaving garbage).	Increasing Indigenous literacy of all students, staff and faculty on campus. Booking the space in advance for appropriate use (i.e. a class). Ensuring you treat the space as you would your own place of worship.
Harvesting medicines and plants from the garden.	Having a conversation with the staff and faculty who care for this space, building relationships, following protocols.
Accessing the space outside of open-to-all events (i.e., "cutting through" or studying).	Reflect on the intentions and purposes of these spaces.
Taking pictures	Ask if it's ok to take pictures. Consider the context your photo is being used within – are you misrepresenting your relationship to the space?

Allyship Guide: Post Reflection Questions

ROSE	BUD	THORN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resonates or aligns with your current praxis? • What resources or toolkits have you accessed and found helpful? Why? • What responsibilities do you feel you already are embodying? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you most curious about? • What resources, modules, or toolkits are you looking forward to checking out? • What responsibilities do you see yourself taking up? • What opportunities do you see to implement these principles in your work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is not aligning? • What is challenging me, or making me uncomfortable? • Where do I need the most support in understanding, or implementing? • How will I commit to learning and unlearning? What's my action plan? • What are some resources I find unhelpful? Why?

Reflective Questions to guide Institutional Accountability for Teams/Units/and Faculties

1. How are we measuring our accountability to Indigenous Allyship, and progress on this work? How can we hold each other accountable?
2. How can we know if we are being Indigenous allies?
3. How is our unit/faculty, or the institution measuring its progress towards Reconciliation? Is this assessment within an Indigenous framework?

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:

- What are the dangers of taking a pan-Indigenous approach? How might this be addressed?

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Allyship: an ongoing process of learning, unlearning, and action. It involves recognizing and challenging systems of power and privilege that marginalize Indigenous Peoples and other equity-deserving groups. For non-Indigenous people, allyship means understanding the impacts of settler-colonialism and reflecting on one's role in upholding or dismantling systemic inequality. It also includes "calling in" others with compassion to promote awareness and respectful behavior (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.).

Burnout: is a work-related condition that results in feeling low energy and cynical about one's occupation and can sometimes negatively impact one's professional performance (WHO, 2019).

Colonization: a process of establishing control over Indigenous peoples and lands. There are different types of colonialism around the world. In Canada, settler colonialism persists as an ongoing process tied to colonial myths and ideologies and settler state structures that control Indigenous lives and futures.

Decolonial: A critical theory and praxis related to historical and ongoing forms of colonialisms in research. The purpose is to redress colonial power imbalances and empower Indigenous peoples in the pursuit of their own research need, and desires futures.

Decolonization: Decolonization can be understood as involving "the confronting and unsettling [of] the impact of colonial histories, ideologies, experiences, and legacies on disciplines, archives, canons, curricula, methodologies, and pedagogies, as well as on structures of governance, institutional design, and cultures, symbols, and ceremonies. Decolonization is a necessary and ongoing process of unlearning, uncovering, and transforming legacies of colonialism, as well as utilizing the educational and knowledge systems available to relearn and rebuild the social, cultural, and linguistic foundations that were lost, or eroded through colonialism. Decolonization also requires making space, balancing, generating, and enabling diverse knowledge systems to thrive in the academy as well as in and through educational and knowledge transmitting places for Indigenous Peoples, the formerly colonized or continuing colonized nations, peoples, and cultural knowledge systems" (Smith et al., 2021, p. 6-7)

Discrimination: refers to "the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, sex, or ability" (American Psychological Association, 2024, para. 1). In the context of Indigenous Peoples, discrimination includes both individual acts and systemic policies or practices that disadvantage Indigenous individuals or communities without valid justification—contributing to ongoing social, economic, and health inequities (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2025).

Elders: highly respected individuals who are often, but not always, senior citizens of a community who have and continue to demonstrate an admirable balance of their wisdom, harmony, and actions within their daily lives. Elders are recognized and designated by the community. They are frequently considered to be Knowledge Keepers of Indigenous history, traditional teachings, Ceremonies, and healing practices.

Emotional Labour: refers to the process of "controlling one's emotions to meet the expectations of a role or job" (Psychology Today, 2025, para. 1), often by suppressing genuine feelings and displaying emotions deemed appropriate in professional or social settings (Psychology Today, 2025).

Epistemic Racism: the racial and deficit positioning of the knowledge of one racial group over another where the racialized group's knowledges are not considered valued or legitimate.

Extractive Research: A research approach where investigations are conducted on, about, or for communities, but are primarily driven by the researchers' own professional interests, goals, or perceptions of community needs and benefits—rather than in collaboration with or under the direction of those communities themselves. This model often overlooks the voices, priorities, and agency of the people being studied, and may result in outcomes that serve external stakeholders more than the communities involved.

In A Good Way (Good Heart / Way or Mino-Bimaadiziwin): striving to live in accordance with mino-bimaadiziwin (<https://treaty2.ca/circles/>), an Anishinabemowin (Anishinaabe language) expression that means living in accordance with the Teachings to enjoy a good life, with good intentions and actions (Rheault, 1999).

Indigenous Data Sovereignty: the right of "Indigenous Peoples, communities, and Nations to manage, oversee, and control data created by or concerning them. The concept of sovereignty highlights that Indigenous Nations are self-governing, which includes authority over their data and knowledge. This principle acknowledges Indigenous Peoples as the ultimate decision-makers regarding their data and knowledge, shifting their role in research from being mere subjects or participants to becoming meaningful partners and co-researchers" (University of Toronto Libraries, 2024, para. 1).

Indigenous Knowledges: the concept of Indigenous knowledges in the academy is a relatively new phenomena; however, it is critical to recognize that Indigenous peoples have sought and shared Indigenous knowledge since time immemorial. Its newness to the university simply underscores how Indigenous knowledges have been ignored and marginalized in Westernized universities. Indigenous knowledges' are diverse connected to different Indigenous groups/Nations, tied to their Indigenous languages, lands and places and are thereby complex and difficult to define universally. Some scholars have, however, articulated common characteristics of Indigenous knowledges (Brant-Castellano 2000) which have helped articulate and make visible distinctions of IKS when comparing them to Euro Western paradigms.

Indigenous Epistemology: an Indigenous epistemology is rooted within an Indigenous paradigm or Indigenous knowledge system. From an Indigenous epistemological perspective, knowledge is considered relational and best understood through the personal subjective self-in-relation to family, nation, land and cosmos including human and non-humans. Elders and storytelling play vital roles in carrying and passing on collective Indigenous epistemologies. Many Indigenous scholars have articulated an Indigenous epistemology in academic research (Absolon, 2011; Archibald, 2009; Kovach, 2009; and Wilson, 2008).

Indigenous Ontology: an Indigenous ontological perspective recognizes that knowledge is relational and accountable to Indigenous communities. Principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhard, 1991) have been applied to relational ontological approaches to knowing, being and doing.

Micro aggressions: "the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group." (Sue, 2010, p. 229)

Paradigm: the overarching worldview that shapes the way one understands knowledge and the world.

Positionality: refers to the social and political context that shapes a person's identity, values, and perspectives, including aspects such as race, gender, class, ability, and Indigeneity (Queen's University, 2025). It recognizes that these intersecting factors influence how individuals experience the world and engage in research or teaching. A positionality statement is a reflective tool that acknowledges how one's identity and lived experiences inform their approach to knowledge, power, and relationships in academic and community settings (Queen's University, 2025).

Protocols: the “guidelines, manners, etiquettes, and rules that are in place to keep Indigenous ways of being, belonging, doing and knowing at the forefront” (Calgary Board of Education, 2022, p. 4). Protocols vary by community; however, some examples include offering tobacco when making a request, providing an honorarium or a gift as a thank you, and offering smudging at meetings, events, or engagements (Calgary Board of Education, 2022).

Racism: is “an ideology that either explicitly or implicitly asserts that one racialized group is inherently superior to others. Racist ideology can be openly manifested in racial slurs, jokes or hate crimes. However, it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values, and stereotypical beliefs” (OHRC, 2009, p. 12). Anti-Indigenous racism is racism against Indigenous Peoples specifically.

Self reflection: is the practice of critically examining how a researcher’s own social positioning, assumptions, and biases shape the research process. It involves ongoing self-awareness and reflection to ensure that personal perspectives are acknowledged and addressed in the design, interpretation, and communication of research (Jamieson, Govaart, & Pownall, 2023).

Relational Accountability: is a “situationally and contextually determined [...] form of paying attention to respect, reciprocity, and responsibility in our relationships” (Fraser, 2022, pp. 2-3), which extend to all of Creation.

Settler: individuals whose ancestors came to this land willingly to access resources, regardless of how long their family has lived in Canada. Settlers benefit from the colonial structures and systems that dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands, rights, and cultures. Importantly, being a settler is not inherently a condemnation, but a starting point for reflection, responsibility, and transformation. Settlers are called to move toward becoming relatives (Strobel, 2024).

Settler colonialism: Settler colonialism is a structure not an event (Wolfe, 1999) structured by the nation state that appropriates Indigenous lands and serves to erase and displace Indigenous peoples and nationhood, and replace it with a dominant national identity, invasive society and national sovereignty. In doing so, settler colonialism has served to undermine Indigenous sovereignty and their self-determining authority over their lands, lives and futures.

Speed of Trust: refers to the principle of building relationships, partnerships, or communities at a pace that respects the time required to establish genuine trust. Rather than rushing processes or outcomes, this approach emphasizes patience and mutual understanding. It emphasizes moving forward only as fast as relationships allow (Pfortmüller, 2022).

Tokenism: refers to the superficial or symbolic effort to include individuals from underrepresented or marginalized groups, without addressing systemic issues or ensuring meaningful participation. It often involves selecting one or a few individuals to represent an entire group, which can reinforce stereotypes and further marginalize those individuals (CultureAlly, 2023).

Turtle Island: is a term used by many Indigenous Peoples across North America to refer to North America, based on origin stories and the shape of the continent. Using this term is one way to recognize Indigenous sovereignty and challenge colonial borders.

Unlearn/ing: a process described as “stripping away the beliefs and ways to act/ behave/ live that have been imposed by our upbringing, by our education, by the society we live in. It means challenging everything we’ve come to know as the ‘way things are supposed to be’ and ‘embracing the way things are’” (Hagan, 2020, para. 3).

Unsettle/ing: in an Indigenous context, unsettling refers to the process of disrupting dominant colonial narratives, assumptions, and power structures. It challenges settler comfort and compels critical reflection on one’s positionality, complicity, and responsibility in systems of ongoing settler colonialism (Regan, 2010). Unsettling is not about creating guilt, but about fostering awareness, accountability, and a shift toward decolonial thinking and action.



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