

Walk With Me: A step on the path toward truth and reconciliation

Willkommen Bienvenue Welkom 歡迎
歡迎光臨 Добро пожаловать Witamy Was
Ketachok Karibu ברוך הבא Benvenuti
Mabuhay أهلا وسهلا Namaste स्वागत
환영합니다 Bienvenidos **Welcome.**

**Don't say in the years to come that you
would have lived your life differently
if only you had heard this story.
You've heard it now.**

Thomas King

Locating yourself

In the Nuu-chah-nulth language, the suffix 'aht' means 'The people of' that place.

Tla-o-qui-aht

Ahousaht

Opitsaht

Woven into the words for the names of their people is the understanding that they are 'of' that place.

Take a moment to reflect on what it means for you to be “of the place” where you have chosen to live?

How does this perspective affect how you choose to live?

To learn more, see *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* by Umeek E. Richard Atleo. (UBC Press, 2004)

Invitation

Please choose one or two partners. You will collaborate with them as you move from one table to the next during the rest of the *Walk with Me* event today.

Take a few moments to leaf through the readings on this table. Find one reading that you all agree particularly resonates with you, moves you, or unsettles you.

Take the reading you've chosen with you to the next station, as well as a copy of the handouts

Reflecting on the Reading and ***Be Creative!***

Follow the prompts on the handouts.

Reflecting on the reading Handout

In groups of two or three, look through the readings on the table. Choose a story, move to the next area and, with your partners, read it and then respond to how the story makes you feel by beginning what you say with one of the following:

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) I wonder... | 6) Amidst the.... | 11) My body speaks.... |
| 2) I feel.... | 7) I see.... | 12) I soften.... |
| 3) I am.... | 8) I breathe deep and | 13) I awaken to |
| 4) This is.... | 9) Inside my heart.... | 14) I begin to move.... |
| 5) Standing here.... | 10) My mind is..... | |

Now, looking at the passage, find a single physical action in the events described that truly embodies something from the list below:

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| ~ loving while experiencing _____? | humiliation |
| ~ creating or appreciating beauty while experiencing _____? | fear or terror |
| ~ giving care while experiencing _____? | loss |
| ~ holding onto a connection to a person or place while experiencing _____? | isolation |
| ~ finding resilience while experiencing _____? | loneliness |
| ~ achieving victory while experiencing _____? | grief or sadness |
| ~ embodying strength while experiencing _____? | sadness |
| ~ being clever and resourceful while experiencing _____? | bullying |
| | anger |
| | deprivation |

Once you have identified a physical action, turn to the **Be Creative!** Handout

Be Creative! Handout

Does that single physical action you've identified remind you of a memory of a moment from your own life? Perhaps it was something from your family's history, or something you once heard about, read, or witnessed as a bystander. In collaboration with your partner(s) your task is to create a short poem, a brief story, a single performed image, a few lyrics of a song, or a simple movement, that incorporates **that very same physical action** in the context of your own experience. Borrow the power of that physical action itself (and the reaction it prompted in you) as the central element in your new creative work. Resist the temptation to re-enact the events in the passage you read because these stories are not our stories to tell. Ground it in your own experience.

Take ten to fifteen minutes to develop and practice your piece. When everyone is ready, we will reconvene to share with each other what we've created. We'll take a few minutes after each group's turn to reflect on what the rest of us heard and saw, and then each group will be invited to tell the others their thoughts on the links between their new work and the story told in the passage they read. After everyone has offered their creative work, we'll hear our invited elders to share their thoughts.

This room is a Perfection-free Zone! Your presentation does not have to be a polished performance. This activity is intended as a laboratory experiment—a work in progress—to try out the idea of how we might experience empathy for the lived experience of Indigenous peoples through creative engagement with readings by these writers.

Do any of these book titles look interesting to you?

If so, take a picture of its cover or use one of the note cards to jot down titles and authors' names to take with you so you can pick up copies from your library or bookstore.

Ten ways to be a genuine ally to Indigenous communities

by Gary Radler

When working with Indigenous communities there isn't one way to be an ally – because every community and individual is different. Every relationship you build needs a different approach. But here are some suggestions that will help you to get started.

1. Listen to and follow the community

Find out who the traditional owners and Elders are of the land you are on. When doing long-term work on Indigenous rights, build strong relationships within the community and make sure everything is Indigenous-led.

2. Centre the stories around community

A big part of your involvement is to amplify the voices of Indigenous communities, don't make it about yourself. You should directly share these messages with your networks in their words without alteration.

3. Know the historical and cultural context

Knowing the history and being culturally competent is vital. The issues the community face come from hundreds of years of ongoing trauma and discrimination. It is not the responsibility of the community to educate you.

4. Never show up empty-handed

Showing up in support is great but offer to lend a hand as well. Use your labour, resources and skills to help out. What additional value can you bring the community?

5. Always seek consent and permission

Consent is a continuous process, not a one-time request. Seek permission before taking part in community events, particularly around cultural and spiritual events. They'll usually be labeled something like 'all community and allies welcome'.

6. Be responsible for yourself

Be aware of what resources you're taking away from communities through your presence. Ensure you've given back to the community more than you've taken away.

7. Know when to step back

Be aware of what space you are taking up. Always remember that you are there as a guest in a supportive role. There will be times when communities need to act alone: respect their boundaries.

8. Saviours are not needed, solidarity is

Solidarity is only meaningful if it is substantive and not merely performative. This means showing up to support the community with your presence alone should be the baseline, not the end game.

9. Be mindful of others' time and energy

Indigenous people often have to be advocates on a wide range of issues that affect them and their community first-hand. They don't have the choice to switch off from being involved and can be spread thin in many directions.

10. Do no harm to the community

The community should be better off, or the same, because of your presence, not worse. Follow all of these suggestions and keep reflecting on your behaviour and you're on your way to doing your part in bringing down an unjust system.

(Inspired by a similar resource created at Amnesty International USA by Kalaya'an Mendoza)

Ally Bill of Responsibilities

© Dr. Lynn Gehl, Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe

Responsible Allies:

1. Do not act out of guilt, but rather out of a genuine interest in challenging the larger oppressive power structures;
2. Understand that they are secondary to the Indigenous people that they are working with and that they seek to serve. They and their needs must take a back seat;
3. Are fully grounded in their own ancestral history and culture. Effective allies must sit in this knowledge with confidence and pride; otherwise the “wannabe syndrome” could merely undermine the Indigenous people’s efforts;
4. Are aware of their privileges and openly discuss them. This action will also serve to challenge larger oppressive power structures;
5. Reflect on and embrace their ignorance of the group’s oppression and always hold this ignorance in the forefront of their minds. Otherwise, a lack of awareness of their ignorance could merely perpetuate the Indigenous people’s oppression;
6. Are aware of and understand the larger oppressive power structures that serve to hold certain groups and people down. One way to do this is to draw parallels through critically reflecting on their own experiences with oppressive power structures. Reflecting on their subjectivity in this way, they ensure critical thought or what others call objectivity. In taking this approach, these parallels will serve to ensure that non-Indigenous allies are not perpetuating the oppression;
7. Constantly listen and reflect through the medium of subjectivity and critical thought versus merely their subjectivity. This will serve to ensure that they avoid the trap that they or their personal friends know what is best. This act will also serve to avoid the trap of naively following a leader or for that matter a group of leaders;
8. Strive to remain critical thinkers and seek out the knowledge and wisdom of the critical thinkers in the group. Allies cannot assume that all people are critical thinkers and have a good understanding of the larger power structures of oppression;

9. Ensure that a community consensus, or understanding, has been established in terms of their role as allies. Otherwise, the efforts of the people will be undermined due to a lack of consultation and agreement;
10. Ensure that the needs of the most oppressed – women, children, elderly, young teenage girls and boys, and the disabled – are served in the effort or movement that they are supporting. Otherwise, they may be engaging in a process that is inadequate and thus merely serving to fortify the larger power structures of oppression. Alternatively, their good intentions may not serve those who need the effort most. Rather, they may be making the oppression worse;
11. Understand and reflect on the prevalence and dynamics of lateral oppression and horizontal violence on and within oppressed groups and components of the group, such as women, and seek to ensure that their actions do not encourage it;
12. Ensure that they are supporting a leader's, group of leaders', or a movement's efforts that serve the needs of the people. For example, do the community people find this leader's efforts useful, interesting, engaging, and thus empowering? If not, allies should consider whether the efforts are moving in a questionable or possibly an inadequate direction, or worse yet that their efforts are being manipulated and thus undermined, possibly for economic and political reasons;
13. Understand that sometimes allies are merely manipulatively chosen to further a leader's agenda versus the Indigenous Nations', communities', or organizations' concerns, and when this situation occurs act accordingly;
14. Do not take up the space and resources, physical and financial, of the oppressed group;
15. Do not take up time at community meetings and community events. This is not their place. They must listen more than speak. Allies cannot perceive all the larger oppressive power structures as clearly as members of the oppressed group can; And finally,
16. Accept the responsibility of learning and reading more about their role as effective allies.

Chi-Miigwetch!

How to be an Ally to Indigenous Peoples

- ◆ Reach out to your Indigenous neighbours
- ◆ Don't co-opt Indigenous cultures or ceremonies
- ◆ Learn about the people Indigenous to wherever you are
- ◆ Support Indigenous craftspeople, businesses and events
- ◆ Remember that the basis of Canadian state as an entity under International law rests solely upon the recognition of the principle of Aboriginal title and then the transfer of that title through the treaty process to the Crown and later on to the Canadian state.
- ◆ Read Native authors
- ◆ Slow down and listen more than you talk
- ◆ Learn about and reject the "Doctrine of Discovery" and "Terre Nullius"
- ◆ Learn about treaties
- ◆ Live with gratitude
- ◆ Care for the Earth
- ◆ Notice where you are
- ◆ Appreciate the diversity of nations, cultures, and people
- ◆ Celebrate Aboriginal Day every June 21st
- ◆ Return sacred objects
- ◆ Support renewable energy
- ◆ Read and promote the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- ◆ Demand that our country honour its treaty commitments
- ◆ Care for the Earth - Live lightly while you are here
- ◆ Question and resist stereotypes, including team names and mascots

Deep Green Resistance Indigenous Solidarity Guidelines

It's important that members of settler culture ally themselves with indigenous communities fighting for their rights and survival, but there are right and wrong ways to express solidarity. The following guidelines have been put together by Deep Green Resistance members with the help of indigenous activists. This is not a complete how-to guide – every community and every situation is different – but the guidelines can point you in a good direction for acting effectively and with respect.

- 1.** First and foremost we must recognize that non-indigenous people are occupying stolen land in an ongoing genocide that has lasted for centuries. We must affirm our responsibility to stand with indigenous communities who want support and give everything we can to protect their land and culture from further devastation; they have been on the frontlines of biocide and genocide for centuries, and as allies, we need to step up and join them.
- 2.** You are doing Indigenous solidarity work not out of guilt, but out of a fierce desire to confront oppressive colonial systems of power.
- 3.** You are not helping Indigenous people, you are there to: join with, struggle with, and fight with Indigenous peoples against these systems of power. You must be willing to put your body on the line.
- 4.** Recognize your privilege as a member of settler culture.
- 5.** You are not here to engage in any type of cultural, spiritual or religious needs you think you might have, you are here to engage in political action. Also, remember your political message is secondary to the cause at hand.
- 6.** Never use drugs or alcohol when engaging in Indigenous solidarity work. Never.
- 7.** Do more listening than talking; you will be surprised what you can learn.
- 8.** Recognize that there will be Indigenous people that will not want you to participate in ceremonies. Humbly refrain from participating in ceremonies.
- 9.** Recognize that you and your Indigenous allies may be in the minority on a cause that is worth fighting for.
- 10.** Work with integrity and respect, be trustworthy and do what you say you are going to do.