



# MENDING THE CHASM

BUILDING INCLUSIVE CULTURES FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

## **Session 4: What Does it Mean to Be An Ally?**

**Downtown Stratford BIA**

**November 16th, 2023**

**Facilitation Team: Leena Sharma Seth**

# Land Acknowledgement DTS BIA

We wish to acknowledge and honour the ancestral guardians of this land and its waterways: the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Attiwonderonk (Neutral).

We acknowledge that we live and do our work on territory governed by two treaties, The Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant of 1701 and The Huron Tract Treaty of 1827.

To this day many Indigenous Peoples continue to call this land their home and to act as its stewards.

As a Downtown Stratford BIA we wish to join with them in caring for this land for generations to come.

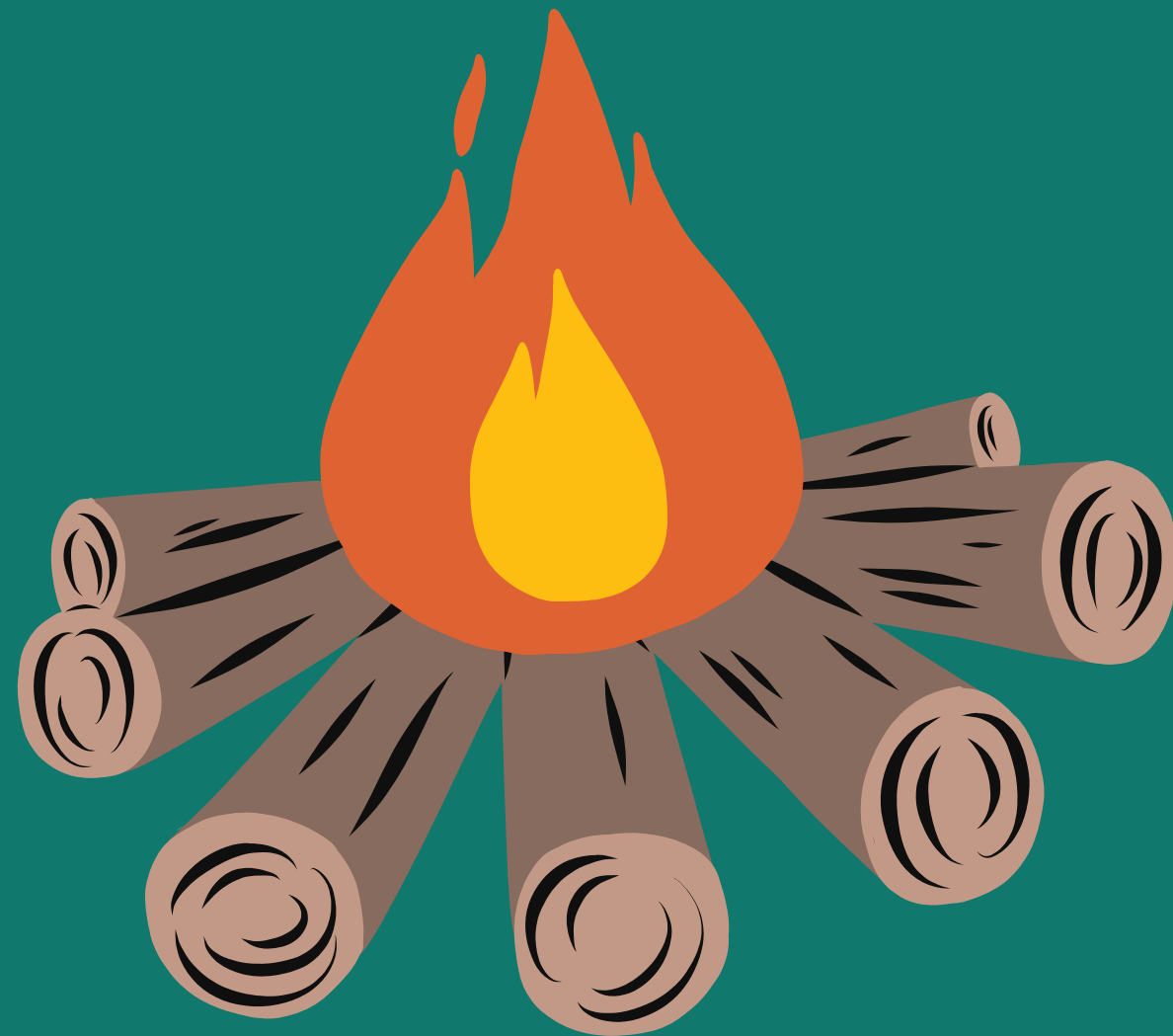
As the Downtown Stratford BIA we desire to have our interactions contain ways we may become better treaty partners.

That our Land Acknowledgement when spoken may be accompanied by actionable steps.

# Embodiment Practice



# Setting the Container



# Community Assumptions

The purpose of naming community assumptions in our work together is to make transparent what is often invisible and to ground ourselves in postures that will help us to embody a more equitable, inclusive, and accountable learning, reflection and transformational space.

- Oppression [racism] is systemic and structural, first and foremost, and interpersonal and personal in expression.
- It's all of us versus whatever the problem/oppression is.
- There is no neutral. Every decision and every choice has the potential to include or exclude, or to create deeper connection/disconnection.
- Our roles and responsibilities are different based on our social location.
- Racism, white supremacy and oppression cause trauma.
- Our mutual liberation and well-being are bound together.
- Binaries are bullshit. We recognize that there are a spectrum of responses and solutions, and oftentimes it's an AND, not OR conversation.
- We honour the full complexity and messiness of this work. We accept and expect non-closure.

# Community Agreements

- Ask for what you need, offer what you can.
- Listen with curiosity and compassion.
- Our impact is more important than our intent; we move with good intentions and remain committed to repairing any harm we may unintentionally cause.
- We avoid making assumptions about other people, including assumptions about their history, race, or lived experience.
- We are committed to progress over perfection.
- We center lived experience in equity, inclusion and anti-racism work because we recognize it as valuable insight and wisdom.
- We expect conflict and value it as an opportunity to deepen understanding, prioritize relationships, and to build common ground.
- We each work to decenter ourselves and make space for others. Especially if we identify as someone who holds dominant privilege because of our social location. Our roles, our accountability, and our work is informed by our social location.
- This is a no shame no blame space. Our focus is on accountability and how we will intentionally use our power, privilege and platform to build a more equitable and inclusive culture in our community.

# Agenda

- Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
- Embodiment Practice
- Community Agreements
- Opening Reflection
- Microaggressions Continued...
  - Small Group Activity
- What does Allyship mean to you?
- What is not Allyship?
  - Small Group Activity Questions?
- Closing Reflection

# Microaggressions Continued...



# Deconstructing Microaggressions

| Microaggression                           | Theme  | Message  |
|---|--|--|
| "When I look at you, I don't see colour." | Colour-blindness.<br><br>Statements that indicate that the person does not want to acknowledge, or is uncomfortable with acknowledging race. | I am denying your racial/lived experience and the harm you're experiencing. Assimilate to dominant culture.<br><br>I am denying your racial/identity-based experience. |

Source: The Racial Healing Handbook – Dr. Annaliese A. Singh

# Unpacking Microaggressions: Activity

In small groups, scroll to the Jam Board page that matches your group, and work with microaggression that is on the page.

- What do you think is the theme of this microaggression?
- What message do you think the recipient receiving when this statement is said to them? (not explicitly said, maybe, but embedded in this microaggression)

# Worksheet - Small Group Work

| Microaggression  | Theme | Message |
|--|-------|---------|
| A college or university with buildings that are all named after White, heterosexual upper class males. |       |         |
| "You have a mental disability?<br>You look so normal to me!"   |       |         |
| "Where are you <u>really</u> from?"  |       |         |

Source: The Racial Healing Handbook – Dr. Annaliese A. Singh

# Worksheet - Small Group Work

| Microaggression  | Theme   | Message  |
|--|---|--|
| A college or university with buildings that are all named after White, heterosexual upper class males. | Macro-level microaggressions, which are more apparent on systemic and environmental levels. | You don't belong/You won't succeed here. You are an outsider. You don't exist.<br>People of colour/non-binary/disabled shouldn't value education.                |
| You have a mental disability?<br>You look so normal to me!   | Ableism – centering the value of being able-bodied, certain (high) level of functioning     | There is a certain look or persona that someone with a disability. Assumption that disabled means incapable or low ability to function.                          |
| "Where are you <u>really</u> from?"  | Denial of belonging   | People that look like you and/or sound like can't be from here. You are different from me. You are separate from this place - this place is my place, not yours. |

Source: The Racial Healing Handbook – Dr. Annaliese A. Singh

# Taking/Seeking Accountability in Microaggression Experiences

1. Do your own work to prepare and resource yourself for this conversation.
2. Set realistic expectations of what you want from these conversations.
3. Always be aware of yourself and your mental health when having these conversations. Choose your timing if you can.
4. Consider your role and your social location/positionality.

Source: : [Kevin Nadal](#)

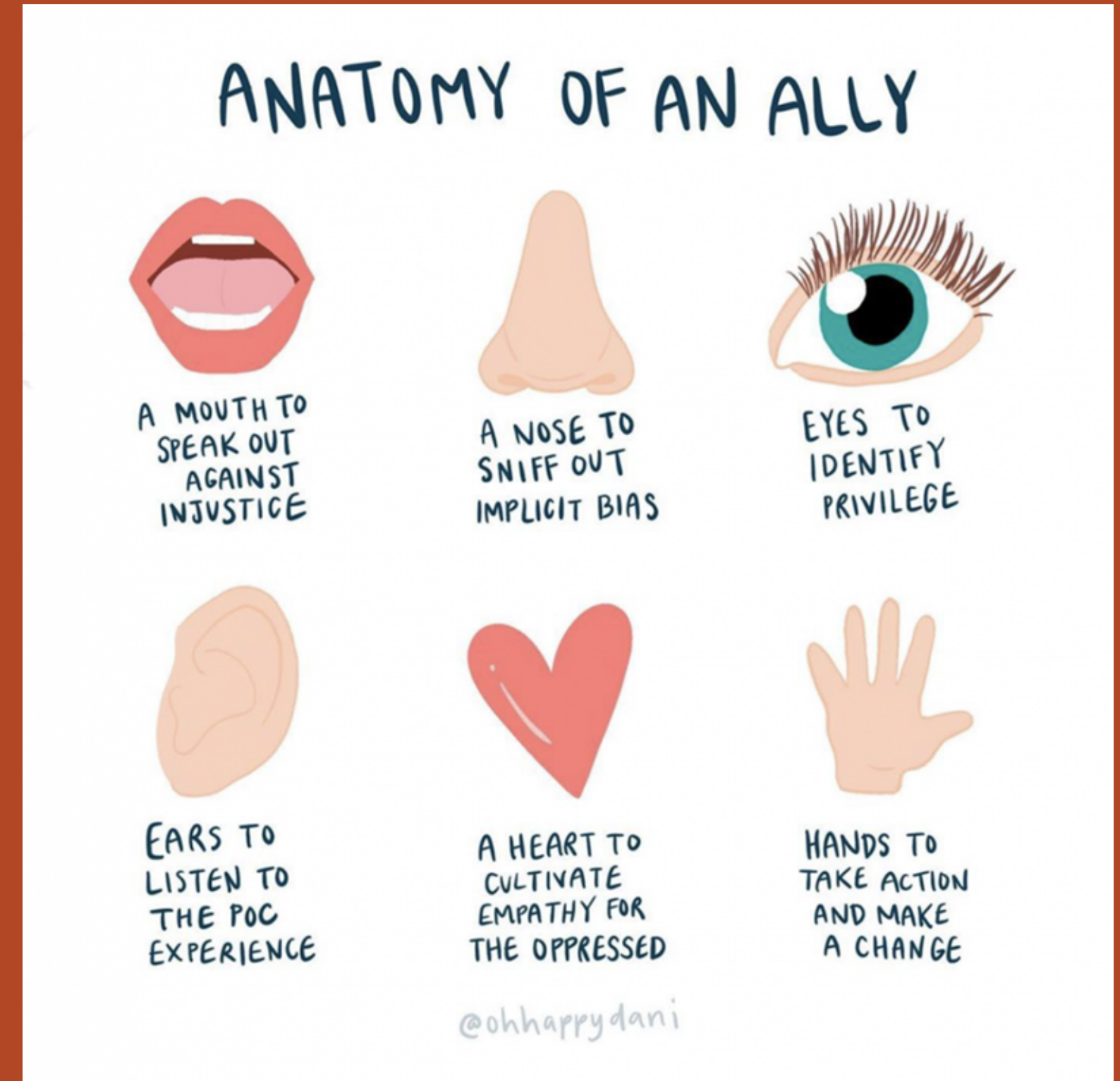


# The Four A's of Allyship

# Allyship: Definition

An active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person in a position of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group.

Source: [The Anti-Oppression Network](#)





# WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE




It is critical that we are rooted in who we are, the ways we experience privilege, and the ways we experience oppression, when working to be in solidarity with equity-denied communities.

# 1. Allyship is about building awareness



# 2. Allyship is about action

**DIFFERENT WAYS TO SUPPORT**



The infographic is titled "DIFFERENT WAYS TO SUPPORT" and is set against a light yellow background. It features three columns, each with an illustration of two people (one with pink hair, one with purple hair) and a teal box containing text. The first column shows the two people standing side-by-side. The second column shows the person with purple hair standing in front of the person with pink hair, with a purple hand icon raised to the right. The third column shows the person with purple hair standing behind the person with pink hair. Each teal box has a white checkmark in the top right corner.

| <b>BESIDE</b> ✓  | <b>IN FRONT</b> ✓   | <b>BEHIND</b> ✓   |
|--|---|---|
| You may need to stand beside someone to support them. Listen to them and walk with them through an experience. | You may need to stand in front of someone to help them avoid harm and hurt. | You may need to stand behind someone to support them, recognizing that they are the experts and know what is best for them. |

Sourced from: <https://illness-to-wellness.tumblr.com/post/179385878172> – originally from The 519 Space for Change



# 3. Allyship is about accountability

**ALLYSHIP**

How to be an Ally for others



**1 BECOME A SPONSOR**  
Be a champion and advocate for someone from an underrepresented community to support their career growth.

**2 CALL OUT BAD BEHAVIOUR**  
Call out unacceptable behaviour. People in underrepresented groups may not feel comfortable raising issues.

**3 USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE**  
Be aware of gendered terms and use language that embraces all people.

**4 FOLLOW AN ARRAY OF VOICES & LISTEN**  
Seek out a variety of diverse voices and LISTEN to understand. Learning and growth will not happen without being challenged.

**5 AMPLIFY VOICES OF OTHERS**  
Never speak FOR a person or on behalf of that person. You are not the keeper of their stories and experiences. Recognize your privilege and amplify the voices of others.

**6 SEEK TRAINING & BEYOND**  
Training will help you understand others beyond stereotypes and biases. Examine your own biases and privilege. Learn how intersectionality affects our experiences in life.

**BE CAUTIOUS OF THE 'PEDESTAL EFFECT'**  
This is when, for example, men are given special treatment & shout outs for even small acts of gender equality - when women have for years done the emotional labour and carried the load for advancing equality. Do not over-focus on men or your dominant identity group as it may ultimately strengthen rather than dismantle the gender hierarchy status quo.

 [WWW.CANADIANEQUALITY.CA](http://WWW.CANADIANEQUALITY.CA) 

# 4. Allyship is about being in authentic relationships.



# BREAK

# What is not Allyship?

Allyship is not about  
charity, it's about justice.

If you have come to  
help me you are  
wasting your time.  
But if you have  
come because your  
liberation is bound  
up with mine, then  
let us work together.

*- Lilla Watson,  
Aboriginal Elder*





Invalidating the experience of the oppressed is not Allyship.



# Group Discussion

"We should temporarily retire this word ally, because whatever value it had before has been destroyed by Whiteness centering itself, as it always find a way to do.

You don't get to call yourself an ally to my struggle and my oppression. I say this person helps me, they are my ally.

You don't get to come around and centering yourself in my struggle and give yourself a boy scout badge and a cookie because you consider yourself my ally. Stop focusing on titles and do what you know to be right in this struggle, don't make words the centre of this struggle...."

- ***Desmond Cole, Author, Journalist, Activist***

What is resonating for you as you consider this quote from Desmond Cole, author of *The Skin We're In*?

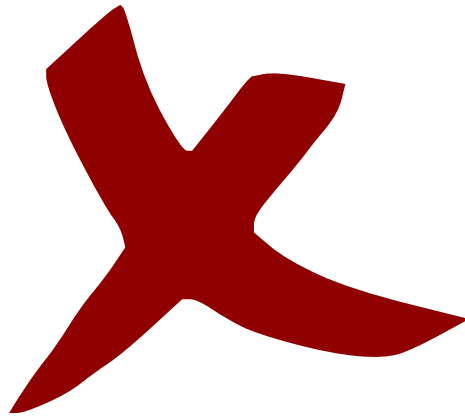




# Performative Allyship is NOT Allyship.



Performative allies share their knowledge about inequity with others, but don't use their privilege and resources to make real change. Performative allyship hurts the people it's meant to support and maintains the status quo by appearing to promote change without producing change—which is inequitable and demoralizing. - Catalyst



## Building a future free from racism.

This is a vital moment in time. Racism in Canada is both real and intolerable and it attacks the very idea of equality and opportunity – we need to acknowledge and tackle it.

Together, we must to listen, learn and challenge ourselves to undo the devastating toll of systemic racism in our communities.

The events of the past week remind us that systemic racism is a form of violence, and reinforces that we must create an inclusive world for all.

We stand together with those feeling deep pain and anger during this time.

is committed to our values, to diversity, inclusion and equity. We foster making space for everyone and welcome and value all contributions.

We will be relentless in working to ensure a future free from racism.

## Together Against Racism

As a public service with deep roots in our community, Burlington Public Library is fully committed to creating a future free of racism and discrimination. We are deeply saddened that we live in such a discordant time that makes it necessary to plainly state what should be implicitly understood as basic rights for all people to equality, dignity, and respect. The Library belongs to everyone in our community.

### Burlington Public Library Statement on Racism

With recent events in the United States and Canada, we are being challenged to take a critical look at the structure of our society, systemic racism, and racial insensitivity. The Library stands with the Black community, and all communities in Canada who have been divided and hurt by racism, social injustice, ignorance, and hatred.

The mission of Burlington Public Library is to inspire imagination, collaboration, and compassion to support an informed and literate society. It is the right of every resident to feel welcome in Library spaces, to find the information they want and need, and to lend their voice to productive, meaningful conversations to surmount prejudice in all its forms.

For over a century, Burlington Public Library has been a trusted civic institution, providing open, free, and equitable access to information to support learning and understanding, so that our society may replace ignorance with knowledge, intolerance with compassion, and inequity with justness.

We have a shared civic, social, and moral responsibility to do what we can to help eradicate systemic racism and promote universal acceptance through our collections, resources, services, and programs. We are more committed than ever in anchoring ourselves in this role in our community.

This starts with educating ourselves and our staff about the legacy of racial injustice. Some of this work began in 2017 with our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and the training we initiated for all staff in this regard. We pledge to provide ongoing staff education and development to expose practices, procedures, and services with the aim to eliminate systemic racism and promote equity and inclusion. BPL has endorsed both the *Canadian Urban Libraries Council Statement on Race & Social Equity* and the *Canadian Federation of Library Associations Position Statement on Diversity and Inclusion*.

At this very emotional and difficult time in our history, we stand with our community to welcome conversations, reinforce our mission and values to promote equity, and decry intolerance and injustice. Our hope is that we can come together to learn and listen to be better, together.

With warm hearts and gratitude.

~ Burlington Public Library Board

### ▼ BPL ACTION

The Library management team is taking steps to eliminate systemic racism and promote equity and inclusion across the organization and within the library sector. Areas of initial focus include:

1. Review Library policies and procedures to identify and change any practices that contribute to systemic racism.
2. Develop staff training around unconscious bias and racial insensitivity and the impact on service, programming, and collections development.
3. Work with the larger library community to challenge Dewey classifications and subject headings.

# What could active Allyship look like in your organization?

A camper shares at a camp gathering that they are trans\* and would like everyone to use a new name and the pronouns “they/them/theirs”. While everyone is very positive and affirming in the moment, later that day, in the dining hall later that day, you hear some campers and counsellors complaining and joking about the whole “pronouns” business.

Reflect on the scenario above and consider how you might respond to the questions below. In your small groups discuss the questions below.

## Discussion Questions

- Can you notice any emotions, sensations, or feelings (somatic response) that are arising within you as you explore this scenario? Name and share them if this feels accessible.
- How might you invite accountability for the harm from campers? How might you invite accountability from fellow counsellors?
- What might an Allyship response look like in this scenario for campers? Real time? After some reflection?

# What next steps are you prepared to take?

- **Start with Why.** Why does this work matter to you and how does it align with your values?
- **What commitments are you prepared to make?** What resources are you committing to this work? (time, budget, staff, accountability)
- How will you **build the emotional resilience** required to have the uncomfortable conversations you, your team, and your Department will need to have?
- How will you be **engaging with** (listen, learn, decenter) and **working in Allyship**, for yourself, with each other and the communities whose lives you are hoping to change with this work?
- How will you **measure progress?** How will you **hold yourself accountable?**
- How can you use your **power, privilege and platform** as an organization to **work in Allyship with communities?**





# Checking out - Reflecting on the Journey

As we conclude this learning journey, what are some tools, insights and practices that you're committed to as you consider your own Allyship journey?

# Resources

[Glossary of Terms: The 519](#)

[Anti-Ableism: How to be a Better Ally - Bitter Gertrude](#)

[A Guide to Lifelong Allyship, TEDxTalk Toronto, Catherine Hernandez, 2020](#)

[Mending the Chasm - Interview with Lita Barrie and Ditas Lagmay, 2021](#)



# Thank you!

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## Connect with us:

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