



INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY GUIDELINES

It's important that members of settler culture to ally ourselves 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 the OFL Aboriginal Circle members. This is not a complete how-to guide – every community and every situation is different – but hopefully it will point you in a good direction for acting effectively and with respect.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Be accountable to the communities you serve, including traditional Elders and warriors, who are the customary leaders or defenders of their people.

COMMUNICATION:

Expand opportunities for Indigenous people to speak for themselves.

PREPARE:

Emotionally prepare yourself for solidarity work, including the ability to deal with criticism. Solidarity work is an opportunity to learn and grow new skills and perspectives.

DECOLONIZE:

Decolonization repatriates Indigenous lands and lifeways for both the colonizer and colonized. It is key to effective long-term solidarity.

- 1. RECOGNIZE** – Indigenous people are not a single, monolithic entity. A vital component to be an effective ally is an awareness that Indigenous peoples are diverse and have diverse histories, cultures and needs.
- 2. ACKNOWLEDGE** your privilege as a member of settler culture, that non-Indigenous people are settlers on Indigenous territories. 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.
- 3. CULTURAL RESPECT** – Working as an ally to Indigenous people does not entitle you to their spirituality. Leave your own cultural and spiritual baggage at the door. Cultural appropriation destroys opportunities for Indigenous solidarity.
- 4. SOBER** – Respect the destructive influences of alcohol and drugs on Indigenous communities. Always work sober within Indigenous spaces and projects. **NEVER** bring drugs or alcohol into Indigenous spaces.
- 5. ELDERS** – **NEVER** speak over an Elder who is talking. Be patient during pauses in their speech. Make sure they are fed first. Assist them when they ask. Defend them from harm.
- 6. LEADERSHIP** – Defer to Indigenous leadership, decision-making and priorities. Follow their lead.

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- 7. CEREMONY** – Only participate in Indigenous ceremony if you are specifically invited. Recognize that there will be Indigenous people that will not want you to participate in ceremonies. Respectfully refrain from participating. It is not traditional to participate in another Nation’s ceremony unless it is intended to be open.
- 8. PROTOCOL** – **DO NOT** take pictures or video of Indigenous ceremonies unless given the approval to do so. **NEVER** photograph or video sacred objects like pipes, medicine bags, masks, totems, etc. If in doubt, ask! If there is no one to ask, don’t do it.
- 9. EDUCATE YOURSELF** – Read the Truth and Reconciliation Report. Learn about the issues of clean water, Sixties Scoops, murdered and missing women and girls, residential schools and the territories on which you live. Celebrate National Aboriginal Day on June 21st and support the Indigenous community’s call for a statutory day.
- 10. MAKE SPACE** – Suppress enthusiasm for your own ideologies, beliefs, ideas and solutions to further empower problem solving and decision making among Indigenous people. You are not here to “save” Indigenous people but to be allies in a struggle for survival. When criticized or called out, listen, apologize, learn, be accountable, and act differently going forward.
- 11. PATIENCE** – Work patiently at the speed of Indigenous leadership, reflection and decision-making. Deadlines are usually less important than acting in the most thoughtful (effective) way.
- 12. INTEGRITY** – Always do what you say you are going to do. Work with integrity. When given a task, do it to the best of your ability. When you mess up, apologize earnestly.

TO LEARN MORE:

For more tools produced by the OFL Aboriginal Circle that enable unions and labour activists to integrate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives into planning and programming, please check www.ofl.ca:

- Guidelines for Working with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Elders;
- Tobacco Offering Protocol;
- Guidelines for Indigenous Smudge Ceremony;
- Updated: Traditional Territory Acknowledgements in Ontario; and
- Two-Spirit – Tips for Practicing Allyship.