Indigenous Allyship in Canadian Business Schools:

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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Indigenous Allyship in Canadian Business Schools 2023

Lauren Aussant (BComm as of June 2023)
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Lauren Aussant is a Métis undergraduate student at the Edwards School of Business, graduating with her B.Comm. in Management in Spring 2023. During her undergraduate degree, she was the VP Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization for the Edwards Business Students' Society and the Student Supports Headperson for the Indigenous Business Students' Society. Lauren is pursuing her Juris Doctor at the University of Ottawa's common law program and is looking forward to incorporating her learnings from the allyship project in a new institutional environment. Through this project, Lauren has learned the importance of creating space for difficult conversations and for making mistakes in the pursuit of learning to develop strong, authentic relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Kayla Benoit (BComm)
Graduate Research Assistant

Kayla Benoit, a two-spirit Ojibway person, is a student in the Master of Science in Marketing program at the Edwards School of Business at the University of Saskatchewan. Kayla also facilitates the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation certification with the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning for the 2022-23 academic year. In addition, she currently holds the position of the VP of Indigenous Engagement for the Graduate Student Association for the 2023-24 years. Her research interest is Language, Human Rights and Indigenous Economic Development. This allyship project allows for further understanding of Human Rights frameworks and Human First approaches to systemic change where we all work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable community.

Maureen Bourassa (PhD)
Faculty Researcher

Maureen Bourassa, originally from Saskatoon, SK located on Treaty 6 Territory and Homeland of the Métis, is an Associate Professor of Marketing and Department Head at the Edwards School of Business. Through her research, she aims to more fully understand the meaning and impact of respect in a marketing context, including stakeholder relationships. Before she became a faculty member, she worked with non-profit organizations on projects around engaging critical but underrepresented stakeholders. Over the last two years, she has been closely involved in the journey to Indigenize at Edwards, and being a part of this project team has been an important part of her own allyship journey. She is grateful for all that she has learned from the sharing circle participants and from this research team.

Dana Carriere (MA, MBA)
Faculty Researcher

Dana Carriere, a proud Swampy Cree/Metis woman, is a faculty member who teaches an Indigenous Business in Canada course and is the Strategic Advisor - Indigenous Engagement at Edwards School of Business. Through her work, Dana hopes to inform and empower her students and colleagues to be socially conscious professionals that advance their commitments to truth and reconciliation and engagement with Indigenous Peoples and communities in meaningful, authentic ways. This project directly aligns with Dana's hopes and goals to advance our personal and collective journeys of learning and engaging within this space, and through this project she created a safe and welcoming environment for participants to have meaningful and honest dialogue, and sometimes difficult conversations, about the meaning of allyship, how we can engage as allies in more meaningful, authentic ways, and how we can take on more responsibility individually and collectively towards advancing truth and reconciliation through intent and action. A key insight Dana had from participating in this project is the importance of starting the conversation and inviting diverse individuals to share their perspectives, ideas, and experiences, while acknowledging that we are all at different stages of our understanding and comfort level with this work, but collectively we can find ways to move forward together in a good way.

Dante Carter (BComm as of June 2023)
Undergraduate Research Assistant

Dante Carter (she/her) is a proud member of Onion Lake Cree Nation. She will graduate in June 2023 with her B.Comm in Marketing. Dante will then be attending University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus for an Interdisciplinary Masters. Along with her studies, she has been an active member of the school community where she helped to support Indigenous students as part of the Indigenous Business Students' Society. She hopes to return to Edwards, as a faculty member, to continue her commitment to the Edward's EDI initiatives.

Marjorie Delbaere (PhD)
Faculty Researcher

Marjorie Delbaere, originally from Winnipeg, MB located on Treaty 1 Territory and Homeland of the Red River Métis, is a Professor of Marketing and Associate Dean of Research, Graduate Programs, and Faculty Relations at the Edwards School of Business. Her program of research explores the interplay between the persuasive use of language and images, often in the context of complex and controversial products. Before joining academia, Marjorie worked in marketing communications for Hewlett-Packard and Agilent Technologies in Germany. This project on allyship aligns with Marjorie's belief that to truly understand a person or group of people, you need to understand their history and culture. Participating on this project has been a major step forward in Marjorie's journey to becoming a better ally herself and moving forward on the path to reconciliation. One major insight that Marjorie will take away from this project is learning the deep significance of the role education has played in Indigenous people's history and the meaning and promise it holds for the future.

Joelena Leader (PhD)
Faculty Researcher

Joelena Leader, originally from Watrous/Manitou Saskatchewan and born and raised on Treaty 6 Territory and Homeland of the Métis people, is a community-based researcher, educator, and grant development professional. She is a Research Facilitator and Sessional Lecturer at the Edwards School of Business whose work is deeply rooted in the principles of Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR), user-centered design/experience (UX) and the intersections of technology and society in organizational, industry, and community contexts. Joelena's doctoral research explored healthcare access and community perspectives across four rural and remote Northern Saskatchewan communities. The allyship project directly aligns with Joelena's approach to community-engaged research that aims to build capacity, meaningful partnerships, and co-learning that enables action. This project was an opportunity for growth as part of her ongoing journey toward truth and reconciliation, and this work highlights the importance of creating safe and supportive sharing spaces to have honest and, at times, uncomfortable conversations as a critical step forward.

Brooke Listwin (BComm)
Graduate Research Assistant

After receiving a B.Comm in Management with Honours and Distinction, Brooke pursued her MSc in Marketing at the Edwards School of Business studying female leadership within marketing. She will begin her PhD studies at the University of British Columbia in the fall of 2023 to pursue a career in academia. Her research interests broadly include consumer self and identity, social influences on consumers, and consumer well-being. Beyond her academic studies, she is an avid sports fan and played for the Huskie Women's Volleyball team during her undergraduate degree.

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Introduction

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP IN CANADIAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS 2023

In 2016, a study found that of Canadian postsecondary institutions that had established some form of Indigenous student services, out of 124 institutions studied, only 35% had implemented institution-wide strategic plans that incorporated Indigenous Initiatives (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Pidgeon, 2016). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action urge institutions to undertake considerable systemic changes to enhance equity in employment, training, and education (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Within the context of the TRC's call to actions and the recognition of the engagement gap that was outlined in the BSAC call for proposals, our research sought to co-create a comprehensive framework that business schools can use to enhance allyship and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples. The premise of this research is that for business schools to effectively collaborate with Indigenous partners and communities, they must first cultivate a strong ethos of Indigenous engagement and allyship on the inside, within their own institutions. This in turn is built on the assumption that an organization's internal culture is imperative to its success in developing partnerships and stakeholder relationships.

This report outlines the multiple stages of our research project focused on allyship with Indigenous Peoples. It begins with a synthesis of the current literature on the topic followed by a summary of the methodology, specifically the implementation of sharing circles. The report then presents findings with insights from sharing circles with students, and faculty and staff, along with a co-created framework that highlights the convergence of thoughts between these sharing circle groups. Finally, key takeaways and recommended next steps for business schools are discussed, emphasizing the importance of true allyship to building effective relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities, with the goal of forming meaningfully engaged and mutually beneficial partnerships. This research is just one step forward on our business school's journey towards true allyship, and we hope other business schools across Canada will take something away from this work and implement it within their allyship journeys as well.

Overview of Literature

ALLYSHIP

Allyship in its broad definition is referred to as “the state or condition of being an ally: supportive association with another person or group” (“Allyship,” n.d.) which is “to unite or form a connection or relation between” or “to form or enter into an alliance with each other” (“Ally”, n.d.). Allyship has been the subject and focus of research across many domains such as mental health training, work organizations, and higher education. Historically, allyship has focused on heterosexual allies of LGBTQ+ [1] people (Brown & Ostrove, 2013). However, research is expanding its scope to address other ally groups such as non-disabled allies working with people with disabilities and white allies to people of color (Brown & Ostrove, 2013). The term "social justice allies" has been used in academia to describe individuals in dominant social groups who align themselves with members of the non-dominant social groups (Mitchell et al.., 2018). The concept of allyship or allies is used in various contexts, and its definition can be influenced by the specific context in which it is being used. As a result, there are extensive and varied definitions of allyship.

Scholarly literature concerning Indigenous allyship in Canada has presented diverse perspectives. Brown and Ostrove (2013) suggest that allies "[first] have a desire to actively support social justice; to promote the rights of the non-dominant groups and to eliminate social inequalities that the allies benefit from; and second, allies offer support by establishing meaningful relationships with people and communities of the non-dominant group that they wish to ally themselves with and to ensure accountability to those people and communities” (p. 6). This form of allyship involves both social activism and justice, as well as the notion of building genuine and meaningful relationships. Goodman (2011) defines allies as “individuals from a privileged group which make intentional choices to support or work for the rights of those from the oppressed group. They are committed to eliminating a form of oppression from they benefit” (p. 157).

The Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network released an Indigenous Ally Toolkit (2019) which expresses that "being an ally is about disrupting oppressive spaces by educating others on the realities and histories of marginalized people” (p. 8). Here, a focus on education is a key component to being an ally. Other definitions of allyship include

“an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person in positions of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group” (Anti-Oppression Network, 2022).

Again, the importance of education is stressed along with an acknowledgment of the power and privilege the individual engaging in allyship needs to recognize. Allyship with Indigenous Peoples involves engaging in self-reflection as well as actively listening and learning to better understand positions of power and privilege concerning colonization, and oppressive and unjust systems of power with the goal of working together to dismantle them (Amnesty International, 2018).

As presented by the multiple definitions of allyship and allies, key attributes include educating or re-learning, acknowledging one's privilege and power, actions of social justice, and creating meaningful relationships. The above definitions underscore the importance of specific positive actions individuals can take when engaging in allyship. Several organizations have also begun to explore what steps or actions can be taken within the context of Indigenous allyship. These actions include building trust and relationships that emphasize walking beside not in front; educating oneself on privilege and power; the history of colonization of Indigenous peoples, culture, and land; and acting and being accountable in supporting Indigenous people and liberation efforts (Smith et al., 2016).

PERFORMATIVE ALLYSHIP

With the understanding of the definitions of allyship and the positive actions one should look to when engaging with allyship, it is important to recognize that individuals and organizations may be engaging with performative allyship. There have been discussions surrounding the authenticity and genuineness of using the terms ‘ally’ or ‘allyship’. For example, allyship cannot be a self-appointed identity with some individuals and organizations use of it as a “badge” or to symbolize a token identity that one is a “good guy” (MUACS, 2019). Therefore, allyship involves going beyond performative (inauthentic) allyship and instead is “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” (Anti-Oppression network, 2022). The active and consistent practice of allyship reflects that one must continually work to be an ally and it is a journey that reflects It is impossible to "become an ally" and one can only strive to "aspire to be an ally" (Smith et al., 2016). This echoes the notion that non-Indigenous people cannot label themselves an "ally" and that only Indigenous Peoples can decide the degree

they believe a non-Indigenous person is being an ally to them (Smith et al., 2016).

Discussions about performative allyship have focused on personal and organizational motivations for engaging in allyship actions, such as meeting quotas, increasing funding success and opportunities, or feeding personal egos (MUACS, 2019). Other negative actions individuals may engage in while trying to be an ally may be taking leadership positions or engaging in the Western “savior complex” in leading movements on behalf of Indigenous people (Smith et al., 2016). Finally, individuals should not seek out Indigenous people for emotional support when dealing with unsettling feelings and difficult conversations or have expectations that one will always be welcomed as an ally (Smith et al., 2016).

INDIGENIZATION WITHIN CANADIAN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

When discussing allyship, it is important to consider the related concept of Indigenization, which was introduced into the vocabulary of Canadian postsecondary institutions in response to the TRC's Calls to Action in 2015. However, there has been no collective agreement on how this transformation and its practices should look, and Canadian post-secondary education has been struggling to ethically engage with Indigenization within their institutions. Indigenization looks to “expand the academy’s still-narrow conception of knowledge, to include Indigenous perspectives in transformative ways” (Kuokkanen, 2008, p. 8; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) conceptualized Indigenization within postsecondary institutions on a three-part spectrum starting with Indigenous Inclusion, followed by Reconciliation Indigenization, and finally Decolonial Indigenization on the far end. Indigenous Inclusion is an approach that is primarily about increasing the number of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty within Canadian academies, but not doing anything to shift the organizational culture. It seeks to support Indigenous peoples to overcome the obstacles within the systems but places the burden of change on them, not the institutions. In the middle of the spectrum is Reconciliation Indigenization—notable in this approach is the establishment of Indigenous advisory and/or reconciliation committees. These committees work to move beyond Indigenous inclusion policies towards goals that attempt to "alter the university's structure,

including educating Canadian faculty, staff, and students to change how they think about, and act toward, Indigenous people." (p. 222). Also notable within Reconciliation Indigenization is the addition of Indigenous course requirements (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

Finally, Decolonial Indigenization “envisions dismantling the university and building it back up again with a very different role and purpose.” (p. 223). Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) propose that this would first mean using a "treaty-based model of university governance and practice" (p. 223) as treaties are living agreements that allow for changes and modifications to evolve. It would also mean institutions support "Indigenous culture, politics, knowledge, and on-the-land skills" (p. 223), including community-based research and learning opportunities. No matter which stage or approach to indigenization an institution may be at, to decolonize academic spaces "non-Indigenous educators and staff must commit to the challenge of becoming aspiring allies who learn to take more time to listen and to observe rather than to speak" (Gaudry & Lorenz, p. 355).

INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP IN CANADIAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

As discussed, approaches to both allyship and Indigenization can vary tremendously. According to Gaudry and Lorenz (2018), Indigenous faculty members and allies are already transforming actions to establish a decolonial academy, and are ahead of administrations in this regard. Research has also shown that postsecondary institutions can offer faculty, students, and staff a sense of belonging, which can in turn facilitate students’ studies and academic success (Carter et al. 2018; Cox, Herrick, and Keating 2012). Each department or college within a postsecondary institution has its own unique environment and structure, which may lead to distinct approaches in promoting meaningful allyship within their respective communities.

In the context of our research project, we aim to co-create a comprehensive framework that business schools can use to enhance allyship and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples within their organizations. Moving towards true allyship within business schools is essential to building effective relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities with the goal of forming meaningfully engaged and mutually beneficial partnerships. Through this research, we aim to understand: How can business schools become better allies to Indigenous business students as a pathway to addressing the engagement gap? What does allyship with Indigenous Peoples mean and how can better allyship improve the readiness of business schools and organizations to take part in meaningful engagement and allyship with Indigenous stakeholders? Our research is developed on the premise that before business schools can effectively work with Indigenous partners and communities,

they first need to have a strong ethos of Indigenous engagement and allyship on the inside. This is, in turn, built on the assumption that internal organizational culture is imperative to organizations' success in partnerships and stakeholder relationships. At Edwards School of Business, truth, reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenous engagement are deeply rooted in our long-term strategy and journey, which we aim to co-create with Indigenous Peoples.

METHODOLOGY

SHARING CIRCLES: STUDENTS, FACULTY, & STAFF

We employed a two-phase qualitative approach involving sharing circles with key stakeholders to effectively address the primary research questions: (1) What does allyship with Indigenous Peoples mean and how can better allyship improve the readiness of business schools and organizations to take part in meaningful engagement and allyship with Indigenous stakeholders?; and (2) How can business schools become better allies to Indigenous business students as a pathway to addressing the engagement gap?

The data was collected via sharing circles, which are rooted in the traditions of Indigenous Peoples. Sharing circles bring individuals together to cultivate trust, intimacy, a sense of belonging, mutuality, and reciprocity (Carr et al., 2020). Sharing circles are used to both discuss and resolve issues of importance, and they create a space that facilitates connection, collaboration, and mutual understanding. Sharing circles are formed with members arranged in a circle, with a facilitator—in our case, Dana Carriere—who leads the circle in a discussion. All sharing circles occurred in private meeting rooms at the Edwards Schools of Business. At the beginning of each session, we briefly explained the research project, and then we posed a series of five questions. However, discussions were open and flexible (free to vary and shift), with no strict structures imposed to allow for members of the sharing circle to guide the conversation in any direction they wished. The five questions we asked in all sharing circles are below:

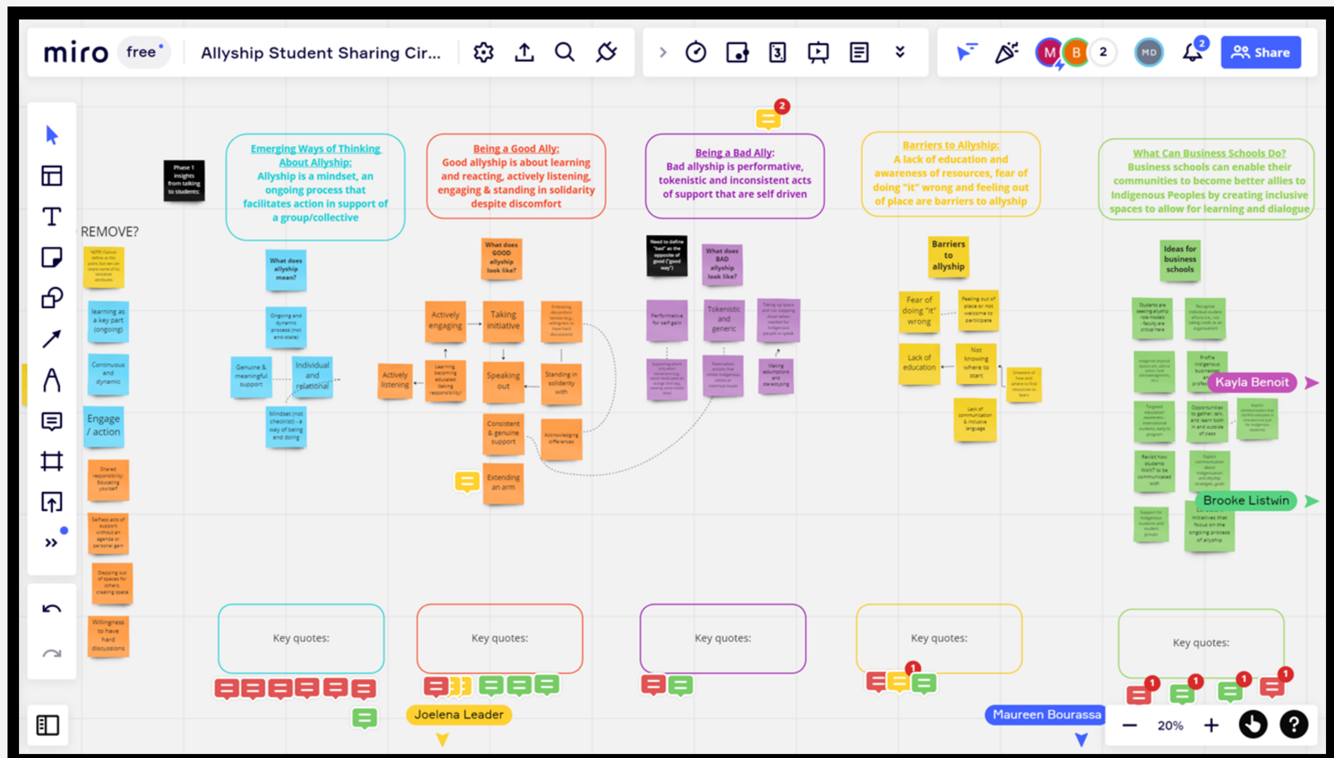
- What does allyship mean?
- What does good allyship look like?
- What does bad allyship look like?
- What are the barriers to allyship?
- What can Edwards do to promote allyship?

The initial round of sharing circles occurred in the Fall of 2022 and involved students of the Edwards School of Business as participants. Four sharing circles were conducted in total, with each sharing circle consisting of three to four participants. Participants were recruited through recruitment posters plus announcements in our internal communications, and they were compensated for their time with $50.00 cash. Sharing circles consisted of international students, Indigenous students, and non-Indigenous students at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

The second round of sharing circles was conducted in the Winter of 2023, consisting of faculty and staff of the Edwards School of Business. Three sharing circles were conducted with four to seven participants each. Faculty and staff were from various positions and departments. The final sharing circle consisted of four members of faculty with leadership positions within the Edwards School of Business. All sharing circles were recorded and transcribed with permission. During each sharing circle, a member of the research team recorded notes, expressions, and thoughts during the sessions on whiteboards to supplement the transcripts. These whiteboard recordings provided an opportunity for the participants to collect, reflect upon, or clarify any thoughts or ideas that emerged during the sharing circle session. This process helped the research team to validate key ideas expressed by the participants in real-time during the sharing circles.

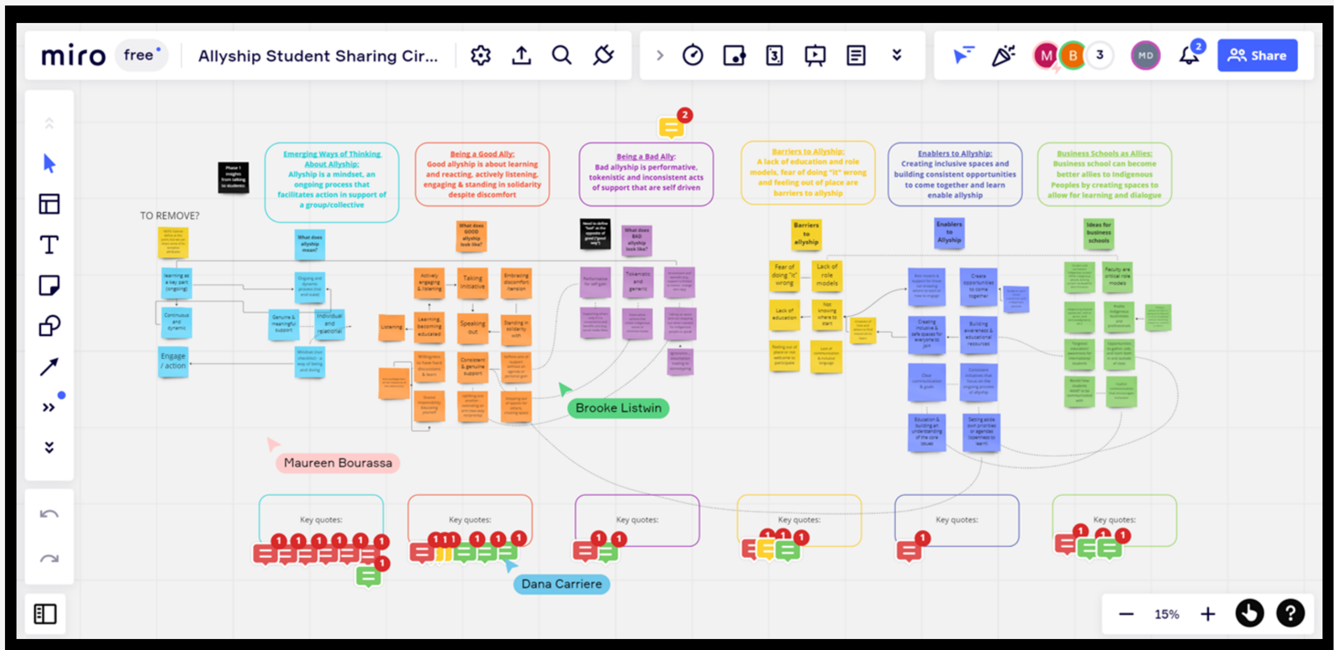
DATA ANALYSIS

Figure 1: Team-based Thematic Analysis via Miro, Student Sharing Circles



We recorded and transcribed the sharing circles, and we anonymized the data with participant codes. The transcriptions, along with the pictures of the whiteboards used during the sharing circles, constituted the primary forms of data collected and analyzed for the study. Team-based thematic analysis (aka team-based open coding, participatory thematic analysis) was used to analyze the data as a participatory process at the interface between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems (Andrews, 2021; Braun and Clarke 2006; Cascio et al. 2019, Guest and MacQueen 2008) using the literature on allyship as a theoretical lens. Data analysis consisted of the research team gathering in-person to discuss, debate, and converge around key themes that emerged in the data from the sharing circles. A web-based program called "Miro" was used to work through the data analysis together. We chose Miro because it allows members of a research team to interact with the data visually and collaboratively—all researchers had access on their devices, and could post and move notes about the emergent themes at the same time that they were discussed in person—as shown in Figure #1 and Figure #2. Based on the results of our collaborative thematic analysis, the key themes were developed; these are are outlined and described in the findings section.

Figure 2: Team-based Thematic Analysis via Miro, Faculty & Staff Sharing Circles



FINDINGS

STUDENT SHARING CIRCLES

What does allyship mean?

One of the primary insights gained from the student sharing circles was the idea of allyship as a mindset. According to the students, allyship is akin to a mindset of actively advocating and supporting a group. It is an ongoing and dynamic process that does not have a definitive endpoint.

"*To me, allyship is like **being an active advocate** for whatever marginalized group, in this case, Indigenous people. I think allyship is a pretty easy word to throw around that gets used a lot, but I don't think it's just enough to be not prejudice. I think to really own the word ally, you have to, I guess, **actively support** whatever group you're referring to." (PA004-4)*

Allyship also means offering genuine and meaningful action in support of a group or collective.

*"If someone is struggling. And you have the capability of **helping them up**. That's what allyship is. **You extend your arm**, and lift them up so they could, like what you said, exchange. So, I think allyship is that **connectivity**." (PA001-3)*

The words "connectivity" and "helping" were words repeated throughout the sharing circles in relationship to this idea of allyship as a two-way exchange.

What does good allyship look like?

In discussions about what allyship means with students, the idea of good allyship often encompassed actions of (1) learning—including active listening, (2) standing in solidarity despite discomfort, and (3) engaging with each other with shared values.

When it comes to learning, students emphasized that individuals should take responsibility for their education and not rely on others to inform them of what they do not know. In the following quote, a participant notes the importance of active individual learning and the shared responsibility of education.

*“A good ally would kind of look like **actively participating** in the discourse and not necessarily just repeating what you've been told or what you've maybe heard about. But like actually, 'I did research and figured this out”, or 'I had this conversation and they brought up this and I didn't consider it' or something like that. Where it's actually conversing and asking questions and **getting the information yourself in a way, rather than relying on others to deliver it to you.**” (PA003-1)*

Student participants also emphasized the importance of standing in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, which may require embracing discomfort and tension at times. This means not only extending an arm to support others, but also taking initiative to speak out in solidarity for the group one is supporting. Making space—and the idea of not taking up space from others—was also referred to throughout our discussions about allyship actions.

*"… the ability **to make space** where there might not already be some. Because within the example of at the college, obviously there's not always necessarily this space where indigeneity can kind of be brought in and discussed in a safe way, or in a way that's relevant to what else is being discussed. And I feel like part of **being an ally would be taking the time to create that space rather than waiting for someone else to do it**. Or, if there is space taking it up, rather giving it to the people who might be needing it more I guess." (PA003-1)*

According to students, another critical element of good allyship is that both parties involved should approach the relationship with honesty, respect, and transparency.

*“You need to be **truthful with your intentions** and goals because both parties need to know their true intentions. There should be complete, honest communication about it, if not, then mistakes or misleading conversations can come up. The second thing is to **treat each partner with respect and transparency**. There has to be no gap of doubt or speculation because that turns out to be bad. Both parties need to acknowledge that this is what's going on and nothing more than that. Third, you have to be **clear on what are the benefits that both parties are getting from that allyship**.” (PA001-1)*

What does bad allyship look like?

During the discussion, students also explored the concept of bad allyship and identified several barriers to allyship. These behaviours include performative and tokenistic allyship, which involve insincere and inconsistent acts of support that prioritize the ally's image over the needs of others (in other words, allyship that is self-driven). Acting in a performative or tokenistic fashion was a critical concern for students. They expressed that people who are intending to be allies should not support others only when it is convenient for them, or when it is only a public display of the "good" acts they are doing. A common example in the sharing circles was of people seeking social media likes by posting pictures wearing orange shirts on orange shirt day, when that action is the only supportive action they ultimately engage in.

*"I feel like part of being a bad ally is **doing things under the disguise** of being like, oh, I'm doing this because I'm woke or I'm doing it for reconciliation. But then its more realistically a way to advance a resume or to able to point to something and say, 'Actually I'm a really good person because I did this one thing.' And that's not really the point of why you were supposed to be doing it though, to say you're a good person, it's to actually benefit the group." (PA003-1)*

*"…an easy example with Indigenous allyship is land acknowledgements. But I've seen, I guess certain professors not just in commerce, but with different departments too, where they have a land acknowledgement, but they don't really do an acknowledgement. **It's just like a slide** that it seemed like they required to go through and they quickly go through the thing and then just move on with the rest of the lecture, or the rest of the class…." (PA002-3)*

Students also highlighted other actions that constitute bad allyship, such as making assumptions and perpetuating stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and taking up space that limits or undermines and minimizes Indigenous voices and issues. As one student mentioned, bad allyship can look very selfish.

"*A bad ally is going to be pretty **selfish** I would think." (PA003-2)*

What are the barriers to allyship?

Following the discussions on the nature of allyship, students discussed barriers to engaging in meaningful and genuine allyship. Three key barriers emerged in the discussions: (1) miseducation/lack of education, (2) fear, and (3) lack of understanding about how to engage. For students, miseducation/lack of education included not knowing where to start in their education journey and being unaware of how and where to find resources. In particular, the international students in our sharing circles expressed a lack of knowledge of Indigenous Peoples when they arrived in Canada.

*"I think that's the education or the knowledge is very important for international students because as we enter Canada, **we have no idea about the Indigenous community**, and we are really confused." (PA003-3)*

In addition to the barrier of education was the barrier of fear. Many students expressed fear of offending someone or doing "it" wrong. Examples included not knowing if they are welcome to participate in certain on-campus Indigenous-led initiatives, or the fear of feeling out of place at Indigenous-led events. The uncertainty around participation also came from a fear of not wanting to take up space as a non-Indigenous participant, as noted by this student.

"I think one [thing] I would say that I struggle with is not necessarily knowing whether I would be taking up space as a non-Indigenous person to come and participate and give my opinions and my thoughts when I'm not necessarily coming from a place of experience or as much knowledge as other people. And so not wanting to insert myself in something that's not really about me." (PA003-1)

Although students expressed their willingness to participate in allyship and on-campus activities, initiatives, groups, or events, they also identified a lack of understanding of how they could effectively contribute and make a genuine impact as an ally as a barrier.

"I feel like the biggest barrier that I kind of agree with is, you know, understanding how and what can I actually do to make a genuine impact…" (PA002-3)

What can business schools do to promote allyship?

The students had a number of ideas about what business schools like Edwards can do to encourage allyship. First, business schools can contribute to building better alliances with Indigenous Peoples by creating inclusive spaces for learning and dialogues. Specifically, students are seeking role models who are good allies within their community; within business schools, faculty can act as role models and show what it means to be a good ally.

Second, students shared their views on the positive and impactful work carried out by student-led groups within the college and university that are making a difference to Indigenization and allyship. The students emphasized that the business school need to do more to recognize the efforts of these student groups. In addition to recognition, the business school should further its efforts of learning, promoting, and supporting the work of Indigenous students and groups. The students emphasized that while business schools should provide recognition and support to Indigenous individuals and groups, they should not take credit for what these individuals and groups have accomplished.

Students also expressed their desire for opportunities to gather, converse, and learn both in and outside of the classroom. When organizing events and other opportunities for students to come together and learn, it is crucial for event facilitators to explicitly communicate that inclusivity is a top priority and everyone is welcome. The students shared several instances where they believed that Indigenous-led events were exclusively for Indigenous students, and non-Indigenous students felt unsure if it was appropriate for them to attend.

*"Sometimes it's not entirely clear if you know as a non-Indigenous student if I am allowed, like should I be going to like the Gordon Oakes for example. I mean, I had heard about it and I was familiar with that it existed, but I never actually looked into it very much at all, because **I thought that was only for Indigenous students."** (PA002-3)*

Another idea for business schools that students offered was for more Indigenous businesses and professionals to be highlighted or profiled. With business schools often holding job fairs or working with various external organizations for in-class assignments, students noted that they are not aware of the large number of Indigenous-owned businesses that they could be looking to for future employment.

*“So, there's like always career fairs and stuff for like Co-op... We could do a **career fair that features indigenous businesses”**. (PA004-4)*

Finally, students remarked that the school could work to Indigenize physical spaces by including more Indigenous art, having the TRC calls to action displayed, and encouraging students and faculty to share genuine and personal land acknowledgments.

The student sharing circles highlighted several measures that business schools can adopt, implement, and work towards to foster genuine, supportive, and inclusive spaces and environments that promote and model allyship. Yet, students expressed that allyship—as a mindset—is also an ongoing journey. Therefore, advancing allyship within business schools entails a continuous process of development and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of the community, both including and beyond the ideas discussed.

FACULTY & STAFF SHARING CIRCLES

What does allyship mean?

Allyship, from the perspective of faculty and staff within the business school, requires an authentic relationship that is not just words but is also supported by action.

*"I think **authentic** is the key word there... when you're trying to find someone for support, that's what you're looking for, is that authenticity, whatever the receiving word of that, is, whether it's allyship or trust or support or … anything there. It has to be authentic, because if it's not, then what are you gaining from this? What you're meaning behind it, if it's not going to be an authentic conversation or an authentic reach out of support." (PA005-03)*

Participants in the sharing circles also emphasized that allyship is a reciprocal relationship, but its effectiveness hinges on validation from the group being supported. This means Indigenous Peoples have to validate whether an individual is an ally—the ally cannot be the one to self-declare that role. With Indigenous Peoples being the ones to acknowledge allyship, it also means that within two-way relationships, the onus of validating allyship is on Indigenous peoples. One participant noted allyship, therefore, has been *"infringed on Indigenous peoples."*

*"They (those we align with) have things that they also provide in an exchange because that's just how all relationships work. No one wants to be in one-way relationships... So for me, authenticity is honesty, it's setting boundaries and **it's two way**. It's not sort of assuming that it's always going to be." (PA005-07)*

"*… performative allyship to me, actually is more detrimental than no allyship, because it then* ***puts the pressure on those within that community*** *to tell you that you're doing it performatively. Or to tell you what you're doing [is] wrong and it exhausts the people within that community to constantly check and check and check to see if you're authentic". (PA005-03)*

Faculty and staff, in the sharing circles, brought up a perspective that was not discussed in the student circles, which is that the term "ally" brings to mind war references or historical metaphors.

"The first time I hear the word ally, it's friend versus foe. It positions it in the ***spectrum of war,*** *and that's something I'm not very comfortable with. I much prefer partnership, but also I understand the word partnership has been overused and over extended, so allyship is much more comfortable and familiar. But at the same time, it is part of a space that includes the idea of war." (PA007-01)*

Participants pointed out that due to the associations and connections that the term "ally" may carry from war times, using it in the context of Indigenous Allyship could inadvertently reinforce or create a "them versus us" mentality. While all sharing circles discussed the potential problems with the word "ally" and its connections to war times, no other terms or words were suggested as an alternative. As the quote above illustrates, although "partnership" was initially proposed as an alternative, the participant dismissed it promptly, as it failed to capture the essence of the relationship under discussion.

What does good allyship mean?

In discussions of what good allyship looks like, faculty and staff sharing circles presented three categories of meaning when it comes to what being a good ally means: (1) values, (2) actions, and (3) ongoing. First, there are specific values that come with being a good ally. Participants noted that being a good ally means being honest and transparent. Honesty and transparency are needed to express where one is at in their journey of allyship and their capacity for allyship at a given time.

"Honesty and transparency *go together. But you know, being honest in terms of saying I support you in this matter, I don't support you in this matter. Right. So being able to say no, this is not the right thing that you're doing or this is not perhaps the right way you're thinking. So to be able to give that honest feedback." (PA007-06)*

As the participant stated in the quote above, honesty also entails holding oneself and others accountable and providing honest feedback to them. The second key aspect to being a good ally includes demonstrating allyship through actions, such as actively listening, learning, and approaching situations with an open mind and open heart.

"Authentic allyship, I think, is when both parties are coming with an ***open mind and open heart idea.*** *And with the* ***lack of judgmen****t and positionality ... I feel like that's something like coming with good intentions. And, you know, hoping for a mutually beneficial outcome, but something that's 'just because.' It doesn't have to be I win you lose or something; like, it's mutually beneficial." (PA007-05)*

Third, good allyship is also not a one-time event. Participants noted that allyship should be treated as a life-long journey where one has an authentic mindset that exhibits authentic actions.

"To make it a ***more permanent allyship****, you have to have some shared values. And that exploration probably has to start right at the start because it's hard for me to support someone who has a different set of values because. Eventually, we're going to diverge". (PA007-07)*

As the participant noted, the idea of "permanent allyship" reflects a lifelong commitment to a journey to allyship. The journey of allyship is ongoing, and maintaining shared values is essential to sustain it throughout one's life. When both parties in the two-relationship can provide meaningful actions throughout the relationship rooted in shared values, then there may be fewer opportunities to diverge from the path to allyship.

What does bad allyship mean?

Faculty and staff identified several categories of bad allyship: (1) performative actions, (2) avoiding doing the work, (3) inconsistent and inauthentic support. Similar to the student sharing circles, faculty and staff conveyed that being a bad ally manifests in performative actions of allyship. The term "bad" and "performative" allyship were used interchangeably to convey an inauthentic, inconsistent, misaligned, and self-serving approach to allyship. Performative allyship, therefore, is when individuals are engaging with allyship for personal or self-gain that does not genuinely benefit Indigenous people. It may also include individuals self-proclaiming to be an ally, even though authentic allyship can only be validated by the group one is looking to be an ally with.

*"Are you saying it to **make yourself feel better**? Or are you saying it to make people realize that, hey, I'm supposed to be an ally? You know, I want to be perceived as this person that is involved in the community. I think having a sort of **silent support is stronger** than having that performative... 'I'll buy this as long as I get to shout out to everybody that I can now be part of this.' And I've seen it before and it's, it just taints everything." (PA005-03)*

In this context, the participant reflects on performative allyship through an example of individuals buying products, such as orange shirts, as a way to demonstrate allyship, but then seeking validation or praise in return.

Sharing circle participants also noted that one is engaging in bad allyship when relying on others to "do the work" for them.

*"It's also a bad ally would be like, 'I want to be an ally, tell me what I need to do to be an ally' rather than taking the initiative and doing some reading or trying to figure some stuff out on your own...**Expecting someone else to do the work for you**, I guess. Or not willing to put any in any work of your own." (PA006-05)*

As this participant, quoted above, expressed, relying on others can mean putting the responsibility on Indigenous Peoples to educate or make connections for others when individuals need to be putting in the personal time and effort. Many resources are available to people, and it is up to the individual to decide if they will put in the work themselves or expect others to do the work for them.

Another crucial aspect of bad allyship discussed in the faculty and staff sharing circles was the presence of inconsistent and inauthentic support. Participants observed that this is reflected when individuals misalign their actions of allyship. An example of this is faculty going through a "checklist," and then using things like land acknowledgments not in a sincere or personal manner but as a performative action to tick off a box.

*"Tokenizing is a is a big thing with bad allyship. Like if you're doing it just to kind of be able to say like **I'm checking this box.**" (PA006-07)*

Inconsistent support also demonstrates a misalignment of personal and professional actions. Misalignment may manifest as individuals only demonstrating actions associated with allyship at work and not engaging with meaningful allyship in their personal lives. Another example of performative allyship: people may think they are being good allies by

wearing an orange shirt to work on Fridays or delivering rudimentary land acknowledgments before their lecture, but if those “allyship actions” stop at work and are not an everyday and lifelong attitude, then it is not authentic or meaningful allyship.

“They'll be like, yeah, let's Indigenize the college. Let's work to reconcile. Let's do this, this, and that. But then that same person outside of work is going to be walking downtown, and they're gonna purposely avoid walking by the [low income housing] or they're purposely going to cross the street when they see an Indigenous person coming or ... You know it happens. Because it's performative... That is something that happens at the university as a whole where they're like, 'Yeah, for work I'm going to cross … Let's check all these boxes. I'm going to do this, this, and that. But ***then personally one-on-one when it comes down to it, I'm not changing my beliefs****. I'm not going to match up to that.'” (PA006-07)*

What are barriers to allyship?

Following conversations about what bad allyship can look like, participants in the sharing circles were asked to discuss what may be preventing individuals from participating in meaningful allyship. Key themes that emerged included: (1) fear and (2) lack of education. One of the barriers to allyship was the fear of making mistakes. Some individuals may feel hesitant or uncomfortable to engage in certain allyship actions due to concerns about causing offense or discomfort in certain scenarios.

“It's an ***uncomfortable****, potentially an uncomfortable topic. You might feel like you don't know everything or that you're, not purposely ignorant, but you don't, I guess you don't know enough and you don't want, instead of saying, instead of maybe saying the wrong thing, you don't say anything at all.” (PA007-05)*

As the participant quoted above noted, some individuals may prioritize their discomfort or fear of making a mistake over the need to engage with allyship. While people may feel they want to engage in purposeful and meaningful allyship actions, the fear of making a mistake holds them back.

Another aspect to fear as a barrier was participants anticipating conflict within conversations around allyship and therefore stopping or disengaging in those difficult conversations. This fear around difficult conversations is expressed in the quote below.

“They ***don't want any bad things to happen*** *to them as a result of being an ally to someone else. They fear it.” (PA007-04)*

A second barrier to allyship was having a lack of education, and is articulated in this participant quote.

“The biggest barrier is the ***being afraid of making mistakes unintentionally*** *right? Because of the lack of education on the specific topic. And you know what? If I'm saying something wrong, what if I don't want to offend somebody? You know, I didn't intend to. And I think I think it's an ongoing process. It's getting better and they're getting more information now, but still it is, very new kind of a territory, right? You, how brave you are to venture into that territory?” (PA006-06)*

The feeling that one is not educated enough can lead to the fear of making a mistake or of offending someone. This same barrier of lack of education was also evident in the student sharing circles, and as such, reflects a need for community-wide learning and education about Indigenous history, culture, and reconciliation within business schools. Related to lack of education and fear is the feeling of not knowing where to start or how to engage in a genuine and meaningful way as an ally.

“Where does it start? *Because it just assumes something's already going. And then people jump in and help. They're hopefully the right people to jump in and help in the right way. But there's no instigation of allyship. It's already something that's going on. So what does that, what do we start with? So it's easy to say we're all allies, but what are we allying for or with [or] towards?” (PA007-07)*

What can business schools do?

The faculty and staff sharing circles were able to offer a unique perspective on what business schools can do moving forward to foster allyship: (1) create safe spaces, (2) support time for Indigenous initiatives, (3) support for student initiatives, (4) anti-racism/anti-oppression training for faculty and staff. First, sharing circles participants discussed the need for creating safe spaces within the school. These spaces include both emotional and physical spaces—spaces for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty, and staff to come together were noted. Additionally, spaces solely for Indigenous students were also mentioned as important. Finally, emotional space for individuals to feel safe and supported in their learning journeys was expressed. These various spaces allow for engagement and conversation to take place.

"Allyship is about that. ***Constant engagement and constant conversation*** *constant learning, creating that space to learn, and, everybody's learning* ***together****, right?*

Like, how to do it and you know, we are all going to take different roles in that process at different times." (PA0006-08)

By coming together in a safe space, everyone can learn together. This learning may look different depending on the individual, but coming together collaboratively may help ease the fear and lack of education that have been identified as barriers to allyship. Sharing circle participants also expressed that within the structure of their work, having supported time for Indigenous initiatives within their job roles could be helpful to support allyship in the workplace.

"For this position that I'm in right now, and it has the title of Indigenous initiatives, but there was no time within my role to have an opportunity to, for example, sit on EDI or go to the additional working groups ... and I had to push to advocate for my own time within my work schedule to do that. And I think that it's important that if we want to continue having these conversations, and it's as important to us as all if these missions and statements say it is. We should be allocating a certain percentage of each of our roles to allow us to do that so that we don't feel like we have to, you know, try to convince our management or convince our leadership to go to these meetings. Or have an impact, or that we can do it ***not off the side of our desk****, so that's more authentic." (PA0005-03)*

Participants also stressed the importance of standing behind faculty and staff in being flexible with the support they can offer Indigenous students.

"[Indigenous students' group] is making those connections with sponsors, they're making those connections with businesses ... Like they've got those connections, that's their family. So like they're, tapping all these people, and I feel like… Why aren't, you know, we doing more to, like, ***really support them in those things****? And how can we learn from that and to do more, kind of? Joint things. I feel like that opportunity is right in front of us and and it's just waiting for us and and their doors open. They're saying come. And yet, very few of us come." (PA0006-08)*

With lack of education being a barrier to allyship, the sharing circle participants expressed the need for anti-racism and anti-oppression training. Participants noted that faculty and staff must individually self-reflect to acknowledge privilege and power as well as identify where they are in their personal allyship journeys. However, to move self-reflection and education forward, mandatory anti-racism and oppression training should be delivered to all faculty and staff within business schools.

"I think it's difficult to, in an academic institution, to force faculty to undergo training, or take these educational components, but they can change the rules and the structure. That is how people are incentivized to behave. So I think, that kind of thing.

*It's, like approach it as, what are the **incentives**, what are the kinds of systems and structures you can change, build it into tenure standards and stuff like that, right?... As opposed to sort of like saying, 'Oh, please come to this educational thing,' put it on the… side of the incentive, because then I think even if it is somewhat performative, they have to maybe ... they have to really actually sit there and think about it." (PA005-07)*

A final major point of discussion of what business schools might do moving forward is to add equity seats for Indigenous students throughout the schools' various major departments and graduate programs.

*"But every other college, it seems like that we kind of like imagine ourselves to be on the same level is everybody else, has equity seats. Edwards does not have **equity seats**. And where I see kind of that gap coming in is we have students that would maybe pursue a Masters in Science in Marketing, but if they can't get into marketing then that's not a real super like realistic opportunity for them". (PA006-07)*

This recommendation came from the acknowledgement that more Indigenous students need to be moving through not just undergraduate studies but through graduate programs, PhD programs, and then returning to post-secondary institutions in academic positions.

*"At the end of the day, if we have **more alumni**, more graduates coming out of these programs, because we do our best to hold even two seats of program, then are we going to have **more faculty** in the future that are able to come back and be those people that are able to support and co-lead research projects and things like that". (PA006-07)*

ALLYSHIP FRAMEWORK

The sharing circles with students as well as faculty and staff revealed many similarities in discussions around allyship. The following framework, in Figure 3, summarizes the convergence of thoughts between all of the sharing circles.

Figure 3: Framework for Allyship Implementation

First, according to both groups, allyship is a dynamic mindset. This mindset reflects a lifelong, permanent commitment to allyship—it is not an end state, nor does it have an end goal. Participants from both sets of sharing circles also felt that allyship involves a genuine, meaningful, and authentic two-way relationship

Students explained that, *“You extend your arm and lift them up…*” (PA001-3) (note this quote does not imply a saviour mentality) and faculty reinforced the importance of this support being authentic.

Being a good ally, across both groups, means that allies engage in meaningful and authentic action throughout the relationship. This requires not only an authentic mindset, but also demonstrating that mindset with authentic actions. Both sharing circles also expressed that individuals need to be honest and transparent—with themselves and with others—about where they are in their allyship journey and truthful about why they are engaging with allyship. As allyship is a two-way relationship; honest communication and reflection are needed within that relationship for it to work.

Regarding what bad allyship means, the student and faculty/staff sharing circles both strongly felt that bad—or performative—allyship involves self-gain. Bad allyship is performing or displaying “good acts” to make oneself look like a good person. Examples of performative actions included delivering impersonal land acknowledgments or only wearing an orange shirt on orange shirt day, without doing anything else. Participants across all sharing circles also noted that performative allyship includes seeking out approval or validation for actions. The performative nature of allyship leads to inconsistent support—for example, attending certain events or activities that are convenient, but not attending certain other events/activities. This conceptualization of bad allyship directly opposes the understanding that good allyship is a permanent, lifelong journey.

Both sharing circle groups identified several common barriers to being an ally. First, both groups of participants highlighted fear as a barrier to engaging with allyship. The feeling of fear was expressed as not wanting to say or do the wrong thing that might offend someone. Additionally, students expressed a fear of whether attending Indigenous events, for example, meant they were taking up space as a non-Indigenous participant, and a fear of feeling out of place or unwelcome. A second barrier to allyship shared amongst both groups was lacking education about Indigenous people, culture, and history. Faculty and staff noted unintentional mistakes could be made due to a lack of education while students described this as miseducation, not knowing where to start on their education journey, and challenges in finding and selecting good resources as educational barriers. Additionally, international students in the sharing circles expressed a lack of formal education on Indigenous Peoples and history when they came to Canada. A third barrier to allyship across both sharing circle groups was not knowing where to start on the journey to allyship. Faculty and staff wondered when allyship starts and if there was a right way to start working towards being an ally. Students expressed how they wanted to engage in meaningful allyship, but they did not know how they could make a genuine impact. Overall, the business school communities

are looking for ways to engage with allyship but fear, lack of education, and not knowing how or where to start on their journey may be holding individuals back.

Finally, both sharing circle groups discussed ideas for how business schools can work towards allyship. While the ideas of each group were more specific to the students and to faculty/staff, two common ideas emerged. One idea was to create more inclusive, and safe spaces within the school. Both groups felt the need to create inclusive spaces that allow for learning and dialogue for everyone. There were also mentions of creating more spaces specifically for Indigenous people in the business school community to feel safe in. Along with creating these spaces came the call for more collaborative learning, sharing, and dialogue within those spaces or other events. Students shared that they want more opportunities to gather, learn, and connect about Indigenous culture, history, and economic development, but with the implication that such events explicitly highlight they are for all students to attend. This would help reduce the fear, for example, of students not knowing if they are engaging in the right way, or even if they should attend certain events. Faculty and staff also noted they can learn from the great work student groups do in their community and they would like events where students, faculty, and staff can come together to engage in meaningful education. Faculty and staff are particularly important in acting as role models for dialogue, relationship-building, as well as collaborative and continuous learning. Of course, Indigenous content in business school curriculum is key - and must be in an authentic way - but perhaps because this is a baseline expectation, it did not emerge as a key conversation in the sharing cirlces.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND NEXT STEPS

As we have discussed within the framework and the other findings of this study, Edwards, as a business school community, has a long way to go in its allyship journey . However, what these sharing circles have demonstrated is the desire from students, faculty, and staff to work together on a path to allyship. Below are some of the key takeaways from this research study:

- It is relatively easy to define what being a good ally is and is not, but it is not that easy to take steps to become a good ally.
- There is significant willingness to become an ally, but there are many fears, uncertainties, and barriers.
- Edwards has not done enough to promote and model allyship or to provide the necessary education and awareness needed, and our students are looking to the College to take on a more active role. Dedicating the necessary resources, capacity, and expertise is key.

From the findings of the study, there are many next steps or short-term goals and initiatives that Edwards has begun to implement and work towards. First, we have established an Indigenous Initiatives Working Group that is looking to increase participation in community events as well as create more opportunities to gather and learn such as Lunch and Learns on various topics (e.g., creating personal land acknowledgements, how to participate in Powwows), book clubs, and visits from Indigenous business professionals. Two Kairos Blanket Exercises were hosted by Edwards, inviting staff, faculty and students in March and April 2023. We ask students, staff, and faculty to wear orange shirts the last Thursday/Friday of each month, and we have designed our own Edwards orange shirt. We engage as an organization in Red Dress Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We have commissioned art from our Indigenous faculty, staff, and students to hang on our walls. Another initiative Edwards has implemented is having a core Indigenous Business in Canada course a requirement for all students to take for the Bachelor of Commerce. Students starting their program in 2021 or later are required to take this course; all sections of this course are instructed by an Indigenous person.

There are also numerous long-term goals and initiatives Edwards looks to implement based on the findings of this study. First, our College aims to demonstrate active and ongoing allyship within and outside the school. This includes recognizing the need for faculty to engage and model good allyship as well as continuing to create opportunities to gather, share and learn from each other. Another long-term goal is to develop and engage in processes designed to critically review and rethink our curriculum, while intentionally and thoughtfully incorporating Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and worldviews. Along with rethinking the curriculum is a goal to rethink physical spaces at Edwards. We recognize that our building and spaces reflect colonial architecture and structures, and we are considering what can be done to create an inclusive and safe space the community that Edwards is asking for. Finally, we aim to continue to develop our Indigenous Strategy in a way that is focused on establishing a baseline for education for students, faculty, staff, and leadership at Edwards.

While it will take time and collaboration to move these goals and initiatives forward, note that these are only starting points of the allyship journey within the Edwards School of Business. Just as individuals need to have a mindset and lifelong orientation to their allyship journey, so do institutions and communities. Through this research study, we have been able to come to a better understanding of what allyship with Indigenous Peoples means as well as how business schools can become better allies to Indigenous Peoples in our business school. With much learning to be done in this space, we recognize that it only leaves room for further research and understanding.

We encourage other institutions to work towards allyship as well. As Canadian business schools, we can seize the opportunity to share and learn from one another as we collectively embark on our journeys towards allyship.

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APPENDICES

FIGURE 1.

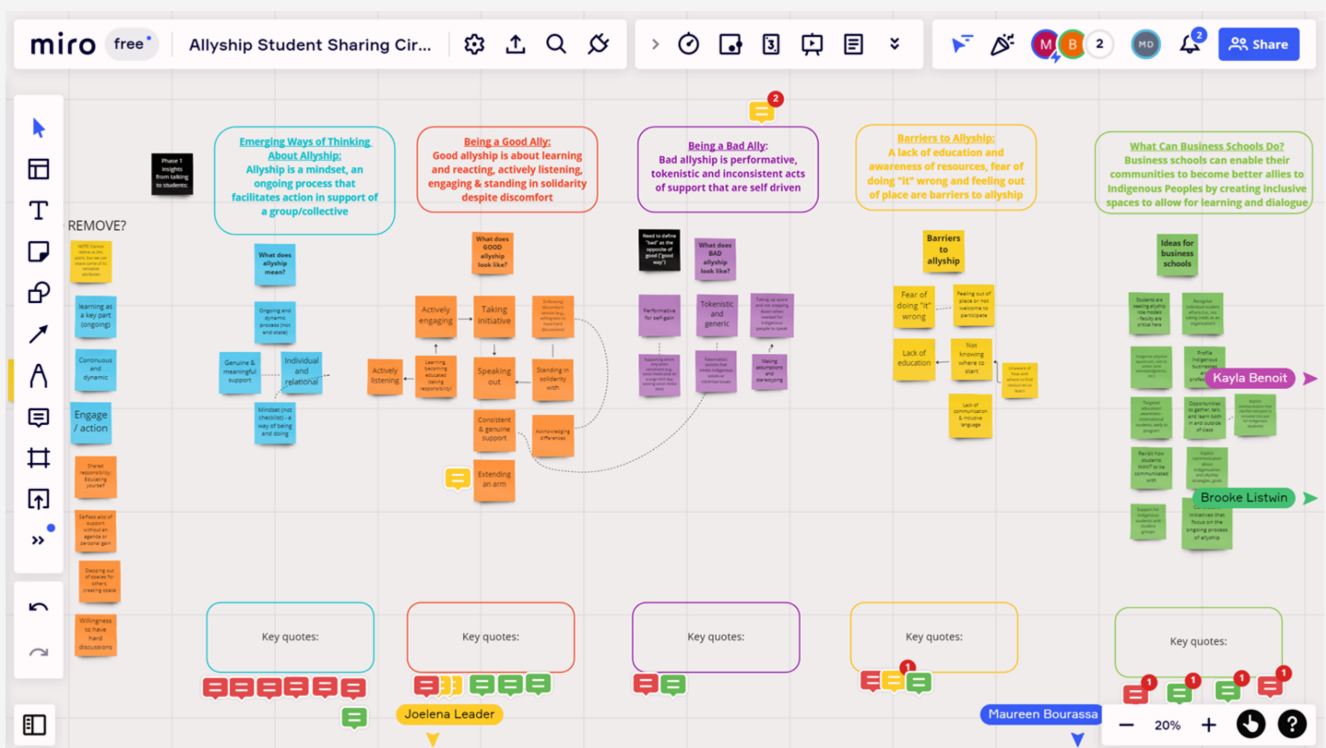

FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 3.