

THE BUFFALO CIRCLE

The Buffalo Circle at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) is a grassroots initiative for allies who support reconciliation and Indigenous Peoples. The inspiration for this initiative comes from the “buffalo nation” that once roamed the prairies. The buffalo helped to create harmonious and respectful relations between nations, as they taught, fed, sheltered, clothed and resourced the Indigenous Peoples.

Today, the commanding and immutable buffalo spirit remains strong and we ask these spirits to provide guidance on how best to build and support reconciliation at USask.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Find someone wearing the Buffalo Circle regalia, or visit the website

teaching.usask.ca/articles/buffalo-circle.php

“Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem, it is a Canadian problem. It involves all of us.”

– Justice Murray Sinclair

Reconciliation at USask

Everyone has a role in reconciliation. Reconciliation is about working together to build new and healthy relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation is about education; of history, treaties, the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and the issues that are important to Indigenous communities. Reconciliation is about working to earn the trust of Indigenous people. Reconciliation is about actively looking for places and spaces where change is necessary and working to bring about those changes.

As University of Saskatchewan President and Vice-Chancellor Peter Stoicheff stated in 2015 “**If not us, who? If not now, when?**”

The Buffalo Circle initiative is built on the base of allyship, indigenization and reconciliation. Buffalo Circle members personally commit themselves to actively work towards reconciliation through relationship, education and advocacy, with and for Indigenous students, staff, faculty and communities, at all levels of the institution.

Members of the Buffalo Circle are recognized by the community for their outstanding support and allyship on campus and beyond. Upon joining the Buffalo Circle, members make three commitments:

- 1. To be visible in their allyship by wearing the Buffalo Circle regalia daily**
- 2. To stand up as allies and to stay standing**
- 3. To help develop, organize and promote allyship on campus**



Content developed by Buffalo Circle members and Indigenous Voices staff.

Do you have what it takes to be an ally for reconciliation on campus?



THE JOURNEY TOWARD ALLYSHIP

To understand allyship, members of the Buffalo Circle have compiled a list of internal and external qualities that many allies feel are important elements in their support for Indigenous Peoples. Allies may have some or all of these qualities and they may be new or experienced in one or all aspects.

The most important quality, the one we all possess, is an enthusiasm and desire to learn, grow and promote reconciliation individually and together through allyship.

QUALITIES OF AN ALLY

Internal qualities

Allyship values

Collegiality, inclusiveness, integrity, honesty, ethical behavior, fairness and equitable treatment are values USask promotes among all who work and study here. **Allies exemplify the above values and also value:**

- Co-creation to support multiple ways of knowing rather than problem solving
- Cultural humility—listening with an open-mind and suspending judgments
- Reciprocity—an equal exchange with others with integrity and respect
- Trust in self and others to achieve reconciliation in their lifetime

The five Rs of allyship

Allies are passionate about:

1. Relationships grounded in safety and humility
2. Respect for all peoples, creatures and the land we share
3. Reciprocity in all relationships
4. Responsibility for truth and reconciliation
5. Relevance for a healthy and reconciled society

Engagement in self-decolonization

Allies intentionally self-reflect on their own implicit and explicit beliefs and how they have been influenced by the settler narrative. As an ally, you should disrupt internal and sometimes deeply held ideas about your own power and privileges. Self-decolonization requires humility, resilience, and a shift in worldview, while you lean into and accept the discomfort that comes along with growth.

Acknowledge and respect differences

Allies have strengths and confidence in their own cultural perspectives, which allows you to have the ability to respect the thoughts, cultures and ways of doing of others. Seeing through multiple perspectives creates opportunities to develop a more wholesome understanding of Canadian society, one that supports equality and inclusivity.

External qualities

Acknowledge and respect cultural differences and ways of being

Allies are deliberate in confronting the settler narrative that informs and guides institutional and personal practices and agendas. As an ally, you support, encourage and include Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing as important elements of Canadian society. You are community guided, responsive, bold and active.

Acknowledge power and privilege

Allies recognize they have power and privilege. As any ally, you are committed to using your influence to help ensure positions of power and privilege are available to Indigenous Peoples.

Active listening to support reconciliation

Allies understand that many voices are not valued equally in society and in conversations that occur on campus. In order to give space for these voices you:

- need to listen to understand, not to respond,
- accept that you may not understand, but you are willing to listen, reflect, embrace discomfort, and commit to hearing others,
- choose to quiet your own voice (listen more) to give space to others and
- encourage dominant talkers to be better listeners.

Comfortable being uncomfortable

Allies participate in and start courageous conversations. You intentionally ask questions even when it creates discomfort in yourself and others. You recognize that avoiding discomfort is secondary to the needs of reconciliation and support for Indigenous Peoples.

