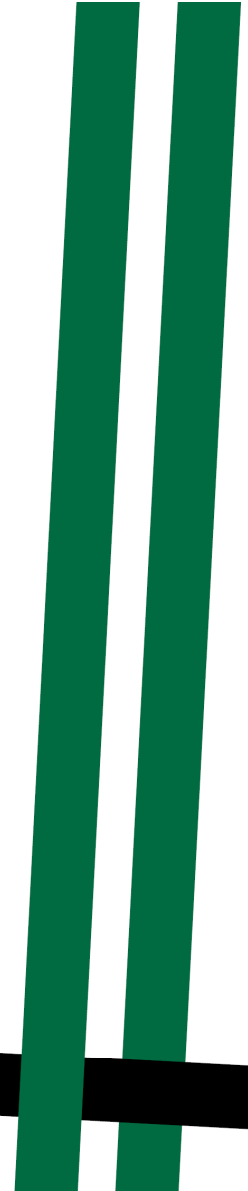


# Indigenous Allyship in Canadian Business Schools

Towards a comprehensive framework for implementation



## Research Team from Edwards School of Business

- **Dana Carriere**, Faculty Member in Management & Marketing
- Maureen Bourassa, Department Head for Management & Marketing
- Joelena Leader, Research Facilitator
- **Marjorie Delbaere**, Associate Dean [delbaere@edwards.usask.ca](mailto:delbaere@edwards.usask.ca)
- Student research assistants
  - Brooke Listwin, MSc student
  - Kayla Benoit, MSc student
  - Dante Carter, B Comm student
  - Lauren Assent, B Comm student

# Our Journey

**We are at the beginning of our journey . . .**





# Where we have been

- Key reflections and learnings from past to present
  - Performative allyship
  - Lack of Indigenous voices
  - Lack of Indigenous content and perspectives
  - Concerns for safety and belonging among Indigenous students
  - Checklist approach

## Where we currently are

- Exploring our role and responsibilities in responding to the *Calls to Action*
  - *62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial government, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:*
    - a) *Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms*
- “Reconciliation requires all Canadian to come together with resolution and common purpose.” [2]*
- Exploring what Indigenization should look like in Edwards
    1. Indigenous Inclusion
    2. Reconciliation Indigenization
    3. Decolonial Indigenization
      1. Gaudry & Lorenz’s (2018) Spectrum of Indigenization within Canadian Universities [6]

# Our Research Study

# Our Research Study

- Within 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?**



# What does the literature say?

# How is allyship defined?

## Allyship

- A broad definition of allyship is “the state or condition of being an ally: supportive association with another person or group” [\[7\]](#) which is “to unite or form a connection or relation between” or “to form or enter into an alliance with each other” [\[8\]](#).
- “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.” [\[9\]](#)

## Ally

- An ally is “a person who is a member of the dominant group or majority group who works to end oppression in his or her professional life through support of, and as an advocate for, the oppressed population” (p. 195) [\[10\]](#)

# Performative Allyship and Negative Allyship Actions

- **Performative Allyship**= Individuals who use their role in a collective struggle as a “badge” or symbol to others they are a good person
  - Not a self-appointed Identity [15]
  - Motivated to act as an ally out of individual self-interests
- **Negative Allyship Actions** [\[11\]](#)
  - Cultural appropriation
  - Taking leadership approach
  - Seeking emotional support from Indigenous people
  - Have expectations on how ones acts of allyship will be received

# Allyship within Canadian Business Schools

- “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.” (p.355) [\[12\]](#)



# Methodology

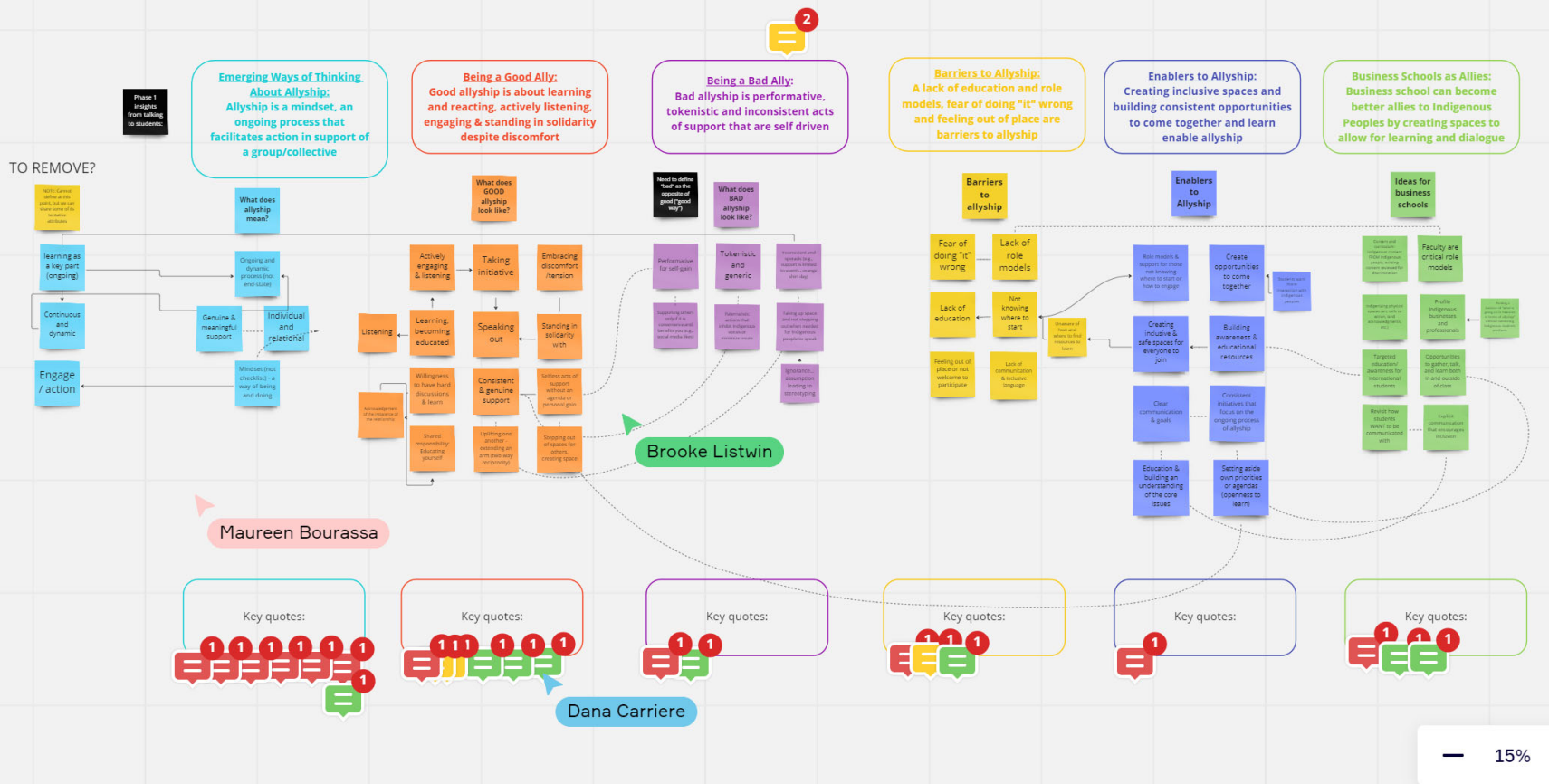
# Methodology

## Sharing Circles [16]

- Derive from Indigenous people's tradition, circles bring people together to create trust, intimacy, belonging, mutuality and reciprocity
- Are used to discussed or resolve issues of importance
- Create a space to facilitate connection, collaboration, and mutual understanding
- Consist of members arranged in a circle with a Circle Keeper to lead the discussion
- Symbolize continuity and equity and are a safe and non-judgmental
- Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data

# Methodology

- Four sharing circles were conducted with undergraduate and graduate students from the Edwards School of Business
  - a) Each sharing circle consisted of three to four participants
  - b) Participants were recruited through recruitment posters and compensated for their time with \$50.00 cash
  - c) Sharing circles took place within private meeting rooms at the Edwards School of Business
  - d) Sharing circles were recorded with permission from the participants
- A Circle Keeper (Dana Carriere) led all four sharing circles



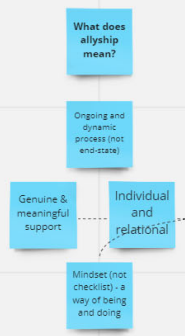


REMOVE?

- NOTE: Cannot delete a sticky note, but we can share some of its attributes
- learning as a key part (ongoing)
- Continuous and dynamic
- Engage / action
- Shared responsibility: Educating yourself?
- Selfless acts of support without an agenda or personal gain
- Stepping out of spaces for others: creating space
- Willingness to have hard discussions

Phase 1 insights from talking to students:

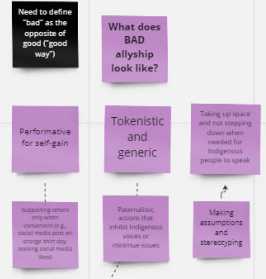
**Emerging Ways of Thinking About Allyship:**  
Allyship is a mindset, an ongoing process that facilitates action in support of a group/collective



**Being a Good Ally:**  
Good allyship is about learning and reacting, actively listening, engaging & standing in solidarity despite discomfort



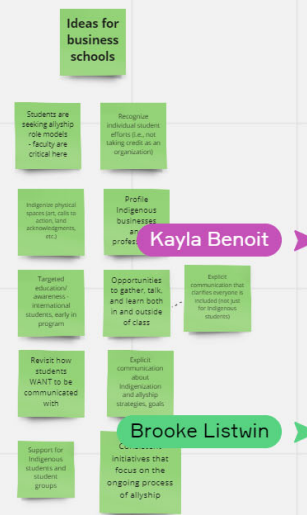
**Being a Bad Ally:**  
Bad allyship is performative, tokenistic and inconsistent acts of support that are self driven



**Barriers to Allyship:**  
A lack of education and awareness of resources, fear of doing "it" wrong and feeling out of place are barriers to allyship



**What Can Business Schools Do?**  
Business schools can enable their communities to become better allies to Indigenous Peoples by creating inclusive spaces to allow for learning and dialogue



Key quotes:

Key quotes:

Joelena Leader

Key quotes:

Key quotes:

Maureen Bourassa

Key quotes:

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# Insights from our Sharing Circles with Students

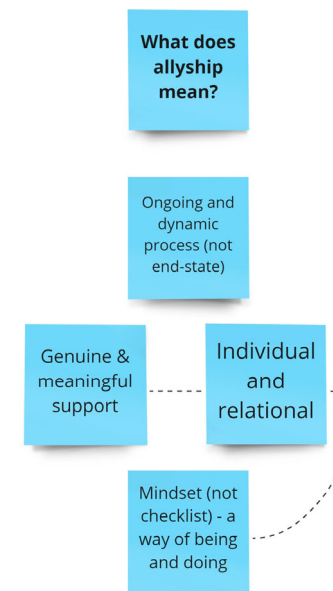
# Sharing Circle Questions

- 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?

# What does allyship mean?

- Emerging ways of thinking about allyship:
  - Allyship is a mindset, an ongoing process that facilitates action in support of a group/collective

Emerging Ways of Thinking  
About Allyship:  
Allyship is a mindset, an ongoing process that facilitates action in support of a group/collective





## What does allyship mean?

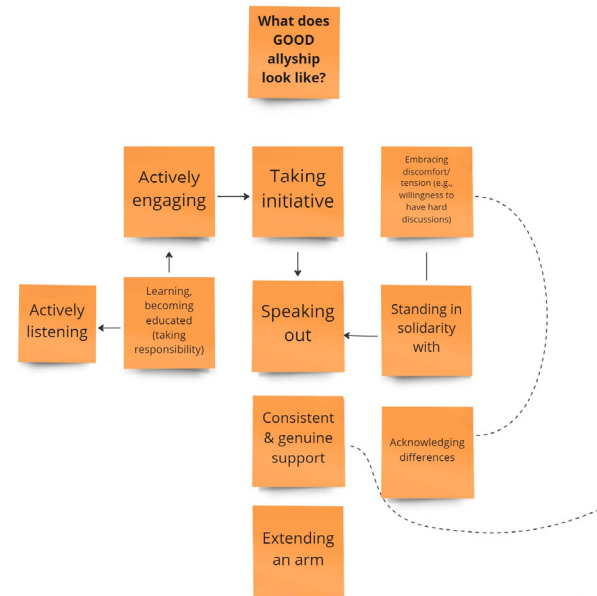
"If someone is struggling. And you have the capability of **helping them up**. That's what allyship is. **You extend your arm**, and lift them up so they could, like what you said, exchange. So, I think allyship is that **connectivity**." (PA001-3)

"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)

# What does *good* allyship look like?

- Emerging ways of thinking about *good* allyship
  - Good allyship is about learning and reacting, actively listening, engaging & standing in solidarity despite discomfort

**Being a Good Ally:**  
 Good allyship is about learning and reacting, actively listening, engaging & standing in solidarity despite discomfort



## What does *good* allyship look like?

“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 *good* allyship look like?

“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)

## What does *good* allyship look like?

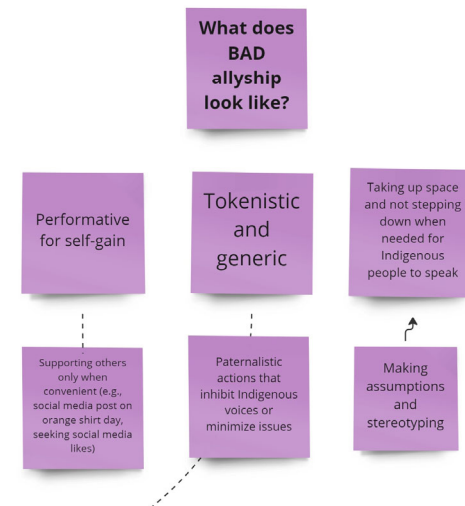
"... the ability to **make space** where there might not already be some. Because within the example of at the college, obviously there's not always necessarily this space where indigeneity can kind of be brought in and discussed in a safe way, or in a way that's like relevant to what else is being discussed. 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)



# What does *bad* allyship look like?

- Emerging ways of thinking about bad allyship
  - Bad allyship is performative, tokenistic and inconsistent acts of support that are self-driven

**Being a Bad Ally:**  
Bad allyship is performative, tokenistic and inconsistent acts of support that are self driven



## What does *bad* allyship look like?

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

“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)

# What are the barriers to allyship?

- Emerging ways of thinking about barriers to allyship
  - A lack of education and role models, fear of doing "it" wrong and feeling out of place are barriers to allyship

**Barriers to Allyship:**  
A lack of education and awareness of resources, fear of doing "it" wrong and feeling out of place are barriers to allyship



## What are the barriers to allyship?

“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)

“I think one that like 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 like insert myself in something that's not really about me.**” (PA003-1)

# Ideas for Business Schools

- Emerging ideas for what business schools can do to promote good allyship
  - Business schools can enable their communities to become better allies to Indigenous Peoples by creating inclusive spaces to allow for learning and dialogue
- Ideas
  - Students are seeking allyship role models; faculty can play a critical role

**What Can Business Schools Do?**  
Business schools can enable their communities to become better allies to Indigenous Peoples by creating inclusive spaces to allow for learning and dialogue





# Our Key Takeaways and Next Steps on our Journey

## Key Takeaways and Learnings

- It's relatively easy to define what being a *good* ally is and isn't, but it's not that easy to take steps to become a *good* ally
- There's a lot of willingness to become an ally, but there are many fears, uncertainties, and barriers
- Edwards hasn't done enough to promote and model allyship, or provide the necessary education and awareness needed, and our students are looking to the College to take on a more active role, but do we have the necessary resources, capacity, and expertise?
- Students view faculty as having a large role in promoting and modelling allyship, but are our faculty prepared, willing, and ready to take on this role?

# Shorter Term Goals and Initiatives

- Indigenous Initiatives Working Group (informal)
  - Participation in community events and initiatives
  - Lunch and learns on various topics
- Continuation of our allyship research study
  - Continue our sharing circles with staff and faculty
- COMM 347: Indigenous Business in Canada as a core course for the Bachelor of Commerce
  - Required for students starting in 2021 or later

# Longer Term Goals and Initiatives

- Demonstrating active and ongoing allyship within and outside of Edwards
  - Recognizing the need for faculty to engage and model good allyship
  - Creating opportunities to gather, share and learn from each other
- Rethinking our curriculum
  - Indigenizing curriculum requires so much more than just adding content
- Rethinking physical spaces
  - Recognizing that our building and spaces reflect colonial architecture and structures
- Developing our Indigenous strategy
  - Focusing on establishing a baseline education for students, faculty, staff, and leadership

# Questions and Discussion



# Let's share and learn from one another

- What resonated with you from our presentation?
- Do you have any advice or guidance for us on our current or planned goals and initiatives?
- Is your college/school currently undertaking any similar type projects or initiatives in this area that you would like to share?
- What reflections or learnings has your college/school had in this area?

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