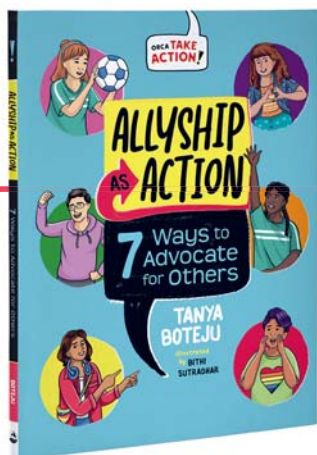




A NOTE ABOUT ALLYSHIP AS ACTION FROM THE AUTHOR

“ In my opening Welcome to this book, I write, “Allyship is a complicated matter, so be prepared to get a little messy here. My own journey to being an ally to others hasn’t been easy or clear. I’ve made mistakes. I can always do more. I’m still learning, and sometimes that learning is hard. But don’t let the complications and mess stop you.”

Well, during the process of writing of this book I unintentionally provided a perfect example of how messy and complicated allyship is and how easy it is to make mistakes!

I made some mistakes with the original version of *Allyship as Action*. In Chapter Four, which addresses performative allyship, I used an example that included Orange Shirt Day, and the illustrations connected to this example showed the words *Every Child Matters*.

Neither I nor anyone on the team of people working on the book realized that *Every Child Matters* is a copyrighted phrase and that we needed permission to use it. Big mistake number one! And I made additional mistakes by not acknowledging Phyllis Webstad, whose powerful story inspired Orange Shirt Day, as I provided this particular example. I also didn’t fully capture the meaning attached to this day and movement. I should have reached out to Phyllis and the Orange Shirt Society before using the example at all.

Since we didn’t receive permission to use *Every Child Matters*, it didn’t feel right to use references to Orange Shirt Day in the updated version of this book. But I also didn’t feel right excluding Indigeneity from this example entirely, even though there are plenty of opportunities for more mistakes by including it. Allyship toward Indigenous people and communities is important to me, and even though I clearly have much more to learn here, I have to follow my own advice: “Don’t let the complications and mess stop you.”

I’m not sure I addressed my mistakes here in the best way possible. I probably didn’t. But I tried, with support from a wonderful team of people, to keep an open mind, absorb the feedback received, and make changes that will contribute to learning about allyship while also addressing the mistakes made. I’ve learned a lot from this process, and it will certainly inform how I move forward in the world!

Allyship is hard, y’all. But even when it is, I hope you’ll join me in continuing the learning. ”

—TANYA BOTEJU



WORDS to KNOW

Performative Ally:

Someone who is more interested in being seen as an ally than actually acting as one and taking action.

Land Acknowledgment:

A statement that recognizes the Traditional, Ancestral and unceded Territory and Land of the Indigenous Peoples who have lived and continue to live on it. It honors their enduring connection to the Land and shows respect for their history and rights.

2SLGBTQIA+:

An acronym that stands for the terms Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and other identities on the spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations.



ACTION FOUR:
DON'T Be a
Performative
Ally

{ THE SITUATION: Empty Words? }

Each week in Kai's seventh grade classroom, the teacher asks a different student to start off Monday morning with a land acknowledgment—a statement acknowledging that the land a person is on is the Traditional Territory of specific Indigenous Peoples.

So far, several students have recited the words the teacher has written up on the white board: "I acknowledge the land of the Indigenous Peoples who first resided here." The whole class listens as the student stands up at their desk to speak, and then

the student sits down and the teacher introduces their first lesson for the day.

Kai has listened attentively each week to the words spoken. They're sometimes left with questions, but since no one else raises their hands to say anything after the acknowledgment, Kai isn't sure they should either.

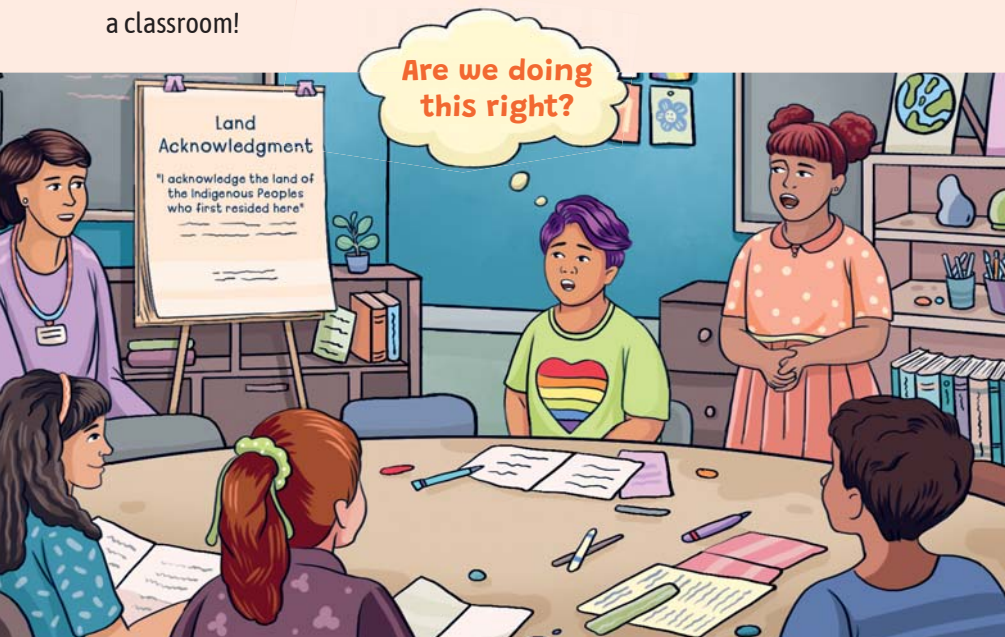
Kai knows a few things about Indigenous Peoples and their relationship with the land—they remember going on a nature walk with an Indigenous Elder in fifth grade, where the class learned about plants native to the area and

how some Indigenous people use these plants for ceremonies and medicines. Kai has heard their parents talk about some of the ways the government has harmed Indigenous people, including by displacing them and taking control of their Traditional Lands and Territories. And Kai has heard land acknowledgments shared before other events they've attended, like when their family attended the Pride Festival last June. But some of those land acknowledgments sounded a little different from the one Kai's class recites.

As Kai's turn on Monday approaches, they're starting to feel uncomfortable and nervous, and they're not quite sure why. Something about this classroom practice just doesn't feel right, and Kai is starting to dread doing it.

Can you think of any reasons why Kai might be feeling the way they do?

Kai might be sensing several things here. The fact that they have questions about the land acknowledgment but don't feel there's room to ask those questions might signal to Kai that learning is not the priority in this particular instance, which might also seem strange to Kai, given that this is a classroom!



“

Allyship is not self-defined—our work and our efforts must be recognized by the people we seek to ally ourselves with.

”

Layla Saad, author
and activist

Kai also has had some prior experiences that suggest there is more to think about here. They know that land acknowledgments can look and sound different, and that might make Kai question why those differences exist, and why the land acknowledgment they use in their class sounds quite vague compared to others they’ve heard. Kai’s experience going on the nature walk with an Indigenous Elder

and interacting with the land could signal to them that acknowledging the land goes beyond mere words. And some of those conversations Kai has overheard their parents having might feel serious and important in a way they can’t fully grasp but still perceive on some level.

Kai might not know precisely why they feel uncomfortable about what’s going on in their classroom, but their discomfort is still real and important, and it’s worth exploring further. Let’s help Kai do that!

Read through “Authentic Allyship” versus “Performative Allyship” on the facing page. After reading, do any items feel particularly relevant in this situation? Might any of these statements help Kai navigate their feelings and how to proceed? Do you have any suggestions for Kai as the date for their land acknowledgment approaches?





Spark

Your Thinking

★ What are some examples of performative allyship that you have seen? Or that you have participated in?

AM I PRACTICING ALLYSHIP OR PERFORMING IT?



AUTHENTIC ALLYSHIP

- △ I take time to reflect on my privileges.
- △ I use my privileges to make room for others.
- △ I push myself to act when action is necessary.
- △ I expect and sit with discomfort.
- △ I make this work about benefitting others, not about making myself look good.
- △ I know allyship is an act that requires ongoing engagement.
- △ I act in allyship even when no one is going to know.
- △ I continue my learning.

PERFORMATIVE ALLYSHIP

- △ I don't really spend time learning or reflecting on my privileges or where others may be marginalized.
- △ I am concerned with appearances more than making a positive difference for others.
- △ I only show allyship when I benefit too.
- △ I center myself in conversations and actions.
- △ I "jump on the bandwagon" but do not commit for the long term.
- △ If called out, I respond with defensiveness or self-pity rather than open-mindedness and self-reflection.
- △ I make sure people know when I act in allyship.

LOOKING GOOD ISN'T ENOUGH

Performative allyship is when a person is more concerned with looking like they're doing the right thing than with challenging inequality or injustice. They might go through the motions, but people who “perform” allyship do little or nothing to actually create meaningful change.

Kai is starting to sense that the land acknowledgment their class recites every Monday is performative. No learning or reflection accompanies this act. The land acknowledgment seems more like a checkbox to be ticked off, or something to do because others are doing it, rather than a meaningful act in the service of others. No one who is Indigenous is benefitting from this land acknowledgment. In other words, the reflection, listening and learning, and action discussed in earlier chapters are all missing from this scenario.

What are some ways Kai could approach this situation?

Talking to someone would be a good start! Maybe Kai could share their feelings and questions about the land acknowledgment with their parents or a friend. This might help clarify some things and provide ways to proceed.

Kai could also spend a little time on their own learning about land acknowledgments—what are their purposes, how are they helpful (or not), and what could be included in one to make it more meaningful? Kai isn't too young to do some research!

Another, harder thing Kai could do is share their research and learning with their teacher and ask to share it with the class, too, as part of their own land acknowledgment on Monday. They could attach an invitation to further learning or action to their land acknowledgment as well. Sharing one's learning can be helpful in creating awareness, getting others to think about their actions and assumptions, and creating change. Would that be hard for a young person? Most definitely! But remember, action is important to allyship, and acting as an ally will almost always include some discomfort.





COMPLICATING THINGS EVEN MORE!

Let's add some more complexity to this conversation. Is sharing a land acknowledgment at the beginning of an event on its own ever enough? Is it possible that merely acknowledging the Indigenous territories one is on (or wearing a pink shirt for anti-bullying, or posting a Pride/rainbow flag on a store window, or adding your pronouns to your email signature) can make some kind of impact on its own, or is this just a performative action?



Personally, I love seeing rainbows around a school, signaling that the school is a safe space for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Rainbow signage makes me feel more welcome...at least for a little while. But if the school doesn't match its actions to that statement, the welcome wears out for me. A land acknowledgment might do something similar—it can show Indigenous Peoples that non-Indigenous people are thinking about them and that they recognize Indigenous Peoples have a longstanding and integral relationship to the land, which can feel supportive. But if the people making those land acknowledgments aren't also taking action to make the lives of Indigenous Peoples better, that's not allyship! Allyship is continual, action-oriented and often uncomfortable.

DEAR READER

We are sorry to say the first printing of
ALLYSHIP AS ACTION: 7 WAYS TO ADVOCATE FOR OTHERS
has some mistakes in it:

- An image of an orange shirt with the phrase “Every Child Matters”, used without permission. This phrase is a copyrighted design associated with the work of Phyllis Webstad and the Orange Shirt Society.
- A reference to Phyllis Webstad’s personal story, shared without prior consultation or approval.

Given that the book is about allyship, these mistakes are especially serious. Using cultural and intellectual property without consent, particularly from an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, contradicts the values we aim to promote in the book and as a company.

We have reached out to the Orange Shirt Society to apologize and open a conversation about revisions and permission. In the meantime we have made some changes and are reprinting the book. The errata show how the pages will appear in our upcoming reprint, which will be available from our distributor as of November 14, 2025.

We take full responsibility for these errors. They should not have happened. Like the book says, sometimes allyship is uncomfortable and we don’t always get it right. Learning and making amends is the only way forward.

—ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS



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