

Activating Allies: Insights from research on how to establish inclusive practices

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Summary

A diverse and inclusive geoscience culture is one where everyone can bring their whole selves to work and openly share their ideas. Unfortunately, not everyone experiences inclusion at the same level. Those that are under-represented, including women, Indigenous people, racialized people, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, often face additional barriers and feel less included. Inclusion is a felt experience that requires psychological safety and sense of belonging. If or how people experience inclusion is strongly influenced by one's personal identity and the culture around them. In this presentation, I will share findings and insights from a 4-year research project, *Activating Allies*. Using the Ally Activation model and findings from the Active Allies course—developed through the *Activating Allies* research study—I will offer practical strategies that anyone can use to create a ripple of change around them. Through understanding these inclusive competencies participants will gain confidence to call in their allies—including their partners, co-workers, and supervisors—to support everyone in creating cultures that are psychologically safe and support belonging.

Theory / Method / Workflow

The 4-year *Activating Allies* study was sponsored by International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII), Mitacs, Vanier Canada, and Women in Mining Canada. Following a literature review (Phase 1), we received University of Saskatchewan research ethics approval and conducted three data collection phases. In Phase 2, we interviewed 17 active allies and developed the Ally Activation change model, shown in Figure 1 (Peltier-Huntley & Dias, 2023). The model was formed by thematically analyzed the qualitative data from these 17, hour-long discussions to gain a deeper understanding of allyship in practice and the path to activating allies.



Figure 1: Ally Activation Model (Peltier-Huntley & Dias, 2023)

In the third phase of the research project, Dr. Rosa Moazed and I used the Ally Activation model to develop the Active Allies course. The Active Allies course supported participants to enhance their understanding around workplace challenges faced by various equity-deserving groups, develop critical allyship skills, and put them into practice. We then tested the Active Allies course with 26 participants at the engineering college (Phase 3) and 76 participants in the Canadian mining industry (Phase 4) (Peltier-Huntley & Moazed, 2025a, 2025b).

Results, Observations, Conclusions

While the full details of the Activating Allies project are published in my dissertation (Peltier-Huntley, 2024), in this presentation I share relevant results and observations that touch on the following few key points relevant to fostering inclusive culture in the geoscience profession, including:

- Why people are motivated to contribute to inclusive workplaces
- Why allyship skill development is needed to support behavioural culture change
- Why psychologically safe places for learning is important for develop allyship practices and competencies
- Why leaders have an especially important role to play in shaping workplace culture through allyship
- How to practically call in your allies or offer allyship to others

Novel Information

Both the Ally Activation change model and the Active Allies course are novel. In particular, the application of the Active Allies course is novel to advancing Canadian workplace culture.

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References

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