# Allyship in Hockey: More Than Words

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Hockey has always been about more than what happens on the ice. It is about teamwork, trust, accountability, and standing beside the people who wear the same jersey. Allyship asks us to extend those same principles beyond the scoreboard.

Being an ally in hockey means actively supporting people who may experience barriers, discrimination, exclusion, or inequity within the sport. This can include people who are marginalized because of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, culture, or other aspects of identity.

But allyship is not simply believing that everyone belongs.

It requires action.

An ally pays attention when someone is being excluded. An ally speaks up when a racist, sexist, homophobic, or discriminatory comment is made in the dressing room, stands, coaches' office, or online. An ally challenges behaviour that conflicts with the values we say hockey represents.

Silence matters too.

When inappropriate behaviour happens and nobody responds, silence can communicate acceptance. Speaking up does not always require confrontation. Sometimes it is as simple as saying, "That's not acceptable here." Those few words can establish a standard for an entire team.

Allyship also requires listening.

We cannot assume that our experience in hockey is everyone else's experience. A player who has never faced racism may not recognize the impact of a racial comment. Someone who has never experienced barriers related to gender, disability, religion, or sexual orientation may not immediately see how certain traditions, policies, or behaviours exclude others.

Listening to those experiences allows us to understand the sport from perspectives beyond our own.

Coaches and leaders have an even greater responsibility. Culture is shaped by what leaders encourage, what they challenge, and what they allow.

A coach who immediately addresses discriminatory language sends a clear message about team expectations. An administrator who examines whether policies create unnecessary barriers demonstrates that inclusion is more than a statement on a website. A teammate who

supports someone experiencing discrimination demonstrates that nobody should have to confront exclusion alone.

Allyship also means being willing to learn.

You will not always know the correct terminology. You may misunderstand someone's experience. You may even make mistakes. Effective allies remain open to feedback, continue educating themselves, and change their behaviour when they learn something new.

Most importantly, allyship is not a title we give ourselves.

It is demonstrated through our actions.

Hockey often talks about character. We teach athletes to protect teammates, take responsibility, show courage, and put the team ahead of themselves. Allyship reflects those same values.

Imagine a hockey culture where every athlete knows their teammates will stand beside them when something is wrong. Where coaches do not ignore discrimination because addressing it might be uncomfortable. Where organizations examine who has access, who holds leadership positions, whose voices influence decisions, and who may still be missing.

That is how hockey becomes stronger.

Being an ally does not mean speaking for other people. It means creating space for their voices, listening when they speak, challenging inequity when you see it, and using your influence to help make the game safer and more inclusive.

In hockey, we often say that great teammates stand up for one another. Allyship asks us to prove it.