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Affaires autochtones et
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First Nation Communications Toolkit for Specific Claim Negotiations

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Purpose

Good communication is essential to the success of any initiative, including specific claim negotiations. All parties at the negotiation table have a role to play in sharing information with the public. The First Nation is responsible for communicating directly with its own members.

This communications toolkit can be used by First Nations to carry out an effective plan for building awareness and support among their members and other stakeholders. It is intended to be a resource for people who are responsible for First Nation communications in a specific claim negotiation process.

The information in this toolkit is based on what has worked well for some First Nations who have already settled specific claims in Canada. Recognizing the diversity of First Nations and of specific claims, the information below can be considered a menu of options to choose from and tailor to the unique needs and circumstances of each community.



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Section 1 | Introduction

Why is Communications Planning Important?

Any group trying to accomplish something can benefit from a plan that helps tell the story of what they are trying to do and why.

Like everyday communication, good communication goes two ways. It includes sending information out, as well as opportunities for listening and dialogue.

A communications strategy is typically an internal document used to guide information sharing and outreach. It begins with clear communications goals (such as building awareness and support among stakeholders) that shape the rest of the strategy.

This includes:

- who needs to be informed or involved (target audiences), why and what their concerns or interests may be (information needs);
- how and when communications should take place (activities); and
- ways to see if the plan is working well (evaluation).

Benefits of a communications strategy

For specific claim negotiations, building a communications plan and putting it into action will help:

- provide information that is timely, correct and useful to all stakeholders;
- increase awareness, understanding and support of the First Nation's goals, the claim and the negotiation process;
- build trust, credibility and stronger relationships, both internally and externally;
- ensure First Nation members feel informed and consulted before being asked for their consent; and

- avoid the problems that poorly planned communications can create. Incorrect or inconsistent information can lead to confusion, conflict, a lack of trust and lack of support. So can information that comes too late or does not meet the needs of the target audience. Preventing these problems saves time and effort.

A communications strategy does not need to be long or complicated, but it does need support and commitment behind it. For more information, see the section on creating a communications strategy.

Partnered or Joint Communications

In many cases, the negotiating parties (the Government of Canada, the First Nation and sometimes the provincial/territorial government) work together on communications to build public understanding and support for the settlement of a claim.

This coordination is usually described in a joint communications strategy. It sets out how the parties will work together, what will be done to communicate publicly about the negotiations and how the parties will share information with each other in advance, as a courtesy, about any planned communications activities they will carry out on their own. The focus of joint efforts tends to be on communicating with third party stakeholders as the First Nation is responsible for communications that specifically target its own band members.

Benefits of joint communications

A joint communications approach supports the negotiation process in practical ways, such as:

- supporting the need for ongoing external information sharing while protecting the confidentiality of discussions at the negotiating table;
- being prepared to respond effectively to issues and questions in a coordinated, consistent way;

-
- sharing information about communications activities in advance to help avoid surprises and avoid negotiating through the media;
 - increasing the credibility of the information and the negotiation process by communicating shared key messages and communicating together; and
 - building trust around the negotiating table and sharing the communications workload.

It helps to establish a joint communications working group that includes representatives from each negotiation team. They develop products that all parties can use, such as a background summary of the claim,

key messages and a list of questions and answers. The group can also identify a coordinated approach to any media relations and possible joint communications activities, such as newsletters or events. For example, in cases where there is the potential for a settlement to lead to the creation of new reserve land, this would usually include joint planning to support information meetings and outreach with local municipalities.

For more information, see section 4 for some sample joint communications products, including news releases, backgrounders and frequently asked questions.



Section 2 | Creating a Strategy & Putting it into Action

Good planning is key to the success of any initiative — communications is no exception. To be effective, a communications strategy needs to be tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of the claim and the community. Different situations will call for different approaches, depending on various factors such as the nature of the claim, local relationships, community demographics and the potential impact of a land-related claim on third parties.

In any case, it is usually First Nation members who will be the most directly affected by the settlement. This makes the First Nation's efforts to communicate with its members essential to the process, especially during the preparations for a ratification vote on a proposed settlement.

A Step-by-Step Approach

There are certain steps to follow to develop a communications plan and put it into action.

Step 1: Identify a communications representative

It is the First Nation who determines the roles and responsibilities of the members of its negotiating team, including any communications coordinator or public spokesperson. This is usually the first step in the communications planning process.

Coordinator: The First Nation often appoints a communications coordinator for the specific claim who may also have other responsibilities on the negotiating team. The First Nation's coordinator anticipates communications needs and provides advice and support on activities such as media relations, events and writing. There may also be coordination related to online and social media, graphic design and printing and distribution services. If a joint communications working group is formed, the coordinator is often the First Nation's representative.

Public spokesperson: The spokesperson for the First Nation, such as the Chief or lead negotiator, participates in media interviews and news conferences, background briefings, community events, stakeholder presentations and meetings.

Step 2: Identify your target audience and their information needs

The next step is to identify your target audiences. Who do you need to communicate with? Who are the stakeholders — the groups that could be impacted or interested in the specific claim negotiations?

Once you have a list together, there are some other key questions that need to be answered to move forward. Answers to the following questions can guide how, when and what to communicate with different target audiences:

- What do target audiences already know and think?
- What is their current level of knowledge and interest?
- What are they concerned about?
- Are there misconceptions that should be addressed?
- How much new information can an audience take in at once?
- Where do these groups find or receive information now?
- How would they like to get information?
- Are there sub-groups that need specific attention or approaches (such as youth, Elders, off-reserve members, etc.)?

Step 3: Create a communications strategy

Planning takes time upfront, but it makes communications easier down the road. Most communications strategies include communications goals, target audiences, key messages and activities. Each section of a communications strategy is explained

in the template for a joint communications strategy. A template is also included for First Nation-led communications tools for a community vote, which includes content that can be tailored for each First Nation or claim.

See the communications planning tips in this toolkit or consult a more general guide on communications planning at: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021860

Step 4: Put the strategy into action

Communications is not a one-time activity – it is an ongoing process that takes place through all phases of the negotiation process. This includes:

- *launch of negotiations* – in the preparation phase when a specific claim negotiation is launched, so that members and other stakeholders know what is happening and why;
- *during negotiations* – while negotiations are underway, actively keeping members and other stakeholders informed and responding to questions or concerns;
- *preparations for a Vote* – when preparing for a First Nation vote on a proposed settlement (the ‘ratification’ or approval phase), including communications to help update the address list of eligible voters and to encourage band members to vote; and
- *after a Vote* – once the vote takes place, communicate the results and next steps and, in the case of a successful vote, plans to celebrate the conclusion of the settlement.

Communications work is still needed within each of these phases. This could include, for example, writing documents such as news releases, newsletters or background material. Putting the plan into action could also mean creating content for a Web page or social media tools or preparing for any planned

activities, such as advertising, media interviews, information meetings and outreach with local municipalities, briefings/workshops, open houses or a signing ceremony.

For additional guidance, see:

- Section 3: Tips and Best Practices.
- Using Social Media Tools in section 3.
- A general guide on Media Relations and Community Engagement at: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021860.
- Scheduling tips in section 3.

Step 5: Evaluate what’s been done

Reviewing different kinds of feedback can give you and your negotiating team a sense of how well target audiences are being reached, what they want to know and what they may be concerned about.

Some evaluation tools include:

- monitoring traditional media and social media;
- reviewing public feedback through letters, phone calls, e-mails and comments on Facebook or Twitter;
- informal feedback from meetings with stakeholders;
- comment cards for community information sessions and other events; and
- Web site traffic.

Section 3 | Tips and Best Practices

1. Tips for Communications Planning

When developing a Strategy:

- Keep it simple so that everyone involved knows the goals and their role.
- Keep it focused — do the right things, not everything.

Who to involve:

- Involving the people who will have a role in communications can increase their support for the communications strategy, including members of the negotiating team, Chief(s), the First Nation band manager, other executives and staff.
- Their input could be gathered at a group session or through individual meetings. Consulting other people in the community such as Elders, youth, business owners and service providers, for example, can also generate ideas on how to reach different target audiences.
- Other First Nations who have been involved in a specific claims process could provide information or advice. To identify potential contacts, explore the Interactive Map of Settled Specific Claims or consult the Specific Claims Settlement Report available on the Internet at: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/.

When to plan:

- Once a negotiation process is underway, the sooner a communications strategy is created, the better. Like all good plans, a communications plan is also reviewed and updated, as needed.

2. Tips for Creating Content

- **Knowing your audience will help you create content that meets their needs and interests.** Many people will not know all the details of an issue, so providing background information on terminology and the process helps increase their knowledge.
- **Using plain language** is always a courtesy for any audience on any topic. The legal and technical language around specific claims can be confusing

for anyone and this makes plain language even more important. There are great guides to plain language online.

- **Visuals like photos, maps and videos** draw people in and communicate key messages. As an example, see these short videos of stories told by First Nations about successful specific claims available online at: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/.
- **Test the materials** to see if they meet the needs of the target audience. An informal review by a few people is a good way to do this and can help guide you on how to improve materials.
- **Build in time to adapt materials** based on feedback from testing.
- **Package information differently for various audiences** and tools (for example, a presentation for government officials vs. a blog post for reaching people online). Whether choosing an open house or social media, **the right tool is as important as the message used to reach an audience.** Choosing a mix of print, online and in-person activities will help reach a variety of audiences.

3. Tips for Making the Most of a Community Meeting

There are different formats to consider when planning for a community information meeting.

An *open house* enables community members to have one-on-one interactions with spokespersons and obtain information by looking at various displays within a larger venue. Open houses are generally held from early afternoon until early evening so that participants can attend at a time that best suits their schedule. The goal is to allow for one-on-one interaction with experts.

By contrast, at a *town-hall* style meeting, spokespersons make presentations to an audience en masse at a specific time with an opportunity for the group to ask questions at the end. The goal with this type of event is often to generate some group discussion.

Whichever format you choose, there are a number of key considerations in planning for any such information meeting.

- Broadly promote the event in advance — including details like childcare, transportation, refreshments and any door prizes to be awarded during the event.
- Keep events to 2 – 2.5 hours.
- If it is a joint event, coordinate with the other parties and go through presentations together in advance.
- Prepare supporting communications materials:
 - presentation, messages and a questions and answers list for speakers and spokespersons;
 - information displays — posters, visuals and maps; and
 - take-home kits or packages with plain language summary information — consider DVDs or USB keys.
- Plan more time for dialogue than for presentations.
- Create opportunities for one-on-one interaction.
- Designate an individual to act as a moderator for any town-hall style meeting to help control the flow of the evening and set some basic ground rules for participants.
- Test the sound (acoustics) in all locations and plan accordingly.
- Have easy ways to provide feedback such as flip charts, a box for questions and suggestions and short questionnaires.

4. Using Social Media Tools

There are many ways to use social media and many tools or platforms to choose from. This section mentions four examples that are available today: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and social media monitoring. These are only examples. There are many other popular social media platforms to choose from that could help you to achieve your communications goals.

Here are some key considerations for using social media tools:

- While social media tools are free, they can require significant planning and resourcing to be successful as well as quick responses provided to queries or comments. These are not one-time activities, but require ongoing work.
- Promoting a Facebook page through online and in-person communications as well as printed materials can help build the number of people who follow the page. Along with other tools, a Facebook page can be a channel to provide updates at key milestones and promote community events.
- Pictures, maps and videos can help tell the story behind an issue. Putting visuals online can draw in a wider audience, including people who are less likely to read written materials. A video on YouTube can be highlighted through various other online tools, such as a Web site, Facebook page or sent as a link in an e-mail.
- Twitter is a fast moving conversation and can be a way to get out short bursts of information, with Web site links to follow for greater depth. Re-tweets, the use of hashtags and Twitter's search function mean that Twitter can have a much greater reach than just your followers.
- While it may not be possible or useful to respond to every comment, participating in online conversations can provide an opportunity to respond to concerns or correct misinformation. Monitoring online conversations can help identify where to focus communications activities. Free tools are available online to monitor social media and send you a message if something of interest is posted.

5. Tips for Scheduling Communications Activities

Here are a few tips to consider for the schedule of activities:

- It is important to establish an ongoing communication with your audience with regular updates provided to build awareness and understanding throughout the process. A sudden flood of information provided at the end of the process can be very overwhelming and can make people disengage from the process.
- Building in the time needed to develop, produce and distribute materials makes a plan more realistic. Having a 'plan B' is a good idea too as there will always be factors that can take a schedule off track.
- Breaking the work into phases with timelines and responsibilities makes the work more manageable. Other factors to consider when planning a timeline and schedule of communications activities include the availability of spokespersons, the work plan of the negotiation table and key milestones of the negotiation process.

6. Media Relations

Building relationships with media, helping to educate them on the issues and being prepared to respond to their requests will support more accurate reporting on a specific claim. To build relationships, it is useful to have:

- a main contact for media within the First Nation;
- a list of anticipated questions and answers for a spokesperson to use in responding to questions from journalists or an information package that can be distributed by e-mail or through links to a Web site; and
- a list of media outlets and contact information for reporters in the area. For a small fee, this information can be accessed through the Canadian Advertising Rates and Data Web site at: www.cardonline.ca/public/home.jsf

Review a more comprehensive guide on how to work effectively with media at: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021860



Section 4 | Sample Communications Products & Tools

1. Template Joint Communications Strategy

This template outlines the key sections of a Communications Strategy and possible Joint Communications Activities relating to specific claim negotiations.

Objectives

- Identifies what you want to achieve through the communications strategy (e.g. build support/awareness).

Public Environment

- Summarizes past communications activities and the current public perceptions and sensitivities.
- Analyses relevant public opinion research, local issues and media coverage.

Target Audiences

- Lists individuals and groups who will be impacted by or interested in the claim (e.g. First Nation members, local officials, media etc.).

Joint Communications Activities:

- Draft key messages (joint and individual).
- Develop joint backgrounder or fact sheet on history of claim and negotiation process.
- [First Nation] Develop its plans for informing and engaging membership (e.g. newsletters; open houses; Web site updates; updates through social media tools; video messages; distribution of information at existing community events/gatherings; door-to-door visits; workshops) and plans for any notification of other local First Nations, if appropriate.
- Develop a common approach to dealing with the media and identify spokespersons.
- Prepare a set of Questions and Answers for spokespersons to address any anticipated issues or questions.
- Identify timing/triggers for proposed joint communications activities, events and release of materials at key milestones (e.g. information meetings with local municipalities; newsletters; information packages; Web updates; online multimedia presentations or podcasts; outreach with key stakeholder groups; media briefings; open houses).
- A press release could be issued to highlight key milestones (e.g. signing ceremony; community celebration); with fact sheet attached and posted online; arrange technical media briefing; tweet with link to any announcements; use existing tools and events.

Communications Protocols

- Sets out how the parties will work together on joint communications (e.g. working group; how media calls will be handled; identifies spokespersons and first point of contact for media).

Evaluation

- Evaluates past activities through media monitoring, analysis of correspondence/feedback from meetings, public enquiries, Web hits and social media monitoring.

2. Template Communications Tools for a Community Vote

*This template focuses on **possible** First Nation-led communications activities and tools targeting eligible voters before and during the ratification phase of specific claim negotiations.*

Goal: Develop Contact List

A number of communications tools could be utilized in the development of the contact list for eligible voters. These could include the following:

- Promotion and use of a toll-free line for off-reserve members to call the X First Nation's offices to provide contact information and ask questions.
- Post a message on the main page of the First Nation's Web site on the need to provide contact information in order to vote (provide e-mail address and 1-800 number).
- An e-mail message or letter could be created and sent to First Nation staff or members with known addresses encouraging them to contact relatives living off-reserve and advise them to call the toll-free number.
- Use the First Nation's existing Facebook page or create one for updates about the specific claim, including ratification. Promote the Facebook page in meetings, in letters, on the Web site and so on. Ask members to use Facebook to seek contact information from friends and family who are eligible voters living off-reserve.
- Post YouTube video message from the Chief or spokesperson and use the First Nation's existing Twitter feed to highlight the call for contact information.
- A poster could be produced and posted in strategic locations advising off-reserve members of the need for addresses. A list of strategic locations where members of the X First Nation may visit could be developed.

Goal: Create awareness of the Ratification Vote, Encourage Voting

A number of communications tools could be utilized to create an awareness of the Ratification Vote and encourage eligible members to vote. These could include the following:

- A poster to be produced and posted in strategic locations advising members of the Notice of the Ratification Vote.
- Advertisements in Aboriginal newspapers, local and regional daily and weekly newspapers (consider advertising in papers that might reach significant numbers of off-reserve members) advising members of the ratification vote and encouraging them to register and vote.
- Advertisements on targeted radio stations advising members of the ratification vote and encouraging them to register and vote (identify targeted stations).
- Articles in X First Nation's regular community newsletter with a heads-up on the upcoming vote and a call for addresses.

This template continues on the next page.

- Develop a special newsletter informing members of the proposed settlement and explaining the Ratification Process (including information on how to vote and the question on the ballot).
- Post notices and updates to the First Nation Web site and Facebook page and tweet to announce and reinforce the vote date as well as dates for community meetings or open houses. Post short YouTube video message from Chief or spokesperson to highlight the vote date.

Goal: Build Awareness and Understanding of the proposed settlement

A number of communications vehicles could be used to create an awareness and understanding among eligible voters of the proposed settlement. These could include the following:

- Community meetings/information sessions and/or open houses to provide information to eligible voters on the proposed settlement. (Identify on- and off-reserve locations).
- A presentation and/or displays for use at the community meetings (Consider independent facilitator, consultation/presentation training, if appropriate).
- Develop a set of anticipated Questions and Answers for use by spokespersons to respond to questions as well as a set of short, concise key messages about the proposed agreements and key anticipated questions.
- Produce a short video for posting on YouTube that provides information about the proposed agreements and includes interviews with spokespersons.
- Existing First Nation community newsletters published before the vote can feature articles on the proposed settlement.
- A newsletter summarizing the proposed settlement could be developed and produced for distribution to all eligible voters. (Distribution could be done by regular mail and at community meetings. Consider focus testing the materials to ensure that the information is clear and understandable; and posting the document on the First Nation's Web site).
- Ensure that all summary materials are highlighted through the First Nation's Facebook page and Twitter profile, where appropriate.
- Monitor and participate in the conversation on other's Facebook pages, blogs or Twitter feeds and correct misinformation on an as needed basis.
- Information package can be mailed to all First Nation members.
- Make the same information package and the newsletter available at all community meetings.
- E-mail and door-to-door campaigns, talking circles, special sessions for youth, women or Elders.
- Take advantage of existing venues (e.g. pow-wows, if appropriate) to distribute information and answer questions.

3. Media Advisory

Definition:

A notice to media telling them about an event or activity you want them to cover.

Media advisories are short, with enough detail to interest the media, but not so much that they can write the story without bothering to attend the event. Mention any persons of local interest, dignitaries, elected officials or others who are key to the event.

Template Media Advisory

Place Logo Here

_____ First Nation

MEDIA ADVISORY

Date (Day, Month, Year)

ATTENTION: ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

Main heading: _____ **First Nation to Announce Key Step Forward in Claim Negotiations**

Subheading with a More Specific Angle of the Story – Local Interest, etc. (optional)

(Location of First Nation) – Chief _____ of the _____ First Nation and negotiating team members, along with (identify dignitaries and officials) will be available to the media for a presentation and questions about a proposed settlement pertaining to (insert brief details).

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: (of event) _____

Contact:

Name & Title _____

Organization _____

Phone _____

E-mail address _____

4. News Releases

Definition:

A report to media that captures key points about an event and news you want them to cover. See other tips and a template for writing a news release at:

www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021860.

Read one of these sample news releases on a specific claim at: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/:

- Canada, Seton Lake Indian Band and Province of British Columbia Reach Final Agreement on Settlement (March 17, 2008).
- Canada and the Caldwell First Nation Achieve Win-Win Solution to Conclude Longstanding Claim (March 25, 2011).
- Canada Celebrates Historic TLE Settlement Agreement with Sturgeon Lake First Nation and Province of Saskatchewan (June 19, 2007).

5. Fact Sheets and Backgrounders

Definition:

A summary of key facts and background information that can be shared with the public and the media, usually one to two pages in length. Review these samples from negotiation updates at:

www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/:

- Woodstock First Nation Specific Claim
- Old Burial Ground Specific Claim Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg
- Peguis First Nation 1907 Surrender Specific Claim
- Settlement Agreement with Bigstone Cree Nation

6. Newsletters and Frequently Asked Questions

Definition:

A newsletter provides an update and background on a topic and is usually published on an ongoing, regular basis. A “Frequently Asked Questions” document is a list of questions followed by a one or two paragraph answer that responds to key points of interest or concern among stakeholders. Both are useful for Web sites and information packages.

Review these samples from negotiation updates at:

www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/:

- Frequently Asked Questions: Fort William Boundary Claim
- Frequently Asked Questions: Madawaska Maliseet First Nation Settlement Agreement Canadian Pacific Railway Right of Way Specific Claim
- Newsletter: Michipicoten First Nation Boundary Claim

See more samples from negotiation updates from across Canada at: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/.

7. Print and Radio Advertisements for Ratification Votes

Sample Print Ad: Call for addresses

Place FN Logo Here

The *(Insert Name)* First Nation wants to reach and inform voters to settle a claim against the Government of Canada.

The _____ First Nation is negotiating a claim with Canada and *(insert province if applicable)* to address *(insert a short description of the claim)*.

Before the claim can be settled, the members will be asked to vote, in person or by mail. A vote is expected to take place in the coming months.

If you are a First Nation member, you can contact the _____ First Nation toll-free at *(insert phone number)* to provide your up-to-date contact information to ensure that you receive voting information directly and are aware of upcoming open houses. You can also send your contact information to *(insert e-mail address)*. More information is available on the First Nation's Facebook page and Web site at: *(insert Web URL)*.

Sample Radio Advertisement Script: Come out to Vote

The _____ First Nation has reached a proposed settlement with the federal government *(and insert province if applicable)* for a claim related to *(insert short description or use name of claim)*.

Before it can be approved, the _____ First Nation must ratify it, so all First Nation members will be asked to vote. A vote is expected to take place in the coming months *[or insert date]*. If you are a _____ First Nation member, you can contact the First Nation toll-free at *(insert phone number)* to provide your up-to-date contact information. This will ensure that you receive voting information directly and are aware of upcoming open houses. More information can be found online on the First Nation's Facebook page or Web site at: *(insert Web URL if short and easy to remember)*.

Contact us to make sure you can have your say on this agreement.

8. Checklist for a Signing Ceremony

Signing ceremonies are often held after a final settlement is concluded. Here is a checklist to consider for planning and for the day of the ceremony. See a more [general guide](#) to event planning at: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021860.

Planning

- Guest list, addresses and invitation letter (send as far in advance as possible).
- Book location.
- Prepare, print and translate (if required) Agenda or Program and Signed Copies of Agreement (if copies will be available at the ceremony).
- Event details to include in a scenario note:
 - How event will unfold, order of speakers, gift exchange, room set-up, catering.
 - Will there be a main host or 'MC'? What role will Elders play (e.g. opening and closing prayer)? Who will present the official agreement to each party for signing? Ushers? Security? Official photographer?
- Audio-visual needs (microphone, electrical) and furniture (chairs, tables, podium).
- Media:
 - Invite media if desired through a media advisory and phone calls.
 - Determine media requirements (e.g. information kit, technical requirements to record the event, spokespeople availability for questions, and if so where and when).
 - Introductory remarks, 'Questions and Answers' for spokespeople.
- Gifts.

Day of Event

- Check sound system.
- Room set up (tables, chairs, sections for Elders and other special guests and media if invited, table with Agenda/Program, refreshments).
- Stage or front of room set-up (microphone, podium, table with cloth and water, etc.).
- Confirm event details and roles with participants in any procession, ushers, security, photographer and media coordinator.

