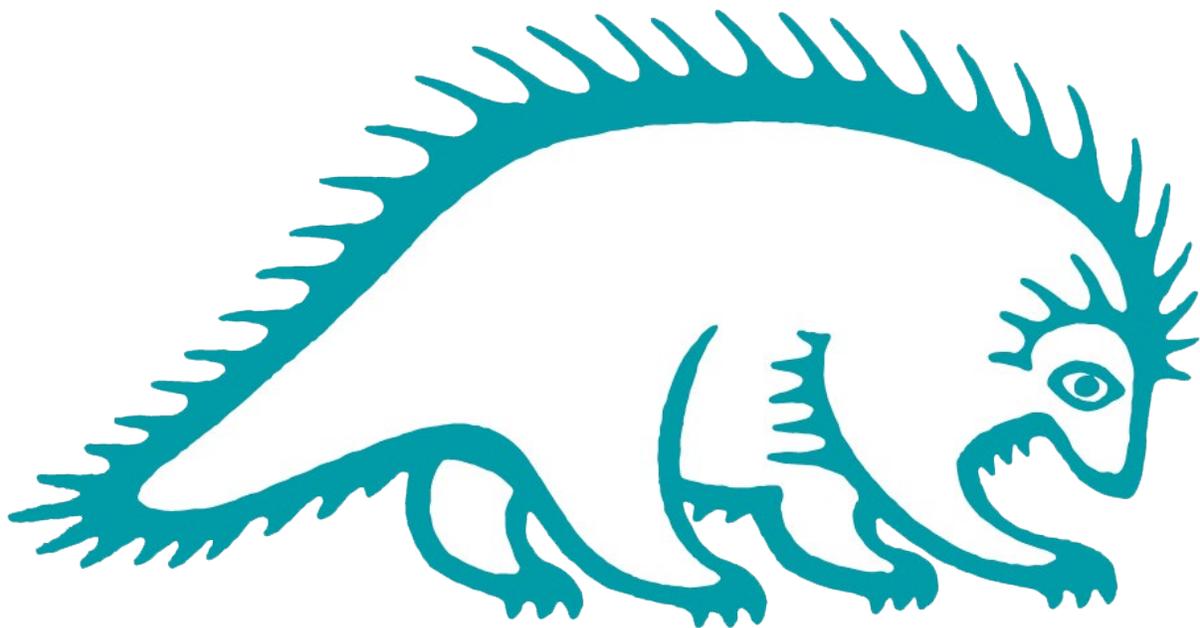


# Okanagan Indian Band Communications Strategy

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## Introduction

*OKIB's Communications Strategy* represents the distillation of feedback from the community, best practices and research data, and strategy development based on the worldwide gold standard for corporate communications (see below). The strategy serves as a shared framework and provides overall guidance for how OKIB communicates with members, staff, elected officials, residents and stakeholders.

The strategy was developed based on findings from the draft *Communications Plan: Okanagan Indian Band*, developed in 2018, which gathered relevant statistical data from members and stakeholders. That draft report provided the background information and included a communications audit, which was instrumental in setting out the objectives in this strategy.

While Communications Branch staff have specific responsibilities for communications and engagement, it is every employee's responsibility to engage in communications. In this way, *OKIB's Communications Strategy* is intended to guide all staff, and enhance the services we deliver by working across departments, enhancing the quality of our relationships, and practicing effective public engagement.

## The Gold Standard for Communications Excellence

Communications excellence is a phrase coined by the International Association for Business Communicators (IABC) as a result of a study of communication management that measured excellence in 400 organizations in Canada, the US, and the UK.

*Communications excellence occurs when organizations use communication to manage relationships with their diverse stakeholders to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest.*

Studies show excellence in communication helps organizations achieve overall goals and objectives. *OKIB's Communications Strategy* builds on the key strategic areas outlined in the organization's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan; and its vision, mission, and guiding principles will be the driver in achieving OKIB's communications goals.

## Two-way communication

Also central to *OKIB's Communications Strategy* is "two-way" communication. Two-way communication brings organizations and stakeholders closer together by allowing them to dialogue with one another to reach mutually satisfactory outcomes.

Rather than a one-dimensional plan that prescribes how the Band can best convey information to stakeholders, *OKIB's Communications Strategy* is a roadmap for truly effective communications that involves ongoing, direct and timely dialogue with members and stakeholders.

By continuing to engage in two-way communication, OKIB will foster effective relationships with stakeholders; ensure community communications are well coordinated, effectively

managed and responsive to the information needs of members, the public, employees and Council; and encourage effective public engagement.

Two-way communication models allow for better, more representative public policy because that policy has been informed and negotiated through dialogue with stakeholders.

### About this plan

*OKIB's Communications Strategy* provides a framework for the organization to enhance its two-way communication, improve stakeholder relationships, and encourage public participation in band initiatives.

Designed to influence all activities that relate to communications within the organization, *OKIB's Communications Strategy* outlines positive and achievable practices that will help the Community achieve its organizational goals.

All Band employees have a role to play to ensure the success of *OKIB's Communications Strategy*. By working collaboratively across departments to ensure the community's communication efforts are well-coordinated and responsive to the needs of stakeholders, we will achieve a more informed and engaged workforce, membership and Council.

This is an evolving strategy for the entire organization. *OKIB's Communications Strategy* will help build our communications capacity and allow us to develop trustworthy relationships and effective public involvement.

### Communications Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

**Vision** - An aware and involved community and engaged and responsive employees, capable of listening, sharing ideas openly and working collaboratively to shape OKIB's future.

**Mission** - To provide a framework to enhance OKIB's two-way communications capacity, improve stakeholder relationships, and deliver effective communications programs that help achieve organizational goals.

### Guiding Principles

1. Provide information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible and responsive.
2. Consider the range of communication tools at our disposal and use those most appropriate to address the needs associated with each circumstance.
3. Work collaboratively across the organization to ensure that information is thorough, factual and timely.
4. Respect the access to information and privacy rights of members and employees.
5. Support opportunities for engagement to inform policy.
6. Strive to achieve a culture of two-way communication and communications excellence practices.

## **Goal 1 - Improve the quality of internal communications**

**Objective 1.1 – Increase the percentage of employees that consider themselves well-informed about OKIB programs, issues and initiatives, leading to increased levels of customer service.**

**Strategy 1.1.1 – Make information about Band Council priorities and initiatives easier to access.**

### **Proposed actions**

- Create a source for employees to get important updates on “need to know” information (Band Council decisions, new policies, etc.).
- Create, consolidate, promote and leverage existing databases of general inquiries/frequently asked questions for employees to find consistent answers to questions.
- Host quarterly Zoom sessions for staff to keep them informed and connected about priorities, initiatives, etc.

**Strategy 1.1.2 – Increase employees’ knowledge of departmental functions across the organization.**

### **Proposed actions**

- Enhance department webpages to educate employees on the function of the departments and the divisions, and provide relevant resources and additional information/links to program information, etc.
- Provide an overview of organizational structure and department functions in the new employee orientation program, including orientation videos.

**Strategy 1.1.3 – Ensure employees at all locations feel a strong connection to the organization.**

### **Proposed actions**

- Increase opportunities for employees across the organization to collaborate through cross-departmental projects, initiatives, and teams.
- Host employee events at satellite locations when possible.
- Continue to inform employees about matters affecting them before informing the public.
- Work with HR to promote staff participation and events.

**Objective 1.2 – Increase employees’ readiness for communication and problem solving across departments.**

**Strategy 1.2.1 – Increase communication skills and enhance the communications capacity of the organization as a whole.**

### **Proposed actions**

- Increase the number of spokespeople and subject matter experts in the organization and provide media training. Make credentials known to establish credibility.
- Continue to develop communications plans, background information and key messages for larger projects.

**Strategy 1.2.2** - Build an understanding of the organization's communications function in helping to build better relationships.

### **Proposed actions**

- Better inform employees on the role of Communications; incorporate information into a new employee orientation program.
- Implement annual needs-assessment sessions between Communications and service areas.
- Nurture leadership's understanding of the communications function.

## **Goal 2 – Build a stronger awareness of OKIB's initiatives within the community, externally among surrounding municipalities, and in the media.**

**Objective 2.1 – Improve the organization's ability to anticipate and respond to issues.**

**Strategy 2.1.1** – Expand and formalize the issues management protocol to effectively identify, monitor and respond to issues (with the involvement of Chief and Council and the executive team).

### **Proposed actions**

- Explore the possibility of establishing an issues committee to identify and review the status of issues and the organization's response.
- Develop tools to be used across the organization (risk analysis template, communications plan template, key message template).
- Prepare employees to be ready and accessible to respond to inquiries.

**Strategy 2.1.2** – Enhance the issues management capacity of Communications employees.

### **Proposed actions**

- Ongoing professional development for Communications team.
- Conduct environmental scans and review on a regular basis to identify emerging issues, top issues, etc.

**Strategy 2.1.3** – Develop a public engagement strategy to guide the public consultation process and create consistency across the organization.

### **Proposed actions**

- When safe, continue to host consultation activities outside of IR#1 to places that are convenient for the public.
- Create more informal opportunities for feedback.

**Strategy 2.1.4** – Foster a cultural shift whereby staff understand their role in the communications process.

### **Proposed actions**

- Through training and behavioral change, improve the communications capacity of employees, better equipping them to interact with stakeholders and respond to issues more effectively.
- Cultivate member experts that can speak to ongoing and emerging issues.
- Work with employees and Council to continue to develop key messages; be more proactive.

## **Goal 3 - Support and encourage membership to participate in the public engagement process and recognize its role in addressing issues and contributing to Band policy and solutions.**

**Objective 3.1** – Increase participation through public consultation and dialogue.

**Strategy 3.1.1** – Develop an OKIB Public Engagement manual to guide the public consultation process and create consistency across the organization.

### **Proposed actions**

- Explore best practices in public engagement as outlined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).
- Seek training for employees to select the best engagement strategies to serve their purpose; and train employees on how to facilitate them.

**Strategy 3.1.2** – Increase awareness of existing opportunities for public engagement and dialogue.

### **Proposed actions**

- Better promote opportunities for the public to get involved and provide feedback.

**Strategy 3.1.3** - Identify new/alternative opportunities for public engagement that are accessible and convenient to the public.

### **Proposed actions**

- Continue to take consultation activities into the community to places that are convenient for the public.
- Provide ongoing, informal opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback (online polls and forums, etc.).
- Support live streaming of Band Council meetings, select Membership meetings, and other major public information sessions.
- Develop a process that encourages the public to ask questions during live streams, and provide answers in real time.

**Strategy 3.1.4** – Leverage the website and social media to promote opportunities for input.

### **Proposed actions**

- Include a monthly quick polls on social media to encourage informal input on current issues and gauge public perception.
- Review and adjust the social media policy once every two years.
- Equip employees with tools and guidelines for using social media (e.g. best practices, dos and don'ts, guidelines for sharing information, etc.).

**Strategy 3.1.5** – Increase the public's trust that the Chief and Council genuinely wants input and will take various points of view into consideration.

### **Proposed actions**

- Create a “How to get involved” section on the website that lists public engagement opportunities, how to provide feedback, a summary of feedback received, and how the feedback was used. Promote the web page, generating awareness and encouraging future participation.

## **Goal 4 - Establish and build on mutually beneficial, trustworthy relationships with stakeholders.**

**Objective 4.1 - Improve the quality of OKIB's key stakeholder relationships.**

**Strategy 4.1.1** – Continue to enhance the band's media relations strategy. Ensure that community news is covered by local media; and increase the accuracy of media coverage of OKIB services and initiatives.

### **Proposed actions**

- Provide more information on critical or complex issues through media packages, media briefings, and more face-to-face time with reporters.

- Consistently identify newsworthy stories and present them in a way that’s compelling.
- Ensure inquiries from the media are given a high priority and responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible.

**Strategy 4.1.2** – Review and update OKIB’s Public Participation Guide to steer the public consultation process and create consistency across the organization.

**Proposed actions**

- Create an organizational model that empowers employees to manage stakeholder relations and work with key publics.
- Create guidelines and provide training to help employees foster relationships with stakeholders (e.g. conflict resolution, negotiation, effective listening, problem solving and decision making, constructive feedback).
- Balance the use of traditional consultation methods (e.g. public meetings, surveys) and emerging methods (e.g. online forums) to best suit the situation.

**Strategy 4.1.4** – Develop customer service strategy and standards.

**Proposed actions**

- Provide appropriate customer service training and resources for employees.
- Make the public aware of the band’s customer service standards, including timelines for responding to inquiries, mail, email, etc.

**Strategy 4.1.5** – Make regular research a cornerstone of band activities; regularly endeavor to understand what’s important to residents.

**Proposed actions**

- Conduct a citizen satisfaction survey every two years to establish a benchmark and to measure against.
- Increase use of research and public opinion polls in decision-making.

**Strategy 4.1.6** – Increase communication skills and enhance the communications capacity of the organization as a whole.

**Proposed actions**

- Better equip our organization’s spokespeople. Provide regular media training.
- Provide training opportunities and resources for employees to improve their communication skills.

**Objective 4.2** – Increase stakeholders’ awareness of band programs and initiatives.

**Strategy 4.2.1** – Enhance the band’s media relations strategy. Ensure that band news is covered by local media; increase accuracy of media coverage of band services and initiatives.

### **Proposed actions**

- Provide more information on critical or complex issues through media packages, media briefings, and more face-to-face time with key reporters.
- Consistently identify newsworthy stories and present them in a way that's compelling.
- Ensure inquiries from the media are given a high priority and responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible.

**Strategy 4.2.2** – Continue to rely on the band's distribution systems to convey important information to residents.

### **Proposed actions**

- Review existing advertising policies and update them to reflect changing circumstances.
- Continue to write/produce high impact ads for Senk'lip, Facebook and the website.

**Strategy 4.2.3** – Make band information and opportunities for input more accessible.

### **Proposed actions**

- Explore the possibility of installing an electronic sign that lists important dates, information, closures, cancellations, important community news, etc., which can be updated quickly and easily.
- Continue to host public outreach events and open houses.