

Okanagan Indian Band Public Participation Guidelines

June 18, 2019

The Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) supports public participation to identify, understand and develop strategies that reflect the needs and concerns of our members, residents and stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OKIB Chief and Council and Administration are the organizations closest to Syilx members and OKIB reserve residents and they carry the responsibility to provide services such as infrastructure, water and waste management, land use decisions, education, health services, housing and community development. As such, Administration has significant influence in the lives of its members and residents. There are many activities carried out by Administration that require some level of public participation such as the development of new infrastructure, land uses, bylaws, and the development and implementation of a variety of special projects, programs, or services.

With the introduction of online surveys and social media, organizations are seeing an increase in both the level and frequency of participation by residents. It is expected that this trend will continue as residents become familiar common engagement methods and tools. The number of members and residents who participate in engagement opportunities will continue to increase, and a "culture of engagement" will eventually emerge.

OKIB's Public Participation Guide is a tool designed to assist Chief and Council and Administration in determining the scope of public engagement necessary for any project or issue in order to gain the necessary feedback, insights and involvement from participants.

WHAT IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Public participation is happening all the time. It starts with information that is provided to the members, residents and stakeholders of the community. Effective public participation, however considers opportunities to go beyond simply providing information and looks at how and when to best connect with all sectors of the community. The end result of effective public participation is decisions that are often more reflective of public concerns and values. Public participation is a process that brings together individuals and groups from many segments of the community, building cooperative working relationships and mutual understanding. Consulting with members, residents, neighbourhoods, interest groups, business and other affected parties is both desirable and necessary.

The level of public participation can range from keeping the public informed to involving the public's participation in the decision-making process. Involving the public early and on the appropriate level helps create support in both the process and the final decision.

BENEFITS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation processes:

- Provide an early warning system for public concerns and needs;
- Serves as a sounding board for proposed organizational programs/initiatives;
- Provides the opportunity for communication between decision makers and the public;
- Creates a credible channel through which accurate and timely information can be disseminated;
- Helps increase understanding and support for the organization's goals;
- Encourages appropriate modification of policies and procedures before major problems develop;
- May contribute to reduction of costly project delays; and
- Increases understanding and contributes to sustainable decision-making.

DEFINITIONS

Public Participation is defined as any process initiated and coordinated by OKIB to share information, involve the members and residents in solving problems and, apply that input to decision-making.

Techniques are the approaches and tools used to facilitate public participation. Level of public engagement means the extent to which the public's involvement will inform the decision. OKIB's Public Participation Scope (p.4) is a useful tool to determine the level of public engagement.

Members are people who belong to the Syilx nation.

Residents means any or all people that reside within the boundaries of OKIB reserves. The particular section of the public most interested will vary and will depend on the project or issue.

Stakeholders are those who have an interest or involvement in providing a service and might include special interest groups, local businesses, and employees.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In every process, regardless of the scope, the following principles should guide decisions about how and when to involve the public:

- Open and Effective Communication – working with the community in a cooperative and transparent way to share information and provide opportunities for open and constructive dialogue.
- Timeliness – considering the appropriate timeframe required for the public participation process to facilitate an informed decision.
- Inclusivity – ensuring public notice and participation is based on building trust and relationships that seek to involve all members of the community.
- Building community participation – planning for a range of public participation techniques to maximize their ability to contribute.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Member, Residents and the General Public: The main role is to actively participate in the process, keeping in mind the “greater good” while considering the current and future needs of the community.

Stakeholders: As an important connection to organizations throughout OKIB, community associations and special interest groups play an integral role in fostering and being involved in public participation. These groups typically have unique knowledge of a topic or issue, or will be impacted in a unique and specific way.

Chief and Council: Council acknowledges the public’s participation and actively engage in public participation processes. Making sure administration proposals, individual concerns and overall public benefit remain balanced also falls within Chief and Council’s role.

Administration: Administration carries out the steps of the participation processes, assists with assessment and evaluation tools and, in some instances, facilitates public participation in forums/formats appropriate to the issue at hand. Administration is responsible for ensuring the proper processes are established and implemented effectively and that the Guiding Principles are consistently met.

Project Manager: Develops and leads team for public participation processes and ensure all consultants and contractors acting on behalf of OKIB adhere to the Guiding Principles and Public Participation Scope.

Communications Staff: Support public participation processes with communication planning that includes awareness building and community reporting, facilitation of participation tools and, monitoring the effectiveness of communication practices.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SCOPE

The scope is designed to assist with the selection of the degree of participation that defines the public's role and the formulation of the public participation goal that will drive the engagement process.

INFORM (Tell)

To build awareness of issues that affect residents and stakeholders that will assist them in understanding the issues, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. For example:

- Fact sheets
- Story boards
- Press releases
- Website & social media
- Advertising
- Direct mail
- Open houses
- Public notices and/or presentations

CONSULT (Ask)

To gather input from the public to test ideas or concepts, clarify issues, and identify possible solutions. For example:

- Surveys (in-person and online)
- Public Hearings
- Community Workshops
- Community Meetings
- Opinion Polls

INVOLVE (Seek Ideas)

To foster a conversation between members, residents, stakeholders, Chief and Council, and Administration that explores perspectives, goals, plans, concerns, expectations, and possible solutions. For example:

- Focus Groups
- Consultative Project Committees
- Workshops
- Resident Inquiries

COLLABORATE (Work Together)

To work directly with members, residents and stakeholders in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives, recommendations and preferred solutions. For example:

- Advisory Committees
- Design Charrettes
- Consensus Building
- Online collaboration work groups

EMPOWER (Public Decides) – to be determined if we want to include this section or not.

The highest level of engagement, empowering, puts the decision into the hands of the public. This level of public participation is not common because it often gives away too much control over decision making, which can impact budgets and may have other service implications.

Empowering can be used in situations where public experts have more information and knowledge than administration or consultants. For example, development of a pickleball court might give the design decisions to players along with an approved budget and a clear definition of deliverables.

WHAT LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION SHOULD BE CHOSEN?

Determining the level of public participation is a critical component of planning an effective process. Some key questions to consider when examining the need to involve the public and stakeholders include:

- What is the decision to be made?
- How will the decision be made and who will make it?
- Who potentially will be affected by the decision?
- Given the decision-making process, how can the public affect the decision?
- What commitment is the decision maker willing to make regarding how the public can affect the decision?
- To what degree will the public’s defined role in the decision-making process meet their expectations?
- How could the public’s role be made more meaningful and their participation encouraged?
- What do you hope to achieve by involving the public in the decision-making process?

EVALUATION METHODS

The main reason to evaluate the process is to learn from each experience and improve.

Incorporate evaluation methods, which include the following key components:

- The results are public.
- Members, residents and stakeholders are involved in the evaluation process.
- The focus is on outcomes, not merely outputs. Outcomes include many different types of benefits or changes.

RESOURCES

This document is based upon the principles set out by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The ideas of the IAP2 have been modified to fit the needs of the OKIB.

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum for Public Participation

IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world. This document draws on the IAP2 concepts and adapts them for use by OKIB.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.

<p>Promise to the Public</p>	<p>We will keep you informed.</p>	<p>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>We will implement what you decide.</p>
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