

FINDING ALLIES

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Summary

This fact sheet outlines who can be an ally, when to find an ally, where to find allies, what to consider before finding allies, how to build a relationship with an ally, how allies can support a planning process, and what kind of boundaries are needed.

Keywords: planning team, communication tools, managing the process, building capacity, direction setting

Who Can Be an Ally?

An ally is an associate who provides support, “coalition, partnership, coordinated actions, or supportive strategies” amongst groups of communities to change unjust and inequitable systems and institutions.¹ Allies can be individuals, other Indigenous communities, non-profit organizations, business corporations, and/or governments. Allies can provide support by “disrupting oppressive spaces by educating others on the realities and histories of marginalized people.”²

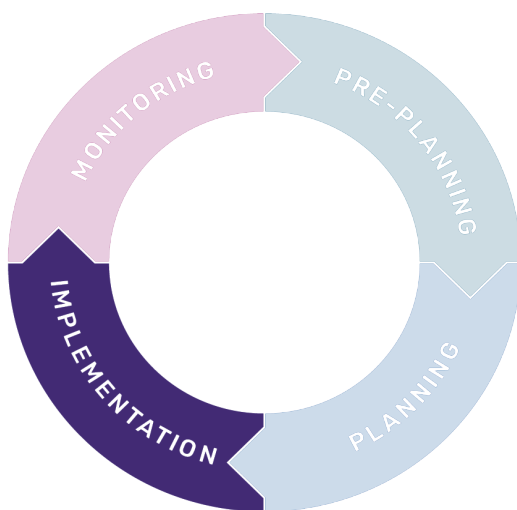


Figure 1 | The four phases of creating a Community Plan.
Adapted from (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada / Indigenous Services Canada. CCP Handbook – Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia. 2016. <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021966/1100100021970>. p. 14.) Used with permission.

When to Find an Ally?

During a planning process, it is common that your First Nation may find the need to expand its circle and find allies from the wider area to support and engage in the planning process. There is not a specific formula regarding when is the best time to find allies as the planning process is ongoing, and your community determines the process.³ The community planning team needs to assess their reality as they move forward, and an ally can engage at any point in the planning process.⁴

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Where Could You Find Allies?

Your committee will evaluate and determine if any parties could be an ally during a planning process. It is advisable that your community ask for referrals from other communities. Potential allies can be identified through these two elements:⁵

1. Allies are promoting social equality for all marginalized groups.
2. Allies are accountable and committed to building a meaningful relationship with your community.

It is important to note that it is not appropriate for any individual, other communities or organizations to self-identify as an ally.⁶

What to Consider before Finding Allies?

Before finding allies, it is important for your community to first identify the internal strengths and weaknesses and the human and material resources available within the community.⁷ It will help your community to decide what kind of allyship is needed to support the planning process.

In addition, understanding the reality of your community will help in communicating clearly with the ally regarding their roles, where their expertise will be needed, and how long they should anticipate committing to the planning process. It is crucial for your community to understand that it is not compulsory to find an ally. These are some of the pros and cons to consider before finding allies:



PROs

Allyship could...

- Be an additional human and financial resource.⁸
- Provide opportunity for community engagement and support.⁹
- Provide opportunity to exchange knowledge and skills unique to each partner.¹⁰
- Provide training and build the capacity of your community.¹¹
- Set up a platform to find positive solutions to common challenges and concerns.¹²
- Allow your community and others to establish meaningful and accountable relationships.¹³

An ally could...¹⁴

- Have a lack of understanding of the central values of different First Nation cultures.
- Take leadership on behalf of your community.
- Deprive opportunities for your community to grow and learn.
- Intrude and interfere in the planning process and affairs of your community.
- Have expectations from your community during the planning process.



CONs

How to Build a Relationship with Allies?

Finding allies allows your community to build meaningful relationship with other communities. Your community may want to establish a positive, transparent, and structured collaboration with your allies. There are a few suggestions that your community can consider sharing with allies to build positive relationships:¹⁵

1 Respectful and Committed Relationships

The ally has to listen, be open-minded, and actively look for opportunities to assist your community in the planning process. Allies need to develop an understanding that planning with your community is an on-going process and requires long-term commitment.

2 Reflection on the Motive of Involvement

The ally needs to internally reflect on their reason, motive, and agenda before starting to engage in a planning process with any First Nation. Planning with First Nations is a relationship that requires trust and detachment from other ways of planning. It is important for the ally to know that your community guides the planning process.

3 Humble Posture of Learning

The ally needs to familiarize themselves with the culture and central values of your community. Allies may need to unlearn what they are accustomed to. Allies also need to continually ask questions to clarify and avoid any false assumptions.

How can Allies Support a Planning Process, and What Kinds of Boundaries are Needed?

Collaborating with different allies in the planning process requires all parties to understand each other's different perspectives, which is critical for the planning process. A few important guidelines for collaborating with allies in the planning process are:¹⁶



Be clear in communicating your community's vision and goals to your allies



Create a respectful environment that nurtures relationships between allies



Encourage diverse and inclusive involvement between different stakeholders



Develop creative and innovative strategies in planning with your allies



Consider allyship as a medium for your community to build internal capacity and exchange knowledge with allies



Protect the values of your community while establishing positive external relations with your allies

Figure 2 | Guidelines for working with allies.

Final Thoughts

In summary, finding allies allows your community and others to establish meaningful and accountable relationships. Finding allies gives opportunity for your community to have multiple perspectives, as your community may exchange knowledge, experience, and expertise with allies.

Further Reading

Best Practices in Aboriginal Community Development: A Literature Review and Wise Practices Approach

by Wesley-Esquimaux, C., & Calliou, B.

This article provides extensive review of the literature on best practices in Aboriginal community development and critiques of Aboriginal community development practices.

<https://www-deslibris-ca.uml.idm.oclc.org/ID/225439>

The 7 C's: A First Nations' Guide to Planning and Reporting Standards by British Columbia First Nations' Data Governance Initiative

This guide provides seven categories of standards that apply to both planning and reporting. The guide also presents some of the main learnings on planning and reporting of First Nation communities of British Columbia.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/558c624de4b0574c94d62a61/t/577e5cf9d482e949405cfd23/1467899162776/THE_7_CS_-_PLANNING_AND_REPORTING_GUIDE_-_FINAL_2015-2016.PDF

Endnotes

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