



Get Started Guide: Indigenous Relations Action Plan

Developed by the ACEC-BC Equity, Diversity,
and Inclusion Committee



Introduction

In developing this guide ACEC-BC partnered with Indigenous artist **Cori Johnson** to showcase artwork that honors and represents Indigenous perspectives. [Learn more about Cori's work here.](#)

Pride Thunderbird

This image is meant to show that love is love. The thunderbird represents transformation.



Indigenous Relations Action Plan

Our work as engineering professionals has a profound impact on the communities we support. It is essential that we approach our projects with understanding and respect for Indigenous Peoples, their territories, and their histories.

Meaningful engagement and consultation with Indigenous communities are founded on the principles of trust and respect. These principles are not just abstract ideals; they require thoughtful, informed approaches and a recognition of the historical and ongoing harms experienced by Indigenous Peoples in BC and across Canada. This resource aims to introduce some of the topics that should be considered as we work towards reconciliation.

By committing to meaningful engagement and consultation, consulting engineering companies and their people can contribute to the development of respectful, inclusive, and sustainable engineering solutions that benefit communities, and draw upon the knowledge and expertise of Indigenous Peoples and their communities.

Introduction

Knowledge and understanding are the first steps in building meaningful relationships for effective consultation and engagement. To start, it is important to understand the terms consultation and engagement. Engineers Canada explains these terms as follows →

Sundial

This image is a hummingbird wrapped by the sunlight. The hummingbird represents resilience, and the sun represents healing.



Indigenous Relations Action Plan

The terms ‘consultation’ and ‘engagement’ carry different meanings, despite often being used interchangeably. The Crown has legal duty to consult Indigenous communities and possibly accommodate when a decision will impact asserted or established Aboriginal rights. Engagement differs from consultation in that it involves building relationships outside of legal obligations with the intention of establishing trust and understanding and seeks reciprocity between parties, regardless of whether the engineer or firm is acting on behalf of the Indigenous community or for a proponent not affiliated with the community.

The act of consultation is more than an exchange of information and note taking. It should represent a willingness to listen and discuss Indigenous Peoples’ concerns and to be prepared to accommodate their concerns. Engagement explores opportunities beyond community involvement in the project delivery, such as the supporting their efforts to assert sovereignty through strengthening their governance systems.

Action Plan

4 Clan Mountain

This mountain is called Stigyoden and is located in Hazelton BC. The 4 images from left to right are a frog, eagle, wolf, and fireweed. They represent the four clans of the Gitksan people.



Indigenous Relations Action Plan

An Indigenous Relation Action Plan can help advance reconciliation on projects by providing a framework that guides an organization's approach to engagement and consultation. The action plan is not project specific but is intended to serve as an organizational framework to guide the actions taken outside of specific projects, as well as within the delivery of projects.

The following recommendations should be considered when developing an Indigenous Relations Action Plan:



Research and understand the history and current context of Indigenous relations in British Columbia and Canada.

This includes learning about the history of colonization, residential schools, and the ongoing impacts of these policies on Indigenous Peoples and communities. Visit the [UBC Indigenous Foundations](#) website for more information.



Engage with local Indigenous communities and seek to understand their interests and perspectives.

This should include open and transparent consultation with Elders, community leaders, and cultural experts.



Identify your company's values and principles regarding Indigenous engagement and reconciliation.

Work towards alignment with the interests/needs of Indigenous communities.

Action Plan

Orca

This image was created to honor the Orca (killer whale) of the coast of Prince Rupert.



Indigenous Relations Action Plan



Identify the potential impacts of your company's activities on Indigenous lands, waters, and resources.

Develop strategies for mitigating these impacts and seek the input of Indigenous communities in the development of these strategies.



Identify with the Indigenous community relevant social and economic opportunities for collaboration and partnership.

This could be through economic participation, job shadowing, using Indigenous-owned service providers, bursaries, sponsorships, and/or employment/training opportunities.



Develop measurable goals and targets for your company's commitments.

Track progress towards these goals.



Ensure that your Indigenous Relations Action Plan is accessible, transparent, and accountable.

Action Plan

Eagle Egg

The eagle egg represents rebirth and the start of a new generation. The eagle represents power and authority.



Indigenous Relations Action Plan



Continuously learn and improve your company's Indigenous relations practices through ongoing engagement, dialogue, and education.

Encourage a culture of learning, recognizing that reconciliation cannot occur without the truth.



Build a culture that fosters safe environments that are free of discrimination and barriers to participation.

Guided by these considerations, consulting engineering companies in British Columbia should develop and/or enhance their Indigenous Relations Action Plan. This will reflect their commitment to building respectful and meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities.

Indigenous Relations Action Plan

There are many online resources and tools available to support organizations in developing an action plan and meaningful approaches to consultation and engagement. Some relevant resources include:

[Engineers Canada - Guideline on Indigenous Consultation and Engagement](#)

This guideline has been written for engineers and engineering firms who interact with Indigenous communities to provide guidance in preparing for and planning engagement that observes Indigenous protocols and meets the project and community's needs. This guideline includes:

- ▶ Background information on the topics of consultation and engagement, exploring aspects of motivations, free prior and informed consent, and safety.
- ▶ Considerations for preparation which include aspects of learning and pre-engagement planning for both individuals and organizations.
- ▶ Principles for respectful engagement including building trust, engaging early, effective communication, and respect for community resources.
- ▶ Detailed considerations for the creation of an engagement plan which include clarifying objectives, resource planning, identification of participants, consideration of formats, collaboration, and evaluation of outcomes.

[Canadian Construction Association – Indigenous Engagement Guide](#)

This guide was created to provide guidance from those in industry who have succeeded in building relationships with Indigenous communities. It includes insights and ideas as a starting point for those looking to begin engagement with Indigenous people and communities. The guide has two main sections:

- ▶ Knowing and Understanding
 - ▶ Information about engaging and building relationships with Indigenous peoples, businesses and communities.
- ▶ Indigenous Engagements and Relationship Building
 - ▶ Guidance on how to build meaningful and respectful relations.

Indigenous Relations Action Plan

[Canadian Commission for UNESCO – Best Practices for Indigenous Engagement](#)

This document provides a series of recommendations for best practices when beginning discussions with local communities, which can lead to meaningful relationships and true engagement. It outlines a simple but effective framework for engagement, comprised of 5 key components:

- ▶ Identify – Identify the nation(s) with territory in your area.
- ▶ Learn – learn about Indigenous communities.
- ▶ Plan – Create an engagement plan.
- ▶ Engage – Engage and make contact.
- ▶ Maintain – Maintain relationships through familiarity and openness.

Additional Resources

The following resources are included to provide additional context and information relevant to building meaningful and effective relationships with Indigenous communities:

- ▶ [ACEC-BC Get Started Guide – Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#)
- ▶ [UBC Indigenous Foundations – The Indian Act](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Corporate Training - Meaningful Consultation with Indigenous Peoples](#)
- ▶ [EGBC Guide to Inclusive Practices](#)

As a first step to engaging with Indigenous communities, these resources can be used to support you in identifying the Indigenous Territories in your area:

- ▶ Globally: [Native Land Digital](#)
- ▶ In BC: [British Columbia Assemble of First Nations](#)

Conclusion

Consultants are encouraged to explore these and additional resources, finding guidance and information that is relevant and applicable. When accessing these or other resources, it is important to consider who has created the content and the context of its creation.