

Making Modern Treaties Work – LCAC
Breakout 1A: Teaching Our Citizens about the Treaties

Moderator: Dana Tizya-Tramm, Chief, Vuntut Gwitchin Government

PANELIST 1: Sashia Leung, Associate Director, BC Treaty Commission

(Teaching Our Communities about the Treaties: Communications Strategies and Good Practices)

- Good communications should be grounded in good governance. A treaty is one tool to defend our rights.
- Good governance is achieved through transparency and fact-based information that results in informed decision making for leaders and citizens. Treaties should include the current status and future vision of nationhood.
- Together Today For Our Children Tomorrow from the Yukon First Nations is a great example of a treaty vision.
- Good practices for community engagement include a space for everyone, with two-way communication and participatory engagement starting at a grass-roots level.
- “Use sight, sound, smell, taste, touch; get out and visit the territory”.
- Community outreach and community gatherings are tools to engage people, especially youths.
- There is a demand for “treaty trailblazers” and to identify natural leaders from each community. We must support them in education and activism to challenge injustice and climate change.
- Involve your communications director in leadership meetings, therefore making key messages effective and to transfer information.
- Lastly, utilize multimedia and social media platforms to engage community members. Majority of citizens are 35 and under, therefore engage the community through tweets, podcasts, and posts.
- Call to update nations’ website to inform community members and cross communication of multimedia platforms. Utilize analytics to target these demographics.

PANELIST 2: Kluane Adamek, AFN Regional Chief, Yukon

- “This work is isolating” therefore these connections are important.
- Communication strategy - “What’s relevant to people... what’s the message people want to connect with?”
- The Yukon is leading in Indigenous communications and outreach. There are 11 Self-Governments in the Yukon and they lead in governance and implementation.
- Part of their success is due to effective community communication. Communicate genuine agreements that became a story.
- Modern treaties may not seem attractive to youths, at first. Therefore, it is important to emphasize our stories of our power, that inspire others to “be a part of the solution, and to be a part of the future”
- We need to create a space to demonstrate gratitude and elevate our people. That is how you can see the “linkages of nationhood”. We need to invite people in the space to be proud, and receive their proper acknowledgement.
- Social media is an excellent tool to engage people. Communications tools are supposed to support and celebrate community members in an inclusive space.

- Communicating is from a place of values and including people throughout the work we do.
- Steps to “ensure that the pride of who we are continue to be instilled in our youth” echo the pride of our agreements in our community.
- There is a demand to improve secondary and post-secondary tools to empower and educate youths on treaties.
- The goal is to support, guide, and empower youths as early as we can. Make this connection through youths, elders and elected leaders.

PANELIST 3: Bobby Clark, Director of Communications and Inter-Governmental Relations, Nisga’a Lisims

- We communicate to over 7,000 people in 4 villages, with most residing in urban centers.
- In 1927, provisions under the Indian Act restricted rights to access lawyers.
- In 1955, they re-established the Nisga’a land committee and hosted over 40 national conventions to provide information from the land question in the courts to the 1970’s comprehensive land claims negotiations.
- In 1976, negotiations began with the federal government, though there was no official recognition until 1991.
- In 2000, there was the creation of the Nisga’a Treaty.
- Now we convene bi-annually since the Nisga’a Treaty.
- The elected body comprises of chiefs from each village and two representatives from the urban center. It’s a “unique structure of government that works well for us”.
- In 2006, we developed a vision statement on how to communicate with citizens, to inform transparently, and how to evolve to meet needs of people.
- The nation’s website posts information on the treaty, publications, reports and social/cultural/economic information as it relates to the Nation in addition to social media
- The importance of investing in our future includes engaging youths. Youth engagement coordination works with secondary schools and village governments.

PANELIST 4: Monica Pishew, MA; AND,

PANELIST 5: Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, PhD of the Modern Treaty Implementation Project

(Preliminary Results: Modern Treaty Implementation Approaches)

- The Modern Treaty Implementation Project researched evidence of treaties and investments with Indigenous scholars and students.
- The project focused on Self-Government negotiations, implementation and social & health research. The importance was to conduct research on modern treaties to inform modern treaties holders.
- Research methods included drawing information from Indigenous governments, departmental organizations boards and committees, lobbying agencies, territorial and federal government websites, and lastly academic literature.
- Observations were made to document how best practices are installed. Evidence of the burden on modern treaties was due to the impact of colonialism. This poses a hurdle for future progress and development. Therefore, negotiations are ongoing and results in gap funding.

- There are 26 modern treaties. Most of which emphasize the theme of traditional ecological knowledge (land management boards) (32%), heritage (19%), social (17%), language, governance, spirituality, and education.
- Contemporary transmission of science, values, and history is exhibited through Elders.
- This was a holistic approach and strategically designed to transfer knowledge to inform people. Cultural values greatly influence governance and understandings. This is conveyed through mission statements, laws, and artwork - all accessed through websites. These portals are important to convey the lessons of modern treaty holders.
- Recommendations include identifying programs with favorable outcomes though are no longer provided; and to better understand the measurable burden of colonization on implementing modern treaties.

Question:

1. In your opinion, what are the key points that make a good leader?

Sashia Leung:

- Have an open mind, heart and voice.
- “A leader of someone who acknowledges people and holds people up”

Kluane Adamek:

- Vulnerability, humility, and courage

Bobby Clark:

- Embracing an oral code of respect is the first and most important edict.

2. How do you succeed in inspiring the youth to be more engaged in politics?

Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox:

- Create empowering spaces.

Monica (Youth resilience and coordinator):

- Let the youth know that their voice is heard and that it matters.
- Make sure they are heard and they are seen.
- Give them the opportunity to share how they think. Be the background noise to youth, and they will pick up on your passions.

Bobby Clark:

- In 2005, our government provided \$17,000 for youth councils. But election results proved to be unstable -elected youths dropped out.
- Never give up to find new ways to inspire youth.

Kluane Adamek:

- Emphasize our law-making powers and languages. Raise awareness of our abilities of activism.
- Trigger conversations of stories in the news, and the hope and engagement that is possible.

Sashia Leung:

- “Bring youth to where decision making is. Youths want to be heard and supported, that’s our responsibility to them”
3. I belong to Treaty 6, and we require negotiations with the Canada’s Air Force and the Alberta government and their challenges with respecting their government. How do we implement our modern treaties when the Federal government is enforcing Provincial governments (Alberta) to oppress us?

Kluane Adamek:

- We didn’t make these provincial and territorial boundaries. The challenge is complex.
- One possible tool is the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights.
- Nation-building is a tool to implement rights.