



Honouring Our Ways

*A Journey Through
Community-Led
Planning*

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Words of Welcome

Hadih, Namekwa, 'Nit, Sing.gaay 'laa, 'Uy' skweyul, and Weytk! Good day and hello. We have created this visual guide to share what we have learned through community-led planning in British Columbia First Nations over the last twenty years. Our goal has been to create a resource that is deeply rooted in our Ways of planning. We acknowledge the lands, waters, winds, and teachings of this place and offer this visual guide in thanks for all that we know and all that we have yet to learn.

— Honouring Our Ways (HOW) Advisory Group: *Gid Uuwans (Dana Moraes), Nox Sa'tsen (Cici Sterritt), We'es Tes (Sandra Martin Harris), Nih tse digh (Dr. Shirley-Pat Gale), Andrew Moore, and Bronwen Geddes*

KEY

These icons appear throughout the visual guide. They offer concepts, teachings, and ideas for us to consider during the Honouring Our Ways (HOW) journey.



Bundle:
Teachings
and wisdom



Octopus:
Community-
led planning
concepts



Sprout:
Things to
try

Honouring Our Ways

These are the principles that guide the work of the Indigenous Planning Mentors.



Indigenous Principles	Colonial Practices
All is Sacred	All is Exploitable
Sustainable Development	Unsustainable Practices
7th Generation Thinking	Short-Term Thinking
Reciprocity	Competition
Mutual Dependence	Hostility
Interconnection	Separation
Right Relations	Unhealthy Relations
Intergenerational Knowledge	Paternalistic Thinking
Equitable Distribution of Wealth	Powerful Take All
Responsibility & Respect	Unreliability and Contempt

Overview

Honouring Our Ways (HOW) is a new way of telling an old story. It is a journey that encourages communities and Nations to come together to share where we have come from, discuss where we are now, and determine where we would like to go. Community-led planning is an essential process that goes hand in hand with strong governance, ensuring a resilient future for generations. This type of planning has been integral in our communities for thousands of years, and has focused on the care of people, land, languages, and traditions. It is a transformational journey that lifts communities and Nations, guiding us towards a sovereign future.

HOW is an Indigenous retelling of Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP). There are numerous guides (CCP Handbook, NADF Toolkit, and Indigenous Planning Studio) that lay out the community-led planning process in a comprehensive, step-by-step way. This visual guide shares the planning journey in a way that reflects our people and our connection to the lands and waters.



Planning creates a collective picture in which community members can see themselves.

HOW is shared in this visual guide through water's journey, in which all that is flowing from streams, rivers, and oceans converges to create a community-led plan for the future. Water gives life, as do traditional laws, languages, medicines, and spirituality.

Although water generally flows in one direction, this journey can be joined at any point along the way that works for our community or Nation. Inside this visual guide, we find four phases of planning that mirror the journeys of the sun and moon, as they connect to water and all life – Our Stories (Pre-Planning), Getting Together (Planning), Taking Action (Implementation), and Celebrating Change (Monitoring and Evaluation).



Planning is an ancient practice and responsibility that integrates Indigenous knowledges and Ways.



There are many reasons for going through the HOW journey, including strengthening governance, engaging community, revitalizing culture, identifying priorities, managing risks, and increasing access to opportunities.



The planning journey is as unique to our community or Nation as is the plan itself. Our teachings tell us that 'we can't rush a river', 'the tide waits for no one', and 'we move together with the rhythm of the land and seasons'.

Our Stories

Pre-Planning

Our Planning Bundle

Keep funding and resources in community

Confirm readiness to begin

Seek resources, salaries, training and technology

Engage Firekeeper and Planning Team

Engage internal communications support

Our Relatives

Connect programs and services

Engage band council, leadership, and staff

Seek mentors

Involve our People (e.g. Elders, leaders, youth, family heads, knowledge keepers, etc.)

Our Roots

Weave in interconnectedness / all my relations

Reflect on resiliency

Gather ceremonies, laws, protocols, and ways of knowing

Conduct planning as ceremony

Our Wisdom

Establish wellness supports

Harmonize existing reports

Gather baseline data / demographics

Develop community profile

Work with community departments

Our Stories

Start with our truths / Honestly acknowledge present

Consider nested approach: Family, community, Nation

Integrate language and culture

Document oral history

Collect creation stories

Our Stories

Pre-Planning

The Honouring Our Ways (HOW) journey shares our collective Ways of knowing – stories of the past, present, and future. We explore these stories with the community or Nation to document them, to learn from them, and to plan for the future. Planning that is community-based and community-led takes time, resources, energy, and support from leadership. Since time immemorial, we have known that there is a collective responsibility to truly listen (with an open heart and open mind) to members before we take action.

Relatives

To support the HOW journey, we have learned that we need one or two passionate people to facilitate the project and keep it moving forward. This person (or people) could be called the Firekeeper, Planning Coordinator, Community Planning Facilitator, or another title to reflect the community. In this visual guide, we use the term Firekeeper.



Ask for volunteers and support from the community or Nation. This enhances the planning journey and builds interest in the process.

We also need a Planning Team, composed of diverse community members from various families, age groups, and skill sets. This team works in collaboration with the Firekeeper, helping to guide and support the HOW journey.

As we move through the HOW journey, consider ways to involve as many community members and as many differing voices as possible, including:

- Leadership
- Administrators and Staff
- Elders
- Knowledge Keepers
- Language Speakers
- Children and Youth
- Parents and Families
- Members Living Away
- Storytellers



“Indigenous knowledges are not a backup plan anymore, they are the plan.”

- Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy

Planning Bundle

Our planning bundle includes all of the different supports and resources we need to begin the HOW journey. Typically, these include:

- Funding to cover the costs of the Firekeeper, Planning Team, external experts (if needed), team training, community engagement sessions, and office supplies/software
- A job description for the Firekeeper and terms of reference for the Planning Team
- Training to support the Firekeeper, Planning Team, and community members with the HOW journey (e.g. a Community Orientation session)
- External expertise (e.g. mentors, other First Nations, consultants, students, and other government departments) needed to support the planning process
- A framework for the HOW journey, including our approach for incorporating language and traditional laws and values
- A safe working space for the Firekeeper
- An outline of the planning process, including details of how and when people are to be engaged and the types and frequency of communications





Community-to-community mentorship and annual training workshops are available for those going through the HOW journey. Visit the Comprehensive Community Planning website for more details.

Roots and Stories

What makes the HOW journey unique is that it is rooted in the stories, traditions, languages, and cultures of our People. To make this process meaningful, set aside a good amount of time to gather the stories of our community or Nation. Walking with our ancestors and embracing our teachings help guide the planning journey forward. The HOW journey allows us to recognize our strengths and build a path that supports interconnectedness.

During the Our Stories phase of the HOW journey, the Firekeeper and Planning Team may collect (through knowledge keepers, language speakers, and historical records and reports):

- Ceremonies, laws, values, and protocols of our People
- Creation stories and teachings of how our People came to be in our homelands
- Significant historical moments, times of change, and events that recognize our resiliency
- Language(s) of our Nation, including key terms, phrases, and ways of knowing

Planning is ceremony. We can begin every gathering and meeting in a good way through offerings, prayers, sweats, and/or song.

What are our sacred laws that guide how we live? Identifying these laws, protocols, and values allows us to create structure in our HOW journey and contribute to respectful dialogue, which provides more safety in our spaces.

Wisdom

The HOW journey involves gathering all of the existing plans, policies, research, data, and statistics that already exist in and about our community or Nation.

Some of the information we may want to integrate into the community-led plan includes:

- Oral histories, place names in our Languages, existing community or Nation reports and research related to our community, such as historical research, books, surveys, and studies about the traditions, milestones, language, and culture
- Previous plans, including community-led plans, land use plans, housing plans, infrastructure plans, education plans, and health plans
- Statistics related to population, social determinants of health, land base, employment, and traditional practices

After compiling and summarizing this information, we may find that some key information is missing. This process and knowledge guides the next phase of the HOW journey.

Gathering wisdom involves 'Two-eyed Seeing' - seeing the world with both Indigenous perspectives and knowledges and Western ones.

Document all of the research and store it in a shared filing system, so that it can be referenced in the future.

"Understand where your community comes from. Know your history and your people."

- Chris Derickson, Westbank First Nation

Getting Together

Planning

Building

Plan in our own ways

Get on the land / water

Host cultural activities

Include art by all

Mirror culture through planning process

Asking and Listening

Continue to seek wellness supports

Create safe spaces that build trust

Encourage staff

Acknowledge and record all voices

Include fun and food

Go to where the people gather

Develop and prioritize activities to support each goal

Develop vision and identify goals

Gather roots, fruits, birds, and bugs (RFBB)

Commit to action

Transformative Visioning

Involve all members at home and away

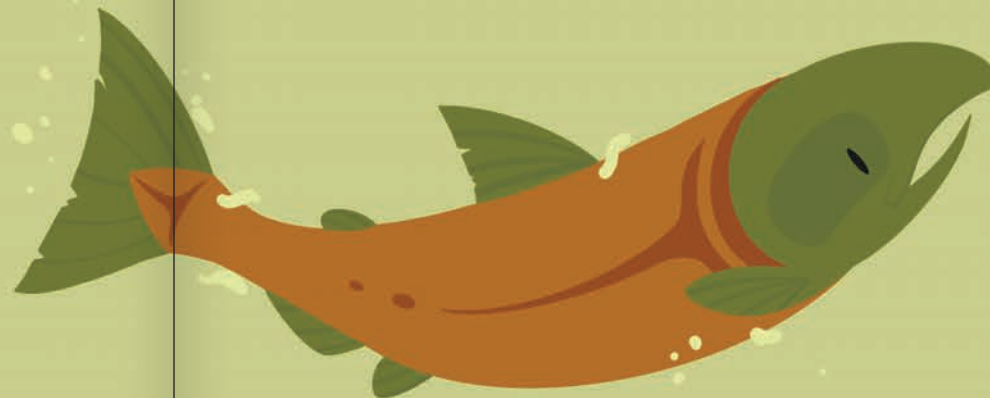
Reflect back to people

Develop key priorities and indicators

Harvesting

Keep records and track data

Document stories about community change



Getting Together

Planning

Getting Together is about people – gathering and listening to all voices to create a plan where we can see ourselves. Getting Together is central to the Honouring Our Ways (HOW) journey.

Weaving Language and Culture

To make our community plan unique and meaningful, the process we follow to create the plan can mirror our cultural protocols and values. By grounding the planning work in our Ways and traditions, we help revitalize these practices and make our plan meaningful to all.

We may consider:

- Hosting meetings that mirror cultural protocols (e.g. opening blessings, speaking circles, closing words, songs, etc.)
- Utilizing language at every opportunity
- Inviting Elders to share their knowledge and stories
- Integrating various art forms from All
- Celebrating significant cultural days and milestones

Asking and Listening

Community participation is the foundation of a community-led plan. Engaging often and in many ways is what ensures our plan reflects us. To begin, we ask people how they would like the work to be done and how they would like to be involved. Would they like to meet

on the land, in community buildings, or in their homes? Would they like to share one on one or in group meetings? Do they want to provide their thoughts in writing? What would they like the community plan to look like at the end?

Ways of knowing, being, and doing support us in doing our planning in a good way.

Respect and honour cultural protocols by giving Elders and participants as much advance notice of gatherings as possible.

We meet people where they are at physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If they are uncomfortable meeting at the band office, we can host conversations on the land, on the water, in homes, at the gas station, and anywhere else people like to gather.

Engaging can be done in many ways. We can create space for sharing ideas and dreams through art, surveys, trips, and conversations. We can connect in groups or individually.

“Each community member has a responsibility to breathe life into this plan”

- Vickie Thomas, ?aqam

In communities or Nations where people are not used to being asked to share their ideas and dreams, it may take some time to build the trust needed to engage. We work to create safe spaces for people to share and acknowledge them for their time. We knock on doors, set up home visits, offer meals, attend existing gatherings, visit schools, connect with parents, offer gifts, and sit with Elders. By acknowledging, documenting, and recording all voices, participants know that their time and visions for the future are valued.

Determining the ways in which settler colonialism has influenced Indigenous Peoples and communities is an important part of the engagement process. History matters!

Trauma-informed approaches involve recognizing past individual and collective harms, creating welcoming spaces that are culturally and personally safe, taking time to work with people where they are at, and being prepared to offer support.

Transformative Visioning

Foundational to our community-led plan is the creation of a collective vision, establishment of goals, and selection of activities.

- **Vision:** What do we envision for the future of our community or Nation? The vision is a statement or picture of where we would like to be in 10, 20, or 50 years.
- **Goals:** To achieve the shared vision, what big goals do we need to work on? These goals might relate to language and culture, health and safety, lands and resources, economic development, infrastructure, community services, governance, and more. There might be several goals in each area. We can think of the goals as paddles that can collectively help us move towards our vision across the water.
- **Activities:** What are some of the specific ways that each of the goals can be achieved? Activities include specific actions or projects that support us to achieve each goal. Together, the activities give strength to each goal or paddle.

What does success look like? Creating goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (S.M.A.R.T.) can be helpful.

Planning is not just for the people here now. It is for the people yet to come. Thinking about the next seven generations as we plan allows us to integrate long-term thinking.

Many communities work through a process of identifying all the things they are doing well, in addition to the areas that need attention. This can help identify goals and activities for the community plan. This process can be called a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) or a SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results), **but we like RFBB (roots, fruits, birds, and bugs)¹:**

- **Roots:** What are our strengths - the things we are doing really well that keep us strong?
- **Fruits:** What are upcoming opportunities for us – things that could bear fruit?
- **Birds:** What are the challenges facing our community that we don't have much control over – the external forces that are or will soon impact us?
- **Bugs:** What are the things that are weakening us – the things that could eat away at us if we don't address them?

¹We give thanks to Jessie Hemphill (Kwakwaka'wakw and Métis) for sharing this approach.

River teachings of 'flow' help us to remember that when we feel stuck or overwhelmed, we might be in a back eddy, but we will get back into the main water flow in time.

We can build the skills of our People by keeping the funding for planning inside our community or Nation. If external support is needed through consultants, we can focus their work on mentoring the Firekeeper, developing the skills of the Planning Team, and transferring knowledge. The people needed to guide us on the HOW journey are already around us.

Harvesting

Planning is a continuous journey. It requires us to collect information to measure whether or not progress is being made towards the vision and goals of the community. Deciding on the information to track (i.e. indicators) allows us to monitor progress effectively. We may track:

- Language (e.g. speakers, fluency, language programs)
- Health and wellness (e.g. births, number of children with traditional names)
- Education (e.g. graduation rates, post-secondary enrollment, cultural camp participation)
- Housing (e.g. members housed, core housing needs met, members moving back to community or Nation)
- Elder engagement in community (e.g. participation in programs, stories shared)

The 12 Social Determinants of Health provide a framework for assessing the state of community wellness. These include culture and language, education, income and social status, and social support networks.

Collaborate regularly and debrief often with the Planning Team. Their support and guidance will help balance us in our planning journey.

Taking Action

Implementation

Weaving Language and Culture

Include key words and phrases in language

Follow laws, values, protocols, and practices

Embed ceremony in projects

Include Knowledge Holders

Implement quick start project

Build project management team

Offer ongoing training

Building

Seek funding and resources

Create employment opportunities in community

Retain Firekeeper as Implementation Coordinator

Taking Root

Remember your resiliency and teachings through change

Focus on wellness for community and Firekeeper

Stay on agenda of leadership and staff and on the minds of members

Begin more complex projects

Conduct mid-and long-term projects

Collaborate with all departments and agencies in and out of community

Build trust

Integrate culture and language

Capture stories

Working Together

Mentor youth

Focus on governance

Track progress

Communicating

Share progress, challenges, and best practices

Honor all contributions and successes

Continuous two-way communication between community and leadership

Taking Action

Implementation

Implementing our community plan can begin before the plan has been drafted and approved by community and leadership. We do not need to wait until the plan is complete to begin implementing some projects. These early projects can be called "Quick Start Projects".

Once the dreams and wishes of members are captured, be sure to let everyone working and volunteering for the community or Nation know what they are, so that they can support making it all happen.



"Implementation starts the day you begin planning."

- Gwen Phillips, Ktunaxa Nation

Building

During Taking Action, it is possible to create new opportunities for community capacity and employment, as well to build capacity of the existing community or Nation staff and supports. The Firekeeper and Planning Team may transition into supporting the Taking Action and Celebrating Change phases of the Healing Our Ways (HOW) journey.

What training might be required for new and existing staff in this transition? What skills, such as project management and communications, would be particularly helpful to develop at this time?



Weaving Language and Culture

Culture and language are central to the Taking Action phase. Weaving laws, values, protocols, and practices of the community or Nation into meetings, reports, funding applications, and project management keeps the foundation of the community plan alive. It demonstrates that these Ways are not just part of the HOW journey, but part of all work in the community or Nation.

Working Together

Implementation of a community plan takes many people from many departments and agencies, both inside and outside the community or Nation. During this phase, we encourage developing partnerships, working with funders, and engaging project managers. Once people are familiar with the community plan, they can better understand how their contributions support the plan and the vision of the community or Nation. This allows us all to be ready to seize opportunities for action.

Trickster figures are about transformation. Their stories share valuable insights around responding to change and adapting with strength. What are the trickster figures in our culture and how might they be incorporated into the implementation of our community plan?



Focusing on wellness and the engagement of members of all ages and genders throughout the HOW journey keeps implementation rooted in a strengths-based (asset-based) approach that focuses on each person's strengths and wellbeing.

Weave ceremony into all actions.



Communicating

Taking Action involves reporting back on progress, successes, and challenges regularly and continuously. Capturing stories and sharing best practices allows the community to stay connected with what has been done, what has been challenging, and what there is yet to do. This enables us to honour all contributions to the community plan for the future of the community or Nation.

Our languages have terms related to 'action' and 'doing' that refer to lifting our people up and taking care of ourselves and others. What are the words for 'doing' and 'action' in our language(s)?



Keep leadership regularly informed and encourage ongoing support of priorities and needed investments.



Taking Root

As our comfort with implementation grows, we can take on increasingly complex and ambitious projects. Some projects may only take a few months, while others may take years or decades to complete. Taking Action is about the journey to create lasting change. A long-term commitment requires us to keep the community plan on the agenda of staff and leadership and on the minds of members.

The planning journey can be challenging. Hold each other up, look after one another, and lean into the land.



Start implementing small projects and then gain confidence to take on more complex projects.





Ask if we have
done what we said
we would do

Track what
has changed in
community

Processing

Compare
objectives to
reality using
data

Consider how
we can change
or improve our
work

Gather
feedback

Circulate
reports,
stories, videos,
and photos

Share with
transparency

Preserving and Distributing

Engage
community using
infographics and
illustrations

Share what has been done,
what has worked, what hasn't
been done and why

Be ready
for change
(environment,
finances, etc.)

Seize
opportunities

Paddling

Bring in
support!

Revise plan
when most
activities have
been completed

Lift
up our
wellness

Weave in
ceremony and
language

Celebrating

Celebrate
achievements with
community as often
as possible

Acknowledge
staff

Support
leadership

Celebrating Change

Monitoring and Evaluation



Celebrating Change

Monitoring and Evaluation

*Celebrate every success,
even the small wins.*

The Celebrating Change phase of our HOW Journey is about celebrating transformation, tracking progress, and sharing results and lessons learned.

Processing

It is important to track data related to our progress and share updates on the indicators we selected during the Getting Together phase. If we think about the river's flow, has the leaf that we placed at the head of the river made it all the way to the ocean? If not, where did it travel and why did it change course? This is our opportunity to ensure that we are tracking the right information to demonstrate change.

Remember to be flexible in the HOW journey, as many things will change along the way. We need to bend like the willow and modify our community plan as conditions change.



"If you want to make the creator laugh, make a plan."

- The Late Linda Bristol, Former Indigenous Community Planning Mentor

Our teachings tell us that when we face criticism, we must not pick it up and carry it. Instead, we must bear witness to the concerns, reflect on what we have heard, and move forward in a good way.



Preserving and Distributing

Reporting is a key function of governance. We can ask ourselves: What has been done? What has worked? What has been challenging and why? This information can be shared with the community or Nation, leaders, and funders, ensuring transparency and pride in the work being done. We can share the information in ways that will be clear and understandable for members (e.g. using infographics, illustrations, and photographs). In addition to tracking data, we can share stories of change through shared experiences, rather than through spreadsheets.

Thinking about and setting up reporting and tracking deliverables early in the HOW journey can save us time overall. We can create a reporting folder and add to it as the project moves along.



The "7Cs of Planning and Reporting" provides guidelines and advice on how to conduct both planning and reporting.

Celebrating

Celebrating progress with the community or Nation is central to keeping the community plan alive. It also acknowledges those doing the implementation work and supports leadership in continued focus on the community plan.

Acknowledging good work and lifting our People up can be done in many ways. How about holding an annual gathering to acknowledge work and share progress? Or perhaps include a write-up every month in the newsletter or on social media about the hard work being done? Or exchange gifts of acknowledgement for hard work?



Paddling

The HOW journey involves learning, assessing, planning, and doing. There comes a point in the Taking Action and Celebrating Change phases when most of the activities have been completed and goals have been met. At this point, it might be time to begin the Getting Together phase with the community again to develop a revised community plan that is based on all of the learning and doing of the past years. The continuation of this planning cycle gives life to the HOW journey and ensures that our community plan continues to build up our community or Nation.



The phrase 'All my relations' highlights the ways our families and communities are connected. It explains how we show up for each other and care for one another – for today and for generations to come.

