



National
Congress of
American
Indians

EFFECTIVE TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND LEADERSHIP IN INDIAN COUNTRY

DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



PYRAMID COMMUNICATIONS

“Our future success as tribal nations is directly linked to how effectively we communicate, and advocate for, the issues important to all of our people. Tribal nations and tribal organizations will always be stronger when we can speak with one voice—one that is strong, unified and clear.”

Jefferson Keel, executive board president,
National Congress of American Indians

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OVERVIEW

The following materials are based on feedback and conversations from tribal leaders and tribal communications officers from across the country. We have focused on tools, tactics and strategies identified as the main themes that emerged during our conversations and through our own extensive experience working on communications issues in Indian Country over the years.

We want to thank all the tribal leaders and tribal communications officers who took the time to discuss their views on what effective leadership looks like today, the ever-changing communications landscape and ways that communications and advocacy can be strengthened in Indian Country moving forward.

Jackie Johnson
Executive Director
National Congress of American Indians

John Hoyt
President
Pyramid Communications

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

TRIBAL LEADERS

Chairman Ron Allen, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Wash.
Chairman Henry Cagey, Lummi Nation, Wash.
Chairman Brian Cladoosby, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Wash.
Joe Garcia, former executive board president, National Congress of American Indians
Wolf Clan Representative Keller George, Oneida Indian Nation, N.Y.
Principal Chief Jim Gray, Osage Nation, Okla.
Jefferson Keel, executive board president, National Congress of American Indians
Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy, The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Ore.
Chairman Charles Murphy, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, N.D. and S.D.
Chairman James Ramos, San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission Indians, Calif.
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Nancy Conrad, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Calif.
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Siobhan Taylor, The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Ore.

WHAT TRIBAL LEADERS THINK

Outlined below are the key findings from interviews with 15 tribal leaders and tribal communications officers across the country. The conversations focused on exploring how communications helps them in their daily work, how the communications playing field has changed over the years and how they have adapted, how they overcome barriers and what the tools and activities are that make them more effective leaders and communicators.

HOW BEST TO LEAD IN AN EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Be humble.

Job and title do not define you. Your desire to help your people does. We consistently heard that tribal leaders felt it was an honor and a privilege to lead and represent their citizens. They also noted that given the extraordinary pressures of leadership and the amount of time it takes, there is very little room for ego.

Listen and learn.

You don't, and can't, know it all. Let people help you become educated on the issues, history and potential direction you might take as a tribe. Never promise what you can't deliver.

Build strong relationships with elected officials and their staff.

Nothing can take the place of a personal relationship. It is important that the relationship becomes yours and not that of your lawyer/lobbyist. Whether it is your member of Congress, or staff member at the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Department of the Interior, people should know who you are when you walk in the door. As one leader said, "You need to be able to navigate from the courthouse to the White House." It is also important to build these relationships in advance of needing something.

Understand how the political system works.

Given the complexity of policy issues and the lack of time leadership has to spend understanding these issues, it is often hard to find the time to fully understand how the political system works. Leadership in government requires understanding how an elected official is thinking, what the role of the staff is to move an issue, and the role and power of committee chairs; all are essential for understanding how to effectively use your power as a sovereign nation. This will also help you develop your messages to these leaders.

Balance local versus national priorities.

Leaders expressed the importance of juggling the double shift of tending to the home front and being in Washington, D.C. to take on important issues at the federal level. Communicating how successful efforts in Washington D.C. impact local on-the-ground issues can help answer many questions from interested citizens.

Engage the media by building trusted relationships.

Based on a long history of being burned, there is a reluctance to trust the media. Several leaders attested that their comfort in dealing with the media comes from the relationships they have built with individual reporters over the years. Talk with other leaders about the relationships they have with reporters who do a good job of reporting fair and balanced stories that represent tribal issues fairly.

WHAT WORKS

Understand how to deliver a message.

Keeping your message short and clear and repeating it at every opportunity is critical to reaching your target audiences. Understanding that saying less can produce better results is an important lesson that was brought up in a number of conversations.

Have the right staff and reporting structure to streamline decision making.

The most confident leaders have clearly defined leadership teams and reporting structures. The roles of the vice chair, chief of staff and lawyer/lobbyist are clear. How best to communicate activities to tribal council, staff and tribal citizens was seen as equally important by leadership. Given the general mistrust in government by citizens, many leaders noted the most dangerous thing to do is to take internal audiences for granted.

Be prepared.

Both leadership and communications officers expressed the need to be prepared. Whether it's background information on people with whom you are meeting, talking points, agendas, schedules or fact sheets that identify and answer difficult questions, tools that help create an increased level of comfort for leadership are important.

Have an agreed upon plan that can serve as a roadmap.

We heard from a number of people that using an agreed upon strategic plan or a strategic communications plan as a guide for making decisions allowed their tribes to have a greater focus. Transparency to all audiences on accomplishments and outcomes stands as an important factor that cannot be overlooked.

You become a better leader when you share your power and your leadership.

As one leader said, "Be a stream, not a reservoir." Understand that effective leadership means distributing power and responsibility whenever possible. As another leader said, "It is important to play the role of referee on tough decisions but let your leadership team lead whenever possible." Leadership training was also seen as invaluable.

Educate your leadership.

There is a need to educate leadership through in-depth trainings on ethics, leadership, financial literacy, federal policy and other issues. There is a consensus that the new wave of emerging leadership will be more effective if there is a clear understanding of their tribal history, the history of relationships with the state and a clear understanding of federal policy.

Electronic communications are an important tool.

Both leaders and communications officers felt the effective use of electronic tools (web, smart phones, YouTube, live streaming, Facebook, etc.) allowed for more timely communications and decision-making. However, apprehension exists as to how and when to implement social media tools, due to the fear of losing control and legal ramifications.

MESSAGING

5 "M"s OF MESSAGING

- Market
- Messages
- Messenger
- Medium
- Materials

CREATING YOUR MESSAGE

- How to craft an effective message

DELIVERING YOUR MESSAGE

- How to deliver an effective message

"Lengthy oratory no longer works as a message deliverer. We must reach and influence our audiences in their environment, through their outlets. Messages must be short and succinct if they are to be effective. Less can be more."

Chairman Ron Allen, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Wash.



MESSAGING

5 “M”S OF MESSAGING

The The 5 “M’s” of Messaging help you answer the who, what, where, when and how of your messages and how to effectively reach the audiences you are targeting. They allow you to contextualize messages to increase their impact.

MARKET—The people you want to reach

Markets are specific; create smaller groups by identifying specific characteristics.

- Who is already engaged in the conversation around this issue?
- Who is missing from the conversation?

MESSAGES—What you want to communicate to your market

Messages should be clear, consistent and geared towards the group you want to reach.

They should be repeated over and over.

- What is your primary objective?
- When people talk about your issue, what do you want them to say?
- What are the top three things you want your market to know about your issue?

MESSENGER—The person you want to communicate your message

Choosing the right messenger means identifying who has influence with your market.

- Who has the ear of the people you want to reach?
- Who does your market trust?
- Who will add credibility to your message?

MEDIUM—How you deliver your message

This is the method you use to communicate your message.

- Do the people you want to reach already use, or have access to, the medium you selected?
- Does the medium give you enough room or time to make your point?

MATERIALS—The tools that reinforce your messages

Depending on which medium you choose to deliver your message, there are a variety of materials from which to choose.

- What materials would be compelling to your market/target audience?
- What types of materials would work with the type of message and information you want to convey?
- What materials would be most effective with which messenger?

MESSAGING

CRAFTING AN EFFECTIVE MESSAGE

Key messages are the two or three most important points you want to get across to your audience. The best messages are succinct, easy to remember and persuasively make the case for your issue or position. Below are some points to keep in mind as you develop your messages.

Make it compelling.

You want your messages to convince audiences that your position on an issue is the right one. Use descriptive, active language that evokes an emotional response and inspires people to take action.



“Mr. Gorbachev,
open this gate!
Mr. Gorbachev, tear
down this wall!”

– President Ronald Reagan

Tie your issue to current events.

In many cases, your issue will relate to tribal, local, state or national current events. To give your messages a broader reach, identify the connection for your audiences and explain why it is relevant.

Tailor messages for different audiences.

Audiences come to the table with different opinions and perspectives. What’s important to one may not be important to another. In Indian Country, you will encounter very diverse audiences like these below. As you identify your audience, determining the objectives for each diverse audience is key, as is asking yourself key questions before engaging with each.

Tribal community: What level of understanding of your issue do they possess? How do you wish to engage them and what action do you want them to take?

Non-Indian communities: How much of a cursory introduction to Indian Country (such as history, terminology, key players, key concepts of sovereignty, a primer of government-to-government relationships) is needed? How much of this background can be provided with ancillary materials?

Policymakers: Knowing that policymakers rely heavily on staffers to brief them, even on complex issues such as the nation-within-a-nation status of tribes, what relationships and materials should you prioritize developing in advance for staffers? When given time with a policymaker, what are the key outcomes you need to advocate for?

Media and press: What are the key talking points that need to be reiterated in order to avoid the media’s tendency to oversimplify and/or sensationalize issues in Indian Country? Who is the most appropriate spokesperson for your organization who would be the best messenger to stay on point? If you could write the headline for the story you want them to tell, what would it be?

Partner organizations: How do you wish to engage partner organizations in collaboration and to enhance the work of all? What is the most appropriate way to convey that while being sensitive to diverse missions and resources?

MESSAGING

DELIVERING YOUR MESSAGE

Native Americans have a long and varied history of storytelling and culturally unique ways of communicating with one another and with other communities. When communicating across cultural lines (whether that is between tribes or to non-Native communities), you should seek to incorporate this rich tradition of storytelling and oral histories into your messaging.

By also following the general tips below, it may be necessary to alter or amplify a storyteller's method of communicating in a way most appropriate with the audience, but in doing so, creating a unique and culturally appropriate example.

No jargon allowed.

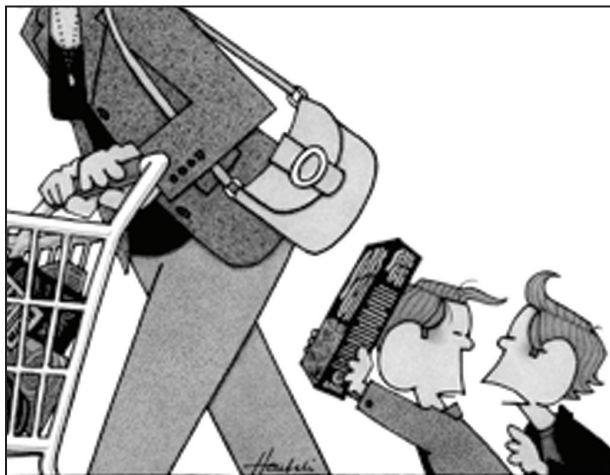
Simply put, speak simply. Acronyms and obscure language may make you appear knowledgeable, but you'll likely leave your audience behind. Instead, use everyday language that is easy to understand, avoid long-winded sentences and make sure that every thing you say harkens back to your key messages.

Be prepared for the tough questions.

There are always multiple sides to an issue. Consider what your "opponents" might say about the issue and be prepared to respond to their comments in ways that support your key messages.

Practice.

Make sure that you know your messages inside out. Role play with colleagues, practice in front of a mirror and simply talk out loud. The last thing you want in an interview is to appear unprepared.



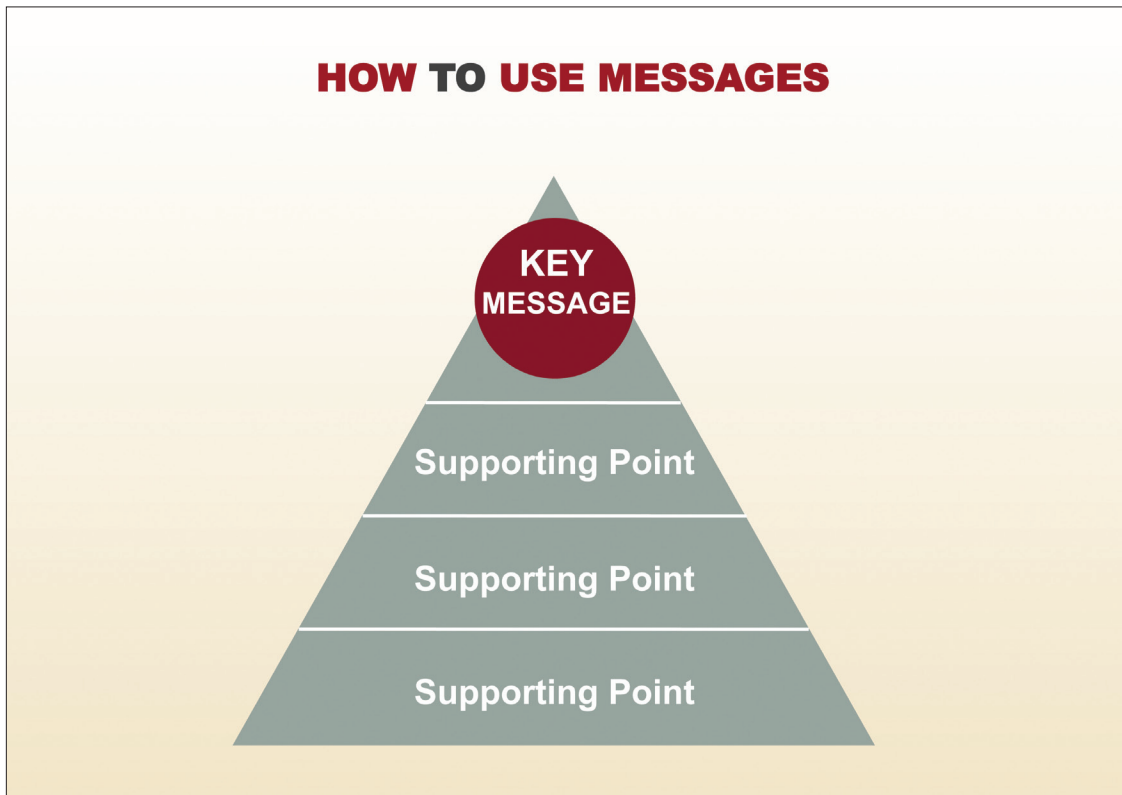
"She'll buy it for us. We just have to stay on message."

HOW NOT TO USE MESSAGES



Unrelated talk buries and undermines your message; the audience will hear the noise and not your message.

MESSAGING
HOW TO USE MESSAGES



Everything said supports and links to the key message, which rests on top with no noise hiding it.

PRESENTATIONS

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PRESENTATIONS

- Public speaking tips

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MEETINGS

- Holding effective meetings

POWERPOINT FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

- The basics

POWERPOINT EXAMPLES

- What to do and what not to do

“In my experience, the best presentations by leadership are those that are clear, concise and to the point. When leadership is comfortable with a presentation, they also are more confident in delivering their messages.”

Todd Antioquia, Sealaska Corporation, Alaska



PRESENTATIONS

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PRESENTATIONS

Public speaking involves not only what you say but how you say it. It also requires knowing your audience and adapting according to it.

Native people are quite accustomed to lengthy introductions that include family relations and histories, identifying one's clan and Indian name, and offering greetings, prayers and often songs in Native languages. In some circumstances, many become offended if this protocol is not followed. Or, at the very least, a speaker who doesn't adhere to these communication mores is viewed as an outsider.

At the same time, such protocols that may be perfectly appropriate in a longhouse or Hogan would not be effective with certain media and political audiences, who are accustomed to succinct messages. Indeed, to a reporter or political staffer who has a limited amount of time (and perhaps limited knowledge of Native Americans), your message could be easily overshadowed by an inflexible adherence to protocol.

It is a difficult balance to strike. Yet, when done successfully, incorporating elements of culturally appropriate communications protocol with direct and well-prepared messaging can produce the most powerful impressions, particularly within those non-Native communities unfamiliar with Native ways.

Below are more tips for successful speaking within or outside of Indian Country.

Connect with your audience.

Build a rapport with your audience. Maintain eye contact, smile and create a comfortable atmosphere.

Speak simply.

The rules for messages also apply to public speaking. Avoid the use of jargon or terms that may be unfamiliar to your audience. If you must use technical language be sure to define it (using simple language!). Try not to overload your audience with too much information; again, think about the main points you want your audience to hear and deliver them simply and clearly.

Pace yourself.

Most people have a tendency to speak quickly in front of groups. In fact, when speaking in front of groups, it's best to speak even slower than feels comfortable. It's always a good idea to pause to let facts sink in or to assess the mood of the room.

Minimize extraneous movements.

Don't let body movements get in the way of your presentation. Pay attention to hand movements, leg twitches—anything that might distract people from what you are saying.

Prepare the room.

Before the presentation, do a test run. Make sure audiovisual equipment is set up and working and that all the props you need (e.g., podium) are in the room.

Save time for questions.

Appreciate that your audience may have questions about certain aspects of your presentation and save enough time for a question and answer session. Be prepared for likely questions and stay open and receptive.

Consider gathering feedback.

Asking participants to evaluate your presentation and provide feedback is a failsafe way to make sure your presentations keep improving. Use a simple rating system so participants can quickly offer their thoughts.

PRESENTATIONS

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MEETINGS

Whether meeting with elected officials, community leaders or government agency staff, there are certain things to consider before, during and after your meeting.

Existing relationships matter.

Personal relationships make a difference and can pave the way for productive and fruitful community engagement. Be sure to build relationships with key elected officials and their staff when you aren't asking for something. Likewise, it is critical that you have relationships with key officials that are different from those that your lawyer or lobbyist might have.

Make sure you know how much time you have.

Find out beforehand how much time you have for your meeting and plan your talking points accordingly. If you have a half-hour meeting, say everything you want to say in 15 minutes, then leave the remaining 15 minutes for Q & A. Ending a meeting early can send a positive message as well.

Tell your story through visuals.

If possible, tell your story through visuals. People like photos and graphics, maps, etc. Avoiding memos will be appreciated. And, if you have to leave paper behind, leave two pages at the most.

Past history shouldn't take up valuable time.

Assume that leaders and public officials will have been briefed before your meeting. This will allow you to avoid using valuable time to review background and history. You can always provide more information if asked for it.

Come prepared.

Make sure you have a focused agenda, you are clear about what your "ask" is, you have spent time reviewing or memorizing your talking points and your materials are ready to be distributed.

Be clear on roles.

If multiple members of your team attend the meeting, be clear about who will deliver which message. Have a plan on who covers each topic before you start your meeting. Planning and coordination can make a tremendous difference in helping you elicit support for your issue.

Reinforce your key messages.

Deliver your key messages at the beginning, middle and end of your presentation. Your messages should come through in your presentation, your materials and your follow-up recap memo or note.

Follow up.

Make sure to follow up with a call or a note so you can answer any lingering questions, as well as express your appreciation for the meeting time. Everything is about relationship building.

PRESENTATIONS

POWERPOINT FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

PowerPoint presentations are an effective way to display key information, but can easily slide into a messy and confusing overload of text. The key thing to remember with PowerPoint presentations is that they are meant to be simple.

Instead of sentences, use phrases and bullet points and then expand upon those in your speaking points. When it comes to PowerPoint, less is more.

General tips

- A simple slide is an effective slide.
- Use multiple slides so each one is readable.
- For detailed graphs, create a summary slide accompanied by a hard copy of the graph.

Fonts

- Use sans serif fonts, such as Arial and Helvetica. They are easier to read than serif fonts.
- Do not use a font size smaller than 18 point.
- Use four to six lines of text per slide.
- Use six to eight words per line.

Graphics and design

- Use ample white space.
- Keep the size of headings, body copy and bulleted text consistent.
- Limit the number of graphics on each slide.
- Generally, left justify bullets.
- Use phrases instead of sentences.
- Print and hand out any graph with more than six columns and six rows.

POWERPOINT WITH IMPACT



This slide's simplicity comes from its clear heading, large font and lean use of text to ensure ample white space.

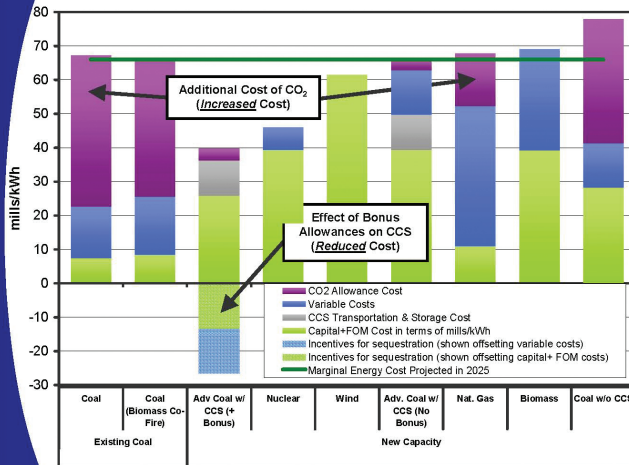
PRESENTATIONS
POOR USE OF POWERPOINT

POWERPOINT THAT WILL PUT YOU TO SLEEP



Near-Term Power Plant Economics with CO₂ Allowance Costs

Estimated Power Plant Electricity Costs in 2025 for Various Technologies
 (includes the cost of CO₂ of ~\$50/metric ton)



- To illustrate the economics of operating existing and new power technologies, the chart shows the cost of various technologies when the cost of various technologies when the cost of projected CO₂ allowance prices are included.
- Projected CO₂ allowance prices of roughly \$50/ton in 2025 increase variable costs of existing plants powered by fossil fuels to the point where many are likely to shut down.
- However, S. 2191 provides significant incentives for CCS technology for coal plants in the form of bonus allowances, resulting in earlier penetration of advanced coal with CCS.

Notes: For the case with bonus allowances, the variable, capital, and fixed O&M costs are actually an aggregate of the solid part and the hashed part but the net cost is only the solid part. For this illustrative calculation, EPA used a conservative efficiency metric for existing coal plants (10,500 Btu/kWh), which most plants currently meet or exceed. The marginal energy cost is defined as the cost of production of the most expensive unit operating in that hour. It includes the cost of fuel, variable O&M cost and the cost of environmental allowances. The capital costs used here are from IPM v3.01, which relies upon EPA capital cost data from AEO 2005. More recently, capital costs have increased with increasing international demand for raw materials. It is not clear how the market will respond to these price increases and whether these increased costs will be sustained over the period of the analysis.

This slide is unreadable and has too much information. Graphs should be distributed as handouts; use PowerPoint to articulate key points or findings from the data.

“How effectively we communicate depends on how well we adapt our long history of storytelling into persuasive messages that move the people we need to move. We must deliver strong and compelling messages consistently if we expect to have an impact on the issues we care about.”

Joe Garcia, former executive board president,
National Congress of American Indians



“...to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people”

— from the Preamble to the NCAI Constitution

This quote from the preamble of NCAI’s constitution is a constant frame of reference for our work as an organization and for the members of NCAI. From the inception of the organization in 1944, the mission to “enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people” has been a primary catalyst for our work.

OUTREACH

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Tips for strengthening relationships through community engagement

ONLINE TIPS

- Techniques for successful online communications

“The first step in engaging your community is to be a good neighbor. Open your doors. Show up at local events. And through it all, add a personal touch.”

Nancy Conrad, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Calif.

“We must be honest and transparent if we want to engage other communities. Always acknowledge the work being done by the person contacting you; strong relationships come from trying to understand another person’s point of view.”

Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy,
The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Ore.



OUTREACH

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Building and strengthening relationships with diverse entities in your community allows you to develop your work in new and meaningful ways. Always take the time to engage your community, using these tips as a guide.

Don't count on the local media to tell your story.

Consider paid advertising and direct mail as a way to tell your story in your own voice while educating both tribal and non-tribal members about your latest news or campaign. Engaging with local media, while important, can take a lot of time and they won't always get your story right.

Know who you need to know—be strategic in the development of relationships.

Identify top opinion leaders (county commissioners, school board members, the local chamber, rotary, faith leaders and others) who have the greatest influence in the community. Cultivate relationships with these groups and, most importantly, educate them on what you are doing, through mailings, briefings and electronic updates. Over time, you can create a "Friends of" list of people that you can count on for support and turn to during times of need.

Conduct community briefings for tribal members, the general community and casino staff.

Often times, tribes interact with the community only when there is a sensitive community issue at hand. By conducting a community open house for tribal and non-tribal members, you can raise awareness around the tribe's latest goals and accomplishments.

Engage tribal members who cannot attend meetings in person.

Choose tools that allow tribal members to stay involved in alternative ways, such as webcasts or cable news channel broadcasting of tribal meetings.

Know your vendors.

Tribes often support the surrounding community through the use of local and regional vendors. Who are they? Are they supportive of your tribe? Make sure you educate the people you are doing business with. They are messengers within your community and should be supportive of what you are doing.

OUTREACH ONLINE TIPS

Your website and online presence is the most accessible and widespread introduction people have to your tribe. Expected and unexpected visitors alike will see your site and will form first and lasting impressions from what is presented. The following techniques will help you set those impressions.

Simple is better.

Prioritize your messages and content. Too much information on your homepage will potentially confuse your readers.

Make sure brand and messaging are consistent with all other communications materials.

If your look and feel and descriptive language are consistent across everything you do, you will have a greater chance of reaching your audience.

Visuals matter.

Not everything needs to be feathers and beads. Playing on perceptions of Native culture and blending traditional images with contemporary messages can resonate across multiple audiences.

All roads should lead to your website.

By using as little language as possible to tell your story, you will draw people in and keep them engaged. And if you can't put all the information in an article, letter or other outreach piece, put the details on the web. Driving everyone to your website will start to build it as a "go to" resource.

Implement a social media strategy.

Developing a way to reach tribal members and other key stakeholders via Facebook, Twitter or other online networking tools is essential. Start with one medium and execute your strategy with timely responses. The caution here is to not take on more than you can handle.

Track website traffic and monitor with Google Analytics.

It is easy to see who is using your website, where they are going within your site and how long they are staying there. With this information on usage, you can effectively plan your updates to the various parts of your website.

Add tools that best tell your story to tribal members and key stakeholders.

Use video, photo galleries, success stories, human interest, etc. Video is becoming a valuable and effective tool to keep people at a site for a longer period of time.

Go to your audiences; don't wait for them to come to you.

Always look for ways to drive audiences to your website on a consistent basis—mention your website in e-newsletters, print newsletters, stories in the newspaper, any printed collateral, etc.

Consider launching a tribal member website.

Members can post information about cultural events and gatherings, and you can utilize news items on both websites to cross-promote information, such as job announcements. This can be a great way to tell individual success stories and make an impact on younger tribal members.

Welcome to Sealaska Corporation
Click to Meet 2010 Board Slate Candidates

Sealaska News
Final Leg of 2010 Tribal Member Shareholder Meetings
June 06, 2010
Last two Meet the Board Slate receptions. [Read more...](#)
High School Students Explore Sealaska Silviculture Practices
June 06, 2010
Craig and Klawock high school students recently took a field trip and explored Sealaska's silviculture practices on Prince of Wales Island. [Read more...](#)
CELEBRATION Begins!
June 04, 2010
Celebration 2010 has brought thousands of dancers and participants to Juneau, Alaska. [Read more...](#)

Land Legislation
Learn about Sealaska's land legislation, view maps, learn quick facts and read valuable reports. Please show your support by taking the following

MEDIA

ENGAGING THE MEDIA

- Techniques for successful engagement with local media

MEDIA INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

- Interview techniques

WRITING A SUCCESSFUL PRESS RELEASE

- Elements of a successful press release

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

“The splintering of the broadcast news media, the decline in print media and the multiplicity of online media leave a gap that Native communications can fill—we must equip and empower our communicators, including our newsletter editors, radio hosts, webmasters, and public relations professionals, in our Indian nations to produce and disseminate our news and information, because if we don’t someone else will, and we already know that story too well.”

Kara Briggs, former president,
Native American Journalists Association



MEDIA

ENGAGING THE MEDIA

Because “media relations” can no longer be relegated to circulating a press release and calling a reporter with a tip, having a multifaceted approach to media is important. This can prove especially challenging in Indian Country, where recent and rapid advances in media and technology have proven especially difficult to keep pace with. These tips are important to adhere to in engaging the local media.

Speak with a unified voice.

Have a group of staff and/or tribal members who can speak with the media with a unified message. Develop the skills of people at appropriate levels who can talk with authority about your tribe. While tribal officials often are strong spokespeople, do not overlook others in the community such as elders, grassroots and spiritual leaders, and those with personal stories that can add much to the human interest element of your story. However, it is absolutely essential to adequately prepare these more non-traditional spokespeople so they represent you with a unified message.

Get to know key reporters in your community.

Build a list of key reporters who cover your issues or related issues. Set up informal meetings to get to know them and vice versa. This will give you a chance to learn about the reporters’ interests and what types of stories they cover.

Act as a resource.

Individuals and organizations that provide concise information and connect reporters with helpful sources will always garner better press than the opposition or competitors. Be in contact with reporters as much as possible to earn trust, develop credibility and break down myths about Native people.

IMPORTANT MEDIA TERMS

Off the record: What you say cannot be used by the reporter in any form. The information given can only be a guide to the next source, who may or may not confirm the information. Be very clear at the beginning of the conversation that everything is off the record and not to be used in any fashion.

On background: The reporter can glean background information from your conversation, but cannot quote or attribute the information to you. Clearly articulate your expectations for how your conversation can be used.

A press release alone is not enough.

Reserve time for pitching a news story to reporters. The press release is the teaser, but the pitch sells the story. Be ready to follow up with additional information, contacts and visuals. And put all your media materials on your website so everyone can be directed to one place.

Work within a reporter's time frame.

When a reporter calls you for information, always ask when his or her deadline is. Respect the reporter's time frame. If you wait too long, he or she may call someone else for a quote or write the story without your input. On the other hand, many tribal newspapers or communications offices are less resourced than their mainstream media counterparts. Information is published less frequently, and one reporter may be responsible for all content. Recognize the need to work within his or her time frame and make every reporter's job as easy as possible by getting as much information to him or her as far in advance as possible and be persistent with calls and emails as follow up.

Exercise caution.

While you may ask to call a reporter back to respond to questions, he or she could try to elicit a response anyway by saying, "Can I just get one quick statement?" Be careful and understand that anytime you're talking to a reporter, every word you say is on the record unless both parties have agreed otherwise.

Relate your issue to a broader issue.

In almost every case, your issue will relate to other important issues in the community. Identify these related issues and highlight them in your messages. If your work has regional, statewide or national impact, it likely has news value. This is particularly true when reporters can cite a study or report that goes against a state or national trend.

MEDIA

MEDIA INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Being interviewed by the media can be a tricky and nerve-wracking experience—but it need not be. Follow these tips for a successful interview.

Prepare.

Never wing an interview. Get your message straight. Role play and have someone lob tough questions your way. Anticipate questions and prepare answers. Be aware of your body language. Spending time preparing for an interview will make a difference.

Set ground rules.

Agree ahead of time what the topic of conversation will be, what questions are allowable, how long the interview will last and where it will be held.

Control the interview.

He who controls the interview controls the conversation. Say what you want to say and keep bringing the conversation back to your messages. Answer questions directly, and then redirect the interview to your messages. If a reporter asks a question that you cannot or will not answer, bridge to your message with a phrase such as, “That is interesting, but the issue is...”

Keep your responses brief.

Sometimes it helps to think in sound bites. Keep your answers short. Once you’ve said what you want to say, stop.

Strike “no comment” from your vocabulary.

“No comment” makes you look guilty and untrustworthy. Instead, articulate why you can’t answer the question—maybe it’s confidential information or you don’t know the answer—and that you will follow up when you are able.

Do not repeat incriminating allegations.

Be careful not to repeat negative questions when you formulate your own answer. For example, if a reporter says, “I heard you are against the Civil Rights Act. Is that true?” Do not say, “It’s not true that I am against the Civil Rights Act.” Instead say, “I fully support the Civil Rights Act.”

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SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

We've heard that your organization is currently experiencing financial challenges. What cutbacks are you planning to implement in response?

Bad answer: We have not decided anything right now.

Good answer: That's interesting that you bring that up, but tonight I'm here to celebrate the graduation of our first language immersion class.

Is it true that your tribal chairman embezzled money from your tribe's operating budget?

Bad answer: I have no comment on that.

Good answer: I have been fully apprised of this matter and have full faith that the investigation will resolve this matter in a timely fashion. As this matter is being resolved, there will be absolutely no interruption in the tribe's programs and services.

How do you respond to those who believe that gaming provides an unfair competitive advantage for Indians based on race?

Bad answer: Gaming does not provide an unfair competitive advantage for Indians based on race.

Good answer: Centuries of federal Indian policy and close and cooperative negotiations with state and local governments have resulted in our ability to create gaming operations that not only create jobs in our communities, including for many, many non-Native people, but also allow us to contribute to the state infrastructure and lead the way in charitable contributions for all within our communities.

How much Indian do you have to be in order to go to school for free, because I hear my great-great grandma was a Cherokee princess?

Bad answer: You are joking, right?

Good answer: Our main office has a list of Internet resources where you can go to research that.

MEDIA

WRITING A SUCCESSFUL PRESS RELEASE

A press release is the hook to your story; it's how you engage people to want to hear more. These guidelines will help you craft an effective—short, snappy and informative—press release.

Always adhere to Associated Press (AP) style writing.

Most news media these days rely on AP style writing, a set of standards established in the *Associated Press Style Book*, available in most bookstores and online.

Be accessible.

Supply contact information. Don't make reporters chase you. If it is easier to reach you on a cell phone, put your cell phone number on the press release. Always provide an email address below the phone number where reporters can reach you, along with a website URL. If reporters want to find out more about your organization, they will expect to find it there.

Less is more.

Understand that less is more. Get to the point quickly and provocatively and don't include the entire history of an issue in a press release. Save that for a background sheet if people are interested in more information.

The headline should be one line.

As a general rule, headlines for press releases should never exceed one sentence or one line of text. Summarize the news using verbs and avoid dependent clauses.

Understand the lead.

The best lead (the first paragraph of your press release) is clever, colorful and succinct without being precious and cute. The lead should be no more than two or three sentences.

A good quote always follows a good lead.

Quotes are reserved for provocative, exciting language that summarizes the key issue. Every press release lead should be followed by an interesting quote that succinctly reinforces the lead.

Local contacts matter.

Quotes from local community sources are better than quotes from officials far removed from the community. If you have a chance to quote a local resident or local authority, quote that person in your press release first. Reporters are more inclined to act on news happening in their hometown. If you are working on a regional issue, provide a local voice for each press release that you send out to different newspapers, where possible.

Prove your point by supporting the lead and quote.

In two or three paragraphs, provide supporting facts that drive your message home. If you have a couple of dry facts, consider bulleting those facts so they stand out.

Keep it short.

There is rarely a need to draft a press release beyond one page. You should prepare a separate document as a background sheet that outlines key facts. The press release is your chance to sell your issue to the media, nothing more.

Write in plain language without jargon.

If you showed your press release to a spouse or friend, would they understand it? If members of your family do not understand it, rewrite the release in plain language, avoiding insider terms or technical jargon. Remember that reporters are writing for a general audience, not special interest groups.

Email press releases as text, not attachments.

While a well-formatted press release is appealing, newspapers are equipped with spam filters and rarely accept unsolicited attachments. To avoid going straight to the junk folder, always send your press release in the body of the email. Avoid glitzy graphics and pictures that take hours to download. Save those for later when you have sold the reporter on your story.


Have a second party proofread your press release.

Nothing can sink a good press release more quickly than an embarrassing typo that makes your organization look amateurish. All press releases require a second pair of eyes for proofreading and review. Ask a co-worker to read your press release first for typos, grammar and then content.

MEDIA
SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release – March 3, 2010

YOCHA DEHE
WINTUN NATION



Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation contributes \$15,891 to the Firefighter Burn Institute Boot Drive

Brooks, Calif. – Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation today contributed \$15,892 from the Tribe's Community Fund to Yolo County's Firefighter Burn Institute's annual "Fill the Boot for Burns" fundraising drive. The fundraiser benefits life-altering burn recovery programs, including Firefighters Kids Camp for young burn survivors and the Little Heroes Preschool Burn Camp.

"The Firefighter Burn Institute is committed to making a difference in the lives of children whose burns have not only scarred their bodies but also their emotional wellbeing," said Yocha Dehe Tribal Chairman Marshall McKay. "The Tribe is proud to help in the healing of these children and to support local firefighters who keep our communities safe. Our Community Fund has given more than \$155,800 since its first donation in 2002."

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation operates its own tribal fire department. The Yocha Dehe Fire Department plays a vital role in emergency response and life safety throughout the Capay Valley and Yolo County by providing full-service fire protection, technical rescue and paramedic emergency services. It serves as a community partner through mutual aid agreements with other fire departments to protect the citizens and land in Yolo County and has become a model department in California.

"The Tribe has always put an emphasis on fire safety and we are proud to support the Fill the Boot for Burns drive and the good work of our fellow firefighters," said Yocha Dehe Fire Chief Mike Chandler.

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation has a longstanding culture of giving. Over the past decade, the Yocha Dehe Community Fund has provided nearly \$18 million in financial support to nonprofit organizations and service providers in Sacramento and Yolo Counties of California. The Yocha Dehe Community Fund was one of the first to be established by a Native American tribe in California and is a recognized leader in local charitable giving.

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Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation is an independent, self-governed nation that supports our people and the community by strengthening our culture, stewarding our land and creating economic independence for future generations. Visit us at www.yochadehe.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Month Day, Year

LOGO

HEADLINE
Use one line for the headline. Keep it short and snappy. The headline should always include the name of the organization/person and what the news release is about. Format the headline in bold. Only capitalize letters that would normally be capitalized.

1ST PARAGRAPH/LEAD
Include city at the start as shown. Include one to two sentences stating exactly what the release is about and include the most important who, what, why, where, when, how and "so what" of the story. This is the lead.

2ND PARAGRAPH
Quote. Quote first, followed by who said it (use "said") and their title.

3RD PARAGRAPH
Descriptive information about release topic (info like the mission of an organization, goals, more info on a specific person or event).

4TH PARAGRAPH
Quote or catchy summary.

5TH PARAGRAPH
Wrap-up. Include website address.

FINAL PARAGRAPH
One or two sentences that describe who you are. Use the same text for every release.

CONTACT INFO
Name, phone, email

ONLINE RESOURCES

LINKS TO NEW MEDIA

The rapid advancements that characterize social media have made this new field seem intimidating, yet it need not be. Chris Nelson, media strategist (of counsel) at Pyramid Communications and a former reporter for The New York Times and Rolling Stone, uses the following websites and tips to build and execute social media strategies.

Facebook (www.facebook.com)

Through a Facebook Fan Page, your tribe can:

- Create an online space for tribal members to informally interact and to merge tribal activities with other aspects of their lives.
- Instantly send news through News Feed: post information, stories and links on the page's wall for members to view and discuss on their terms.
- Connect with outsiders through a common, understood medium. A Fan Page can be an easily accessed introduction to your tribe.

Twitter (www.twitter.com)

Twitter is used for brief—140 character—messages. People use it to share news, to comment on the day's events and to link to relevant websites, as well as to stay up-to-date with reporters, activists, community members and others that stakeholders view as critical.

YouTube (www.youtube.com)

Share video content with your community through YouTube. Posts to YouTube can also be embedded within other sites, like your blog.

Flickr (www.flickr.com)

Flickr allows you to share photos with your community. By "tagging" photos, or assigning them brief descriptive terms (for instance, "powwow," or "dance"), you can help stakeholders find your photos and others like them.

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)

Encourage tribal members to connect to one another on a professional basis to promote networking, sharing of information and professional advancement.

Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com)

With Hootsuite, you can not only manage Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn from a single website, you can manage multiple Twitter accounts at once. Use Hootsuite to schedule tweets for later posting, to review team members' tweets before they get posted, manage workflow and track Twitter statistics.

Social Mention (www.socialmention.com)

Track, through a one-time search or free daily email, what is being said about your tribe on social media sites.

Delicious (www.delicious.com)

Delicious is a social bookmarking site. It allows you to save all your bookmarks in one place, share them with others and see what other people on the web are bookmarking.

Digg (www.digg.com)

Digg is another popular social bookmarking site.

Ning (www.ning.com)

Ning allows you to set up a hub for your own social network. Use it for event organizers or participants, tribal members or other groups working together.

PitchEngine (www.pitchengine.com)

PitchEngine helps users share their news in ways that are conducive to social media sharing. In addition to including the traditional text of a news release, a “social media release” can include downloadable images of your logo or other photos, a ready-made tweet to allow others to share your news with a single click, the ability for readers to comment on your news, links to coverage of your news, your Facebook, Twitter and other profiles, and more.

Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics)

This tool allows you to track website traffic and monitor who is using your website, where they are going within your site and how long they are staying there.

Blog platforms

Use one of these services to create, update and maintain a blog. Blogs offer a more expansive outlet for you to share news, to post links and comment on issues and ideas that are important to your community.

TypePad (www.typepad.com)

WordPress (www.wordpress.com)

Blogger (www.blogger.com)

Blog readers

Stay up to date with all the blogs you follow in one simple place with a blog reader, also known as an RSS aggregator. Whenever a new posting appears on your favorite site, it also appears in your blog reader, saving you the inconvenience of checking into sites repeatedly.

Google Reader (www.google.com/reader)

FeedException (www.feedException.com)

OUR COMMITMENT TO INDIAN COUNTRY

Since Pyramid was founded in 1993, Indian Country has been central to our practice as a cause-driven, full-service communications firm. At Pine Ridge, at Yucca Mountain, in Southeast Alaska and elsewhere, Pyramid has worked to address challenges that affect Native communities. We're honored by the opportunities we've had to help raise awareness of subsistence rights, support land stewardship and protect cultural traditions.

In all our services—and across a range of complex issues—we bring a deep commitment and understanding to our work in Indian Country.

SELECT CLIENTS

- Alaska Federation of Natives
- American Indian Community House
- Antioch University's Center for Native Education
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Colville Confederated Tribes
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Doyon, Limited
- Duwamish Tribe
- First Alaskans Foundation
- The Ford Foundation Native Arts and Culture Initiative
- Honor the Earth
- Huna Totem Corporation
- InterTribal Bison Cooperative
- Lummi Nation
- Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- National Congress of American Indians
- National Native American AIDS Prevention Center
- Native Arts and Cultures Foundation
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Northwest Indigenous Film Festival
- Potlatch Fund
- Red Feather Development Group
- Sealaska Corporation
- United Indians of All Tribes Foundation
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California
- Yakama Nation
- Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation

“If we don’t take the steps necessary to promote an accurate image of American Indians, if we do not tell our story completely and accurately to everyone and anyone who will listen, then the pillars of economic, social, governmental and political success that tribes have begun building over the past 30 years will come crashing down around us.”

Anthony Pico, former chairman of Viejas Band,
Kumeyaay Indians



National
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