

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN OUTLINE

Bonaparte Indian Band

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BONAPARTE INDIAN BAND	2
PROJECT BACKGROUND	3
COMMUNITY NEEDS AND CHALLENGES	6
Community Wellness	6
Governance	8
Economic Development.....	12
Housing	14
Elders and Youth	15
CONCLUSION	17
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	17

BONAPARTE INDIAN BAND

Bonaparte Band is part of the Secwepemc Nation. It is located approximately 10 kilometers west of Cache Creek on about 1878 hectares of land in the interior of BC. The Bonaparte people have existed and prospered within their traditional territory since time immemorial. The Band is separated into nine sections, and has a membership of nearly 900. Approximately one quarter of Band members live on reserve.

Bonaparte is governed by an elected chief and eight council members elected under the Indian Act (1985) election system. Council terms are two years with a recent election taking place on March 6, 2011.

The Bonaparte Indian Band provides governance to and on behalf of its members both on and off reserve. The Band provides a number of programs and services that impact almost all facets of band and community member's lives including: membership, health and social development, education, housing and infrastructure, land management, natural resource management and preservation of language and culture. The Bonaparte Indian Band also facilitates economic development through an economic development corporation and provides political and intergovernmental representation.

Bonaparte's mission is to provide the best possible quality of life for its community members by delivering programs and services in a fair and equitable manner; by facilitating economic development and new employment opportunities; by protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural environment; and by respecting and preserving Bonaparte's culture and traditional values.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Bonaparte Indian Band accessed funding through the New Relationship Trust's Capacity Initiative Program to fund the development of a Comprehensive Community Plan Outline, which is the first step in the Band's comprehensive community planning process. Based on community input, this Outline identifies critical issues and concerns that will be addressed in the larger Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP).

Bonaparte Band retained Lori Pilon and Deb Biddiscombe from Knucwentwécw Development Corporation (KDC) to facilitate the CCP Outline process. KDC is an entirely First Nations owned development corporation providing planning and consulting services to First Nations communities. Lori Pilon holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration, and has extensive experience working in senior management positions with First Nations organizations. Lori is of Metis descent and lives on the Skeetchestn reserve. Deb Biddiscombe is a member of the Canadian Institute of Planners and has been working almost exclusively with First Nation communities for over 15 years. Deb has extensive experience working with band councils, staff and community members to develop realistic and achievable community plans. Jenny Allen and Vi Antoine, Bonaparte Indian Band members, were contracted on a part-time basis to arrange the community sessions, liaise with band members and provide administrative support to the project.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The CCP Outline project commenced in August of 2011 with a preliminary start-up meeting between KDC and the Chief and Council to confirm project goals and objectives and to set up a plan for regular reporting and communication. The start-up meeting was followed by sessions with Band managers and staff, elders, youth, families and individual council members. Eleven sessions were held throughout the process.

Chief and Council did not attend the staff and community sessions to ensure that community members felt comfortable to speak freely about issues of concern without the fear of being critical of their community leaders. For anyone that was unable or chose not to attend one of the community sessions, submissions in writing were accepted. Seven written submissions were received.

In order to further engage youth in the community a contest was held. The theme of the contest was “*What is Your Vision of Bonaparte in 2020*” and invited children and youth from 6 – 16 to submit art, essay, photos, etc. to show what they would like Bonaparte to look like in the future. Two 32 Gb iPod Touches were awarded for best art work in two specific age categories (6-11 and 12-16).

To facilitate attendance, the community sessions were advertised in advance through the Band’s website, newsletters and direct contact; transportation and childcare was offered as required; and refreshments were served. A record of attendance was kept, and following each session ‘Key Points’ papers were drafted.

The following consultation sessions were held:

Date	Session	Attendance
October 5	Band Managers and Staff	10 staff members
October 22	Elders	13 elders
November 15	Youth	9 youth
January 14 and 15	Families	28 community members representing 7 family groups
February 11	Council	2 Council members and 2 elders

This consultation approach resulted in clearly identified community challenges that should be addressed in the second phase of the CCP process, which involves the development of a broader and more strategic Comprehensive Community Plan. Identification of these challenges was not intended to be critical of any individual or group, but is meant to be constructive so that the community as a whole can take responsibility and work together to address these challenges.

This CCP Outline was provided in draft form to Chief and Council, Band staff and community members to provide an opportunity to review and confirm that the needs and challenges facing the Bonaparte community are accurately outlined in this document. All involved believe that this Outline provides an accurate description of challenges the community is faced with and that addressing these challenges will assist Bonaparte to become a stronger, healthier and more prosperous community.

The community's needs and challenges are set out in the following section.

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

This Outline specifically identifies areas of concern for Bonaparte community members. It was emphasized throughout the consultation process that this Outline Phase of the CCP process was not meant to produce an actual CCP. It was understood by all participants that the Outline Phase of the CCP process was to identify and discuss, in general terms, critical issues facing the community in order to identify specific issues and challenges for inclusion in the full CCP.

During the various consultation sessions Band members were asked to look to the future and identify what their goals and objectives were for the community. Every effort was made to keep the meetings positive, productive and forward looking.

Where appropriate, potential solutions suggested by community members are noted, largely to ensure that they are captured in this document. The issues identified herein for inclusion in the larger CCP process are not presented in order of importance, and all issues should be addressed to the extent possible in order to increase governance capacity and create a healthier, more sustainable community.

Community Wellness

Member Goals Identified:

- Community healing
- Healthier lifestyles
- More inclusive of members of all ages
- Reduced addictions and dependencies
- Less emphasis on family and more emphasis on community

An important issue that was raised consistently in all of the sessions was that the community was split along family lines. Participants indicated that this split had a negative impact on many aspects of community life including community gatherings, annual general meetings, elections, and the way that services, recognition awards, funding and employment opportunities were allocated. The family divisions have been going on for longer than most people could remember and are being passed on through the generations.

The positive message that came out of the discussions is that community members recognize that this family divisiveness is not healthy for their community and expressed a desire and willingness to make positive changes. Several participant groups felt that a return to traditional values and cultural practices would help to resolve the conflict. They also felt that elders would play a vital role in guiding the community to a healthier place as the Council and community looked to them for advice and to pass on their knowledge of the language, history and culture to the children and youth.

Specific suggestions from community members include the following:

- Personal and family issues should be set aside and Bonaparte Indian Band needs to focus on healing of the leadership, staff and members to build a healthy community
- Build on what all families have in common such as celebrating our children's accomplishments, supporting the youth, participating in sporting events, pride in our new health facility, and learning and speaking the Secwepemc language
- Ensure appropriate policies and processes are in place and apply them fairly to all community members to avoid perceived favoritism or conflict of interest in the provision of services and in hiring

Drug Use

Several community groups expressed concern that illegal drugs were being sold and used extensively in the community. They indicated that there were a number of 'drug' houses located on the reserve and expressed concern about the negative impacts these houses, and the people that these houses attract, have on the health and safety of the community. Some youth participants advised that Bonaparte is bad for drugs and alcohol abuse; and "that alcohol, ecstasy and pot are popular and start as early as grade 7."

Some steps that were suggested by community members to address this issue include:

- Establish and enforce policies and bylaws that require that council and employees be clean and healthy;
- Policies to provide for supporting individuals through counseling, treatment and holding their position for a limited amount of time, for those individuals that make an effort to make a change
- Host and support healthy activities and events for all members of the community
- Provide a drug and alcohol worker and services; ensure confidentiality
- Eliminate drug houses from the community
- Provide security from the elements of drug abuse

Governance

Member Goals Identified:

- Lead by example
- Put community ahead of family
- Separation of governance and administration
- Separation of governance and economic development

Leadership

Council, staff and community members all indicated that having a strong and healthy leadership was essential for the community to move forward. They felt that the Council must work together to provide leadership for the community, and that Council members must be clean and healthy to do this important job. Participants indicated that Council members are seen as role models in the community and should lead by example, treating everyone fairly and with respect, and conducting themselves professionally at all times.

Council's role as the political and policy-making body for the Band was also discussed. Participant's advised that Council members are often involved in administrative and operational matters which undermines staff and detracts from the leadership role Council was elected to carry out.

Some suggestions that were made to address leadership challenges include:

- Provide separation of roles between politics and administration including council members not holding jobs with the band
- Employees and Council members to conduct themselves professionally at all times including respecting confidentiality, not gossiping, and showing respect for all community members
- Ensure all council and all employees are clean and healthy (free of drug and alcohol abuse) through entrance and random drug/alcohol testing
- Provide training as required to ensure Chief and Council have sound leadership skills in areas such as negotiating, planning, conflict of interest, financial management, and the Indian Act.

Communication

Communication with Band members was also deemed of utmost importance. The recent development of the Band's website, the use of facebook to provide electronic notices, and the monthly newsletter are all positive initiatives that helped improve access to information for Band members; however in order to ensure all band members receive Band news in a timely fashion additional methods of communicating should also be employed. Most participants appreciate that technology provides an efficient means of communicating, particularly with Band members who do not live on reserve, however many Band members would like to

see and hear from their Chief and Council directly and more regularly, and to have two-way conversations.

Suggestions from community members included:

- Provide timely communication to all band members. Regular general band meetings, personal communication, home visits, and attendance at family events and celebrations by Chief and Council were the preferred methods of communication, supplemented by the band's newsletter, website and other social media.
- Increase consultation with band members by having two-way communication

Election Code

Bonaparte's elections are currently held pursuant to the Indian Act, which sets out the eligibility for nomination to run for council and the number of council members to be elected which is dependent on the population of the band. Community members indicated that a custom election code had been drafted in the past however had not been ratified by the band membership. There was general agreement that it would be desirable to establish a custom election code and some of the changes suggested include fewer council members, longer terms, and more stringent criteria for eligibility to run for council.

Additional participants' comments included the following:

- Develop an effective electoral system that enables the community to elect educated, capable representatives to Chief and Council
- Develop and adopt election regulations to set out eligibility to run for office i.e. must not owe money to the band, be employed by the band, have sued the band or have a criminal record; must pass drug and alcohol test; should be knowledgeable about the community, culture and heritage
- Pay council members appropriately so that they do not have to also work for the Band
- Provide orientation, including meetings with INAC Funding Services Officer, for newly elected Chief and Council

Administration

Member Identified Goals:

- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Job descriptions and performance reviews
- Clear lines of reporting
- Enforcement of existing policies, bylaws, etc.

Effective and efficient Band administration was also identified by participants as critical for the community. Although there are a number of dedicated and long term staff members, there has also been a large turnover of key staff at the band office. Additionally, the current Chief Administrative Officer has been hired on an interim basis, and staff understands that the Chief Financial Officer is also not there for the long term, however there is an opportunity to mentor band members.

For a variety of reasons, including but not limited to the change of staff over time and the interim nature of the current administration, there has been a lack of central over-arching direction. This has resulted in a lack of policy enforcement and lack of consistency in program delivery. Staff capacity building, employment and contract certainty, long-term integrated planning, clarification and separation of council and administration roles, and Council's support of staff are needed.

Some suggested steps to address issues with administration are:

- Develop a strategic plan, including departmental work plans with time lines, to provide guidance for managers and to ensure accountability
- Ensure all employees have job descriptions, performance plans and timely performance evaluations; hold regular management and staff meetings
- Ensure all employees have appropriate life and technical skills to perform their jobs, provide basic training and professional development to support where appropriate
- Hire qualified staff and pay them accordingly, and provide meaningful positions to bring capable and educated band members home

Financial Management

While the finance department was seen as being managed well with capable staff, several participants expressed concern about program dollars from forestry and other programs being used to fund deficits, and felt that they were not fully informed of the Band's financial position. Rent arrears in the housing department were also a major area of concern. Participant's felt the Band should have financial bylaws and policies in place to ensure that the Band was adhering to sound financial practices and to increase accountability and transparency to Band members.

Band member's suggestions include:

- Develop financial plan to ensure the band does not incur a deficit and to provide accountability to community members
- Provide timely financial information to band members including annual audits of all band funds including those in DIA and other programs, and the economic development corporation
- Develop annual department budgets and provide timely year-to-date financial statements for internal management and control

Economic Development

Member Identified Goals:

- Clear support for identifying economic opportunities
- Need to have functioning economic development corporation
- Need to move forward with necessary feasibility studies and financial analysis of opportunities
- Need to generate jobs for people with all kinds of experience and education, including professionals

Economic Development was also identified in all sessions as being very important for the community. Bonaparte is currently almost totally dependent on INAC funding, which is not keeping pace with inflation or growth. Sustainable economic development can provide the community with training, meaningful employment, services, efficient use of the Band's land and resources, and investment. Chief and council, staff and community members are supportive of pursuing viable economic initiatives.

The Band has formed a development corporation however it is not currently operational. The next step for the Band is to appoint members to the Board of Directors with representation from the band, council, business and professional; and to staff the corporation with an independent chief executive officer that will be self sustaining. A well qualified CEO with good business management skills should be hired.

A number of potential initiatives were suggested, from cultural and conference development at Loon Lake to unique carbon-neutral forestation projects to development (perhaps a winery) at Rocky Point. Prior to moving forward with any development a business plan would be required to ensure the venture is viable.

Community suggestions for economic development included the following:

- Develop an economic development strategic plan that will include a mix of short- term revenue generators and longer-term more sustainable ventures
- Identify, assess and prioritize business opportunities
- Develop business plans for all band ventures
- Designate land as required for development
- Establish a sound structure that can provide timely decision making, sound financial management and accountability, and administrative policies including fair and transparent hiring practices
- Provide training and employment for band members including, but not limited to, life skills, academic upgrading, trades, equipment and technical training
- Identify 'seed' monies
- Establish partnerships

- Retain control over natural resource extraction i.e. mining, forestry
- Invite guest speakers and go on field trips to learn from other bands' successful ventures

Housing

Member Identified Goals:

- Review and amend, if necessary, housing policies
- Enforce housing policies in a fair and transparent manner
- Identify future housing demand and develop program for meeting demand

Bonaparte has a housing program that aims to provide safe, affordable and appropriate housing for its community members however concern was raised regarding the sustainability of the program and the lack of support for enforcement of housing policies. Currently, there are a number of people who do not pay rent - without consequence. This lack of enforcement was seen as unfair to community members that do pay their rent, as well as a drain on limited band revenues. Community members felt that the fair and consistent enforcement of policies, up to and including eviction, is critical to the success of a fair and sustainable housing program.

Other concerns that were raised included that all homes do not have access to safe, potable water, and that safety features such as smoke detectors and carbon monoxide monitors are not provided in all homes. There was also uncertainty about house ownership and whether insurance coverage and maintenance was being provided by the Band.

Finally, participants felt that additional housing was required and expressed an interest in exploring a variety of housing forms to better meet individual needs i.e. single storey, single-family, multi-family and elders housing (independent living and extended care). The availability of additional housing on reserve was also seen as desirable to support band members who wish to move back to the reserve but are unable to due to lack of suitable housing.

Community members suggested the following:

- Development and enforcement of housing policies including collection of rents (eliminating arrears), no subletting, screening of applicants
- Provide good financial management and transparency
- Deliver high quality RRAP program
- Provide for safety and building inspections by certified professionals
- Provide handicapped access for new and existing homes where appropriate
- Employ band members in the construction, renovation and maintenance of housing by training carpenters, trades and inspectors
- Provide safe potable water supply

Elders and Youth

Member Identified Goals:

- Elders and youth are very important to the community, special programs and services must attend to their specific needs
- Elder housing may be needed
- Youth programming needs to be consistent and involve youth in decision making

While community members felt that specific programs and services are required for both the elders and for the youth, they also felt there is a need and benefit for providing opportunities for exchange between elders and youth in order to preserve culture, language, traditions, lineage and history. Suggestions included:

- Provide opportunities for youth and elder to interact and do cultural activities i.e. hunting, fishing, beading, making regalia, making baskets, sweats and speaking the language
- Support elders to preserve and teach the language by recording the language and traditional practices
- Provide a cultural/spiritual camp at Loon Lake with traditional activities in Secwepemc language

Elders

Concern was expressed that many elders are living below the poverty line, and others are due to retire but have no pensions in place to sustain them. The Band provides some work programs, however many elders have worked hard all of their life and should not be required to work into their 70s.

Specific elders program suggestions included:

- Prioritize service provision to ensure elders basic health and safety needs are being met

Youth

Youth saw accessibility to educational funding and programs as important to their future, however they still wanted to stay grounded in their culture and traditions. They saw themselves going away to get an education and have a career; and needed a self-sustaining reserve economy, meaningful employment opportunities, and access to quality housing in order to return to the reserve. Also, in order to improve the quality of life on reserve they would like to see an improvement to recreation facilities.

Specific suggestions from the community sessions include the following:

- Support youth by providing opportunities and supporting their participation in sports, celebrations, community events, and field trips i.e. hockey games, Edmonton
- Develop and maintain community facilities such as gym, community hall, weight room, playground, rink, community garden
- Include all youth in communications, services, recognition and funding; be inclusive and fair
- Encourage and support parental involvement
- Support the youth worker to have greater involvement and to provide more organized activities for the youth
- Encourage and support youth to graduate

CONCLUSION

The Comprehensive Community Plan Outline process has been a positive and productive process involving Chief and Council, staff, elders, youth and many community members. All participants displayed a genuine interest in seeing the community become stronger, healthier and more prosperous. They have also expressed an ongoing commitment to positive change and to continuing the CCP process.

The next phase involves developing the larger, more strategic Comprehensive Community Plan. This Outline and the community input received through this process will inform the larger CCP which will include the community's vision for the future as well as specific steps that will be taken in order to realize that vision.

An application for funding has been submitted to INAC's *BC Capacity Initiative* to continue with a formal CCP as well as to build capacity internally in the areas of governance, planning and management in order to ensure that Chief and Council, staff and Band members have the skills to actively participate in the development and implementation of the CCP.

The next steps in the CCP process include:

1. Community plan training for Chief, Council, management and planning coordinator and/or planning committee
2. Capacity building workshops for Chief, Council, management and planning coordinator and/or planning committee
3. Community research and analysis
4. Development and adoption of the CCP
5. Integration of CCP into Council's five-year work plan
6. Implementation and ongoing evaluation

This project has created support and momentum for positive change. Band members have indicated that some programs and plans have been started in the past, however have not been finished or followed through on, so it is vitally important to maintain the community support and momentum by moving forward as quickly as possible to complete and implement the CCP.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to sincerely thank Chief and Council, staff and community members for their support of and contributions to this important community planning project.