



PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

# 2017–2020 Communication Plan Strategy



diverse. vast. abundant.

## Preamble

The Peace River Regional District Communication Plan describes the goals, objectives, strategies and tactics that will assist the organization to better connect with its citizens. The PRRD is striving toward communication excellence, which includes transparent and two-way communication and engagement practices. This plan is a living document and will be reviewed annually.

## Introduction

This plan outlines the Peace River Regional District's open and transparent approach to corporate communications. The goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics outlined here were developed as part of the audit of the 2013-2016 Communication Strategy. The audit, which took place in August and September 2016, included:

- » Feedback received through interviews and surveys of PRRD residents, stakeholders, staff, and Board Directors
- » Review of existing channels, materials and tactics

This strategy provides a framework for the entire organization to enhance its communication efforts, improve stakeholder relationships, and encourage mutually beneficial dialogue and action as part of ongoing public participation processes.

All PRRD employees, as well as the Board of Directors, have a role in ensuring this plan and its principles of open and transparent communication are carried out.

## A Snapshot: Where we are and where we're headed

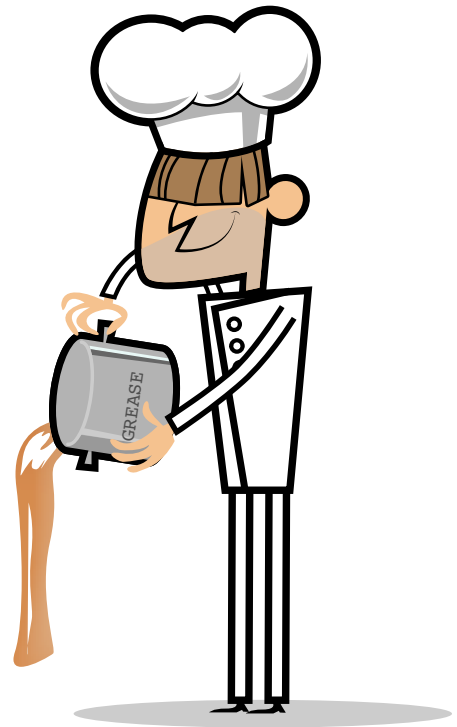
The Peace River Regional District has undergone significant improvement in its delivery and management of corporate communications, both internally and externally. The Region's first three-year Communication Strategy was launched in 2013, and set a solid foundation for a culture of communication excellence.

Moving forward, the PRRD will continue to work toward an environment that recognizes open and transparent two-way communication models, builds on existing framework, and utilizes methodology of recognized professional organizations such as International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) and Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), among others.

The audit highlighted the continuing need for staff to learn about PRRD business, in particular new projects and service changes occurring in other parts of the organization. Continued face-to-face staff meetings, as well as a more consistent approach to departmental information flow, would help employees develop a better understanding of higher level activities and provide an opportunity for synergies between departments and work groups.

The audit also identified the need to increase the capacity of the PRRD communications function. Currently all work—both day-to-day tactical activities, and longer term strategic planning and relationship building, are undertaken by a sole communications manager. A full time communications coordinator could take on much of the day-to-day tactical activities, and free the manager's time to focus on longer range policy planning and strategies, as well as necessary relationship building. This new position would also provide necessary vacation backfill for the manager as well as dedicated support during crises.

With this plan as a foundation and guideline, the PRRD will continue to improve organizational trust and strengthen two-way communication channels that will allow the Board, staff and citizens to seek common ground and mutual understanding.

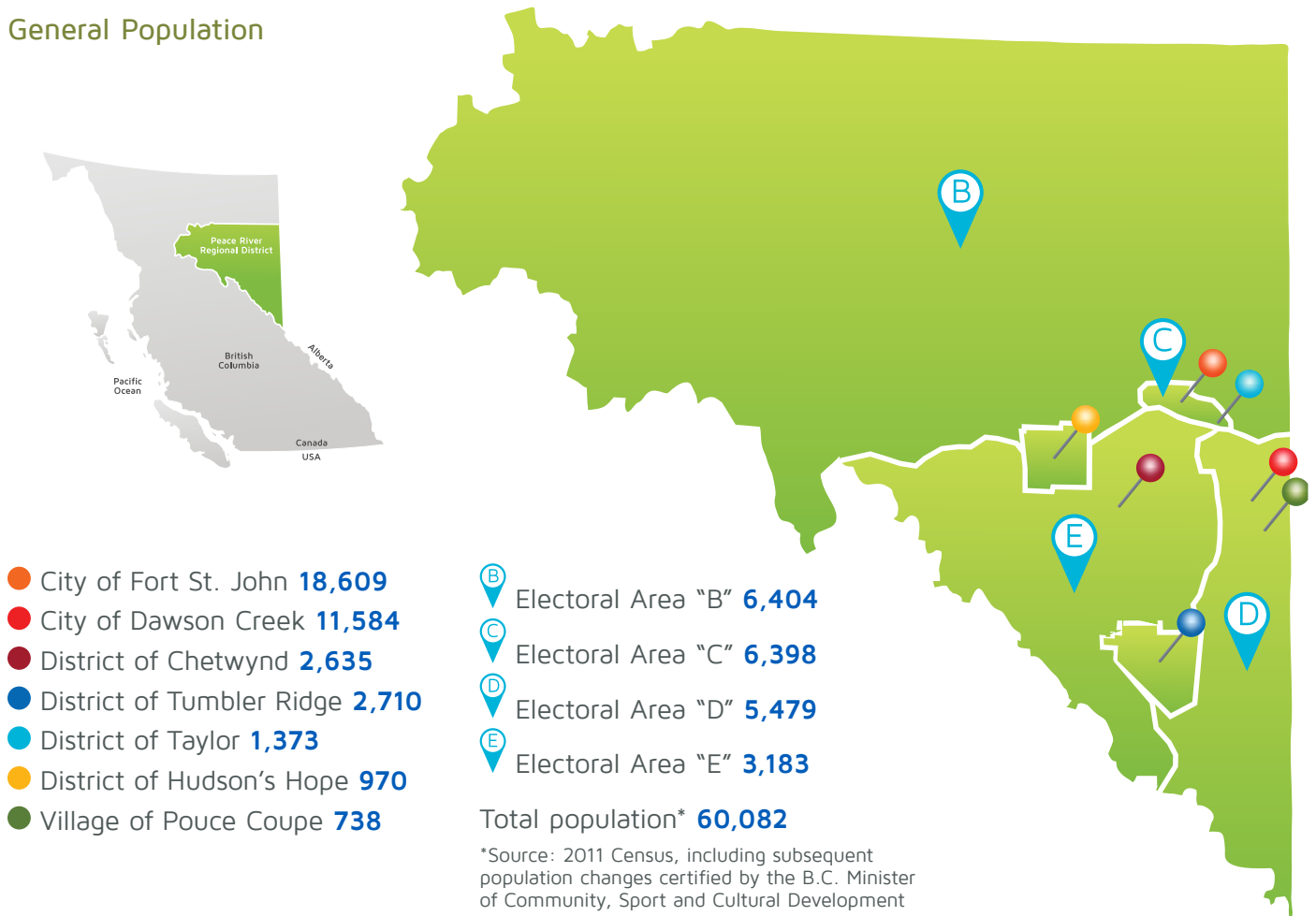


*Don't dump that grease: Cooking Kyle is one of the stars of the PRRD's YouTube series of videos.*

# Audiences

The Peace River Regional District communicates and engages with numerous audiences. These audiences fall into a number of groups and categories and include:

## General Population



## Board of Directors

There are 12 members on the Board of Directors: Eight are appointed from municipalities, and four are elected to Electoral Areas.

## Regional District Employees

The PRRD employs 34 staff that are based at three locations (Dawson Creek, Fort St John, Charlie Lake).

## Stakeholders

A wide spectrum of business, community organizations and groups. This includes, but is not limited to, other levels of government, First Nations, and employees of the PRRD's member municipalities, regulatory bodies and agencies, economic development organizations, industry and business associations, PRRD contractors, recreation groups, community groups, environmental interest groups, and tourism associations.

## News media

The Peace River area is serviced by a number of local and regional media outlets. Over the past few years many of the print newspapers have either ceased operation or publish less frequently in favour of online news publication.



**Alaska Highway News** | [www.alaskahighwaynews.ca](http://www.alaskahighwaynews.ca), print edition Thursday, up to 9,000 copies, serving Dawson Creek, Fort St John, Fort Nelson, Pouce Coupe, Cecil Lake, Goodlow, Charlie Lake, Montney, North Pine, Rose Prairie, Taylor, Hudson's Hope, Baldonnel, Farmington, Chetwynd, and Tumbler Ridge.

**The Mirror** (Dawson Creek) | [www.dawsoncreekmirror.ca](http://www.dawsoncreekmirror.ca), Weekly print edition (Thursday)

**Coffee Talk Express** | Chetwynd, Tumbler Ridge, Dawson Creek, Hudson's Hope



**CJDC TV** | [www.cjdctv.com](http://www.cjdctv.com), CTV Two/Bell Media broadcasting from Dawson Creek and available on Channel 5 (VHF) and 31 (UHF), produces local newscasts weekdays 6-7pm and 11pm-12am.

**CHET TV** | [peacefm.ca/chet-tv/](http://peacefm.ca/chet-tv/), community television serving Chetwynd



**Peace FM** | [peacefm.ca](http://peacefm.ca), 94.5 Chetwynd & 104.1 Dawson Creek

**CJDC 890AM** "The Peace Country's Country" | Dawson Creek

**Moose FM** (CKFU 100.1 Fort St John) | [www.moosefm.ca](http://www.moosefm.ca), affiliated with [energeticcity.ca](http://energeticcity.ca)

**Sun FM** | Fort St John and Dawson Creek, Top 40 music, 98.5FM

**The Bear** | Fort St John, rock, 101.5FM

**CBC Daybreak North** | Weekdays 6am-8:30am. CBC AM



Online news includes mainstream media outlets such as [CBC.ca](http://CBC.ca) and [Globalnews.ca](http://Globalnews.ca), as well as dedicated local news outlets:

**Energeticcity.ca** | Online news with a focus on Fort St John area; affiliated with Moose FM

## Other audiences

People outside the PRRD's boundaries, including neighbouring municipalities and districts, resource industry workers who reside elsewhere, outside agencies and associations with business interests in the PRRD, among others.

# The Peace River Regional District Guiding Principles for Effective Communication

- 1 Provide information that is timely, clear, appropriate and accessible
- 2 Connect with citizens using channels and tactics that they prefer
- 3 Ensure appropriate and accessible feedback mechanisms are available
- 4 Identify and support opportunities for engagement to enlighten and inform public decision
- 5 Constantly strive for communication excellence through regular measurement and evaluation of efforts

## **GOAL 1:**

# **Increase the understanding of PRRD business and services**

### **1.1 Foster an understanding of the role of a regional government in the lives of citizens and stakeholders**

#### **1.1.1 Develop a governance literacy campaign the explains “What is the Peace River Regional District?”**

- » Create a roster of PRRD informative topics and share on regular rotation (proactive) using social media, video, existing channels
- » Find opportunities for staff and board members to speak at community events, business forums and service club meetings to raise the awareness of PRRD business and current issues
- » Use key messaging from this campaign in other materials in order to support the PRRD role and administrative/engagement process

### **1.2 Support a transparent and open Board**

#### **1.2.1 Explore taping/broadcasting board meetings, and link video clips to minutes/decisions**

#### **1.2.2 Investigate offering public input opportunities at board meetings**

## **GOAL 2:**

# **Support and encourage improved communications**

### **INTERNAL:**

#### **2.1 Increase opportunities for employees to connect and share information**

##### **2.1.1 Continue quarterly all-staff meetings:**

- » Allow more agenda time for department roundtables and internal committee news
- » Minimize time spent on narrow discussions that impact few staff

##### **2.1.2 Ensure managers are updating their staff through regular (weekly) departmental meetings**

#### **2.2 Ensure employees understand the use of and have access to coordinated and branded tools**

##### **2.2.1 Promote use of new and existing communication tools**

- » Reinforce use of WINK, templates, branding through consistent reminders
- » Monitor and coach internal use of templates and brand elements
- » Promote use of PRRD visual standards guide to all staff

#### **2.3 Increase employees' communication skills and expand the communications capacity of the PRRD**

##### **2.3.1 Explore establishing guidelines for customer service excellence that are shaped by internal corporate values and align with the PRRD's mission, vision and values in order to create a more accountable and transparent communication flow**

##### **2.3.2 Develop a response / follow up system with citizens that allow for information sharing (eg to report an issue) such as a standardized "thank you" return email, an opportunity to receive future updates, or other mechanism that shows feedback was received and heard**

##### **2.3.3 Ensure staff, in particular front-line positions, receive timely information on PRRD and Board business, issues and projects**

##### **2.3.4 Increase the capacity of the PRRD communications function by adding a full-time communication coordinator position**

### **BOARD:**

#### **2.4 Develop an understanding of the organization's communications function and its role in helping to build transparent and engaged relationships with its stakeholders**

##### **2.4.1 Use the communication section of board reports to outline communication and engagement requirements**

- » Prepopulate template with simple example text
- » Brief senior managers on utilizing this section including outlining strategies, and using the Communications Manager as a resource

##### **2.4.2 Tie the PRRD strategic plan to current and upcoming projects, and to individual/departmental work plans**

#### **2.5 Increase the knowledge of PRRD communications and engagement of new Board members**

##### **2.5.1 Create a better understanding of roles of board, staff, and the regional district**

- » Include an overview of the communications function for new Board members' onboarding package for next incoming elected board (2018)

##### **2.5.2 Provide 'Communication and Public Participation for Decision Makers' training for Directors with a focus on messaging, board roles and the IAP2 public participation spectrum**



## **GOAL 3:**

# **Increase and improve opportunities to communicate with citizens and stakeholders**

### **3.1 Improve how information is communicated to citizens and stakeholders**

#### **3.1.1 Continue to strive for proactive communication tactics**

#### **3.1.2 Continue with current channel “mix” to achieve maximum reach**

- » Fine-tune content and language to simplify message, underscore PRRD role and position

#### **3.1.3 Continue use of social media channels and post frequency schedule**

- » Continue and expand current roster of weekly post topics such as “Trashy Tuesday” (solid waste and recycling information) and “Weedy Wednesday” (invasive plant news)

#### **3.1.4 Update Social Media Policy**

- » Update existing interim social media policy to reflect use of social media to current usage

### **3.2 Create clear messaging that is accessible for all audiences**

#### **3.2.1 Develop language and tone guidelines to simplify messaging**

- » Use these guidelines for new and reworked information materials
- » Utilize photos, charts or graphs instead of lengthy text wherever possible and feasible
- » Revamp About Us, Director sections of website to simplify page layout and language, create clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities

### **3.3 Establish opportunities to connect with citizens face-to-face**

#### **3.3.1 Increase attendance at business events, community fairs, and similar events, and use these events to showcase PRRD business and engagement opportunities**

## GOAL 4:

# Support and encourage engaged and involved citizens

### 4.1 Develop a public engagement strategy in order to guide consistent and transparent consultation across the PRRD

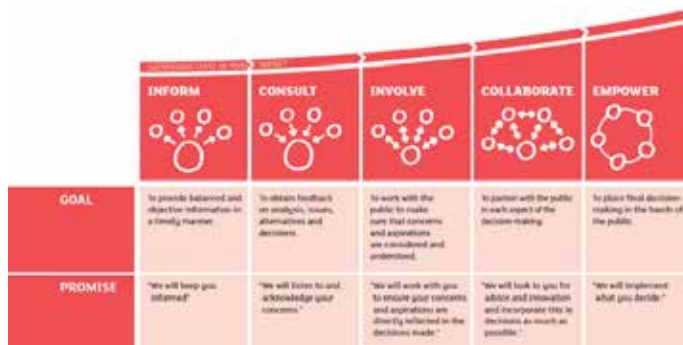
- 4.1.1 Develop a consultation and engagement policy to formalize the PRRD’s objectives and engagement processes
- 4.1.2 Create an internal toolkit/toolbox for staff to introduce the IAP2 principles to community groups
- 4.1.3 Continue to utilize IAP2 principles and PRRD engagement strategy templates for notification and public consultation processes

### 4.2 Cultivate a trusting and respectful community of public participation with citizens and stakeholders

- 4.2.1 Continue to develop and formalize a network of “Community Champions” — local area volunteer “keepers” residing in remote or hard-to-reach areas of the PRRD that agree to fan-out communications information to their community
  - » Volunteers who agree to forward PRRD information emails, put up posters, or other related activities that support PRRD communications in their local area
  - » Community Facebook page (or other social media platform) administrators that agree to share PRRD news, either by sharing PRRD posts, or allow PRRD communications staff access to post pertinent information on their pages
- 4.2.2 Look for opportunities to gain public trust by identifying emerging issues and apply IAP2 principles to the engagement process.
  - » Discover the consensus on issues and implement collaborative solutions in a timely fashion
- 4.2.3 Provide ‘Communication and Public Participation for Decision Makers’ training for Directors with a focus on messaging, board roles and the IAP2 public participation spectrum

### 4.3 Provide opportunities for citizens to engage with the PRRD in a two-way dialogue

- 4.3.1 Create feedback mechanism for simple issues
  - » Develop an online widget and/or an app that can be used by residents to communicate simple or routine information, such as maintenance problems, to the PRRD
- 4.3.2 Continue to use and promote the ‘Engage!’ section of prrd.bc.ca to provide outlines of all projects, programs and public participation opportunities



The IAP2 spectrum of public participation  
SOURCE: placespeak.org

# Timeline

| ITEM  | DESCRIPTION   | TIMELINE  |
|-------|---|-----------|
| 1.1.1 | Develop a governance literacy campaign "What is the Peace River Regional District?"   | 2017-2018 |
| 1.2.1 | Explore taping/broadcasting board meetings, and link video clips to minutes/decisions   | 2017      |
| 1.2.2 | Investigate offering public input opportunities at board meetings   | 2017      |
| 2.1.1 | Continue quarterly all-staff meetings   | Ongoing   |
| 2.1.2 | Ensure managers are updating their staff through regular (weekly) departmental meetings   | Ongoing   |
| 2.2.1 | Promote use of new and existing communication tools   | Ongoing   |
| 2.3.1 | Explore establishing guidelines for customer service excellence that are shaped by internal corporate values and align with the PRRD's mission, vision and values in order to create a more accountable and transparent communication flow                              | 2018      |
| 2.3.2 | Develop a response / follow up system with citizens that allow for information sharing (eg to report an issue) such as a standardized "thank you" return email, an opportunity to receive future updates, or other mechanism that shows feedback was received and heard | 2018      |
| 2.3.3 | Ensure staff, in particular front-line positions, receive timely information on PRRD and Board business, issues and projects  | 2017      |
| 2.3.4 | Increase the capacity of the PRRD communications function by adding a full-time communication coordinator position  | 2017      |
| 2.4.1 | Use communication section of board reports to outline communication and engagement requirements   | 2017      |
| 2.4.2 | Tie the PRRD strategic plan to current and upcoming projects, and to individual/departmental work plans   | 2017      |
| 2.5.1 | Create a better understanding of roles of board, staff, and the regional district   | 2017      |
| 2.5.2 | Provide 'Communication and Public Participation for Decision Makers' training for Directors with a focus on messaging, board  | 2017      |
| 4.2.3 | roles and the IAP2 public participation spectrum  | 2017      |

| ITEM  | DESCRIPTION   | TIMELINE |
|-------|---|----------|
| 3.1.1 | Continue to strive for proactive communication tactics  | Ongoing  |
| 3.1.2 | Continue with current channel "mix" to achieve maximum reach  | Ongoing  |
| 3.1.3 | Continue use of social media channels   | Ongoing  |
| 3.1.4 | Update Social Media Policy  | 2017     |
| 3.2.1 | Develop language and tone guidelines to simplify messaging  | 2018     |
| 3.3.1 | Increase attendance at business events, community fairs, and other similar events, and use these events to showcase PRRD business   | 2018     |
| 4.1.1 | Develop a consultation and engagement policy to formalize the PRRD's objectives and engagement processes  | 2018     |
| 4.1.2 | Create an internal toolkit/toolbox for staff to introduce the IAP2 principles to community groups   | 2017     |
| 4.1.3 | Continue to utilize IAP2 principles and PRRD engagement strategy process templates for notification and public consultation processes   | Ongoing  |
| 4.2.1 | Continue to develop and formalize a network of "Community Champions" — local area volunteer "keepers" residing in remote or hard-to-reach areas of the PRRD that agree to fan-out communications information to their community | Ongoing  |
| 4.2.2 | Look for opportunities to gain public trust by identifying emerging issues and apply IAP2 principles to the engagement process.   | 2018     |
| 4.2.3 | Provide 'Communication and Public Participation for Decision Makers' training for Directors with a focus on messaging, board  | 2017     |
| 2.5.2 | roles and the IAP2 public participation spectrum  | 2017     |
| 4.3.1 | Create feedback mechanism for simple issues   | 2018     |
| 4.3.2 | Continue to use and promote the 'Engage!' section of prrd.bc.ca to provide outlines of all projects, programs and public participation opportunities  | Ongoing  |

## Notes and Acknowledgements

The Peace River Regional District recognizes and thanks the employees, Board members, stakeholders, and numerous citizens for their valuable input that informed this strategy.

Your feedback is critical to our continued communication and engagement success. Call or write with your comments, ideas, questions or criticisms:

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