

Building Relatives: Five-Year Strategic Plan



Introduction

The Board of Directors of CFAR Society, Circle for Aboriginal Relations (CFAR) met via Zoom May 26 and 27, 2020 to develop a Five-Year Strategic Plan. Led by Elders Reg and Rose Crowshoe, the planning session began with a Smudge and opening prayer. Elder Reg spoke to the Board about the need to balance the written strategy by including oral tradition, “I look at western written transformation on Indigenous people, whatever is written on a strategic concept, you upset the balance of authority because a written document imposes on an oral culture.” He explained, “Oral transformation is using ethical space to have buy in to build relatives.”

The concept of “building relatives” anchored the planning process. Elder Reg said if the Board can understand that Indigenous protocol are the oral policies, the Board will earn trust and respect in community and build relatives.

Mission

The Board determined the current Mission Statement captures why CFAR exists. In keeping with the concept of building relatives, the Board made one change. The new wording is as follows:

To provide leadership in Aboriginal, government and industry relations by creating a circle of relatives to foster a broad understanding of different perspectives. CFAR facilitates the development of trust, respect, and credibility among our membership and with others.

Vision

More significant changes were made to the Vision Statement as the Board agreed the current statement was too long and contained some redundancies. The new Vision Statement is more concise. It reads:

To provide networking and educational opportunities to share our collective knowledge, passion, and experience in building a circle of relatives.

Values

Values not only support CFAR’s vision, they also support the culture CFAR wants in place with its membership and Indigenous communities. The values reflect how CFAR members show up when engaging with communities and building relatives. In addition to the values of trust, respect and credibility contained in the Mission Statement, the Board added the following values:

Inclusive	Innovative
Accepting	Wholistic
Reciprocal	Humble
Fearless	Open-hearted

Environmental Scan

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered how organizations operate. It is unlikely there will ever be a return to the way work was conducted pre-pandemic. The virus poses challenges for CFAR as the Society relies heavily on gatherings as a means of connecting with each other and community. COVID delivered a serious blow to an already weakened economy. People are out of work, businesses are closing, which means fewer sources of funding for CFAR. Discussion turned to

alternatives and opportunities. Virtual conferences, a line-up of speakers who can use Zoom to engage CFAR members, using Eventbrite and charging a nominal fee were some of the ideas put forward. Elder Reg says now is an opportunity to legally harvest Indigenous knowledge and oral tradition. One Board member suggested a virtual library of oral knowledge in which CFAR would be stewards of the knowledge.

One of the ways CFAR imparts Indigenous knowledge currently is through the Indigenous Community-Industry Relations (ICIR) Certificate or Indigenous Community Engagement Citation (ICE). The programs align with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. The TRC asks all Canadians to take "steps toward reconciliation, noting that 'this will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.' Designed as a catalyst for community engagement between Aboriginal people, industry, and government."¹ Having said that, provincial cuts to post-secondary institutions may jeopardize the programs. Board members and CFAR's Executive Director are in talks with the University of Alberta Faculty of Extension and Indigenous colleges with the intent of securing a home for the programs.

The Board noted CFAR was limited physically to be primarily Alberta-based, but technology means CFAR can extend our reach beyond provincial borders and expand our membership. CFAR's membership is currently heavy in the oil and gas sector. The Board said the current environment is an opportunity to reach out to other industries including forestry, health care, tourism, mining, renewable resources, and transportation. CFAR can be a resource to other industries through education and through sharing Indigenous knowledge. The Board can teach other organizations that good business is built on proper community relations. Community comes first.

While the federal government has repeatedly touted its commitment to reconciliation efforts with Indigenous people, work on implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) has all but ceased during the pandemic. The impact of UNDRIP on CFAR is the lack of clarity around the phrase Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). FPIC is a principle protected by international human rights standards that state, 'all peoples have the right to self-determination' and – linked to the right to self-determination – 'all peoples have the right to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development'². The principle figures prominently in UNDRIP. FPIC is often interpreted as Indigenous communities having veto over development projects on their traditional lands; however, recent court rulings interpret FPIC as a 'duty to consult'. The different interpretations have created uncertainty for industries who have projects or are planning projects within traditional territories.

In conclusion, the Board decided to proceed with three focused goals and strategies over the next five years and review progress annually:

Goal One: Expand our Membership

Goal Two: Add stories to our work in honour of oral tradition

Goal Three: Promote ICIR

¹ <http://cfarsociety.ca/education/aboriginal-community-industry-relations-acir-certificate/>

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/publications/2016/10/free-prior-and-informed-consent-an-indigenous-peoples-right-and-a-good-practice-for-local-communities-fao/>

Goals	Strategies	Performance Measures
Goal One: Expand Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send email to member list describing the goal and the rationale for reaching out to other industries. • Establish database of contacts in other industries. • Board Members to reach out to contacts they know on a personal basis. • Prepare a script for callers to cover points on the role of CFAR and the benefits of CFAR membership. • Over the long-term, record in-person and virtual gatherings to use as a promotional tool. • Ask members to bring an industry friend to a CFAR event. • Recognize people who have gone through our society (membership) and who are joining CFAR by their roles. (i.e. Elder Reg’s teachings on children’s societies such as Little Birds Society for pre-schoolers and Chickadees Society for older children.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The diversity of our membership by the number of industries represented. • Double our membership within the five years.
Goal Two: Add stories to our work in honour of oral tradition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a video of a few CFAR members relating the CFAR story of how it came to be, how it has evolved and where it is going. For promotional use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video productions are completed, and number of views tracked. • Track and increase the number of members who

	<p>by members and on the website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a recording of the teaching around “Building Relatives” to include on the website. • Record testimonials from members on what CFAR has meant to them professionally and personally. For the website and for promotional use. • Promote experiential learning within a safe environment (i.e. land-based teachings, ceremony) 	<p>hear stories and teachings through experiential learning.</p>
<p>Goal Three: Promote ICIR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote ICIR to new members. • Include members who have taken the program in the video testimonials. • Develop partnerships with Indigenous post-secondary institutions and market ICIR together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses are running and numbers are sufficient to allow ICIR to continue. • Measure student learning through an Oral Truthing Ceremony for graduates of ICIR.

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