



Buffalo Nations Grasslands Alliance
GRASSLANDS FOR GENERATIONS

Overview of BNGA's Outreach and Engagement Plan

Why does BNGA have an outreach and engagement plan?

Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.
Sitting Bull

It's all about relationships. It's all about relationships. It's all about relationships.
John Esterle and others¹

Relationships based on shared interest and trust form the bedrock of successful cross-boundary, cooperative conservation.² Understanding and then responding to the needs and priorities of people who engage directly with the land will make BNGA a smarter, more adaptive initiative. Engaging a diverse group of people will build the shared ownership needed for sustaining long-term efforts to achieve BNGA's goals.³ It will identify and address conflicts early before they become destructive. Outreach and engagement will unlock the creativity of diverse perspectives while building the solidarity needed to ensure the diversity of life in the Northern Great Plains flourishes for current and future generations.

Purposes of BNGA's outreach and engagement

BNGA has the following general intentions and ambitions for its outreach and engagement:

- To increase and maintain trust, cooperation, and participation among BNGA's board, steering committee members, and advisors in BNGA's planning and programs
- To ensure buy-in (trust, acceptance, and ownership) at a community-level for BNGA so that BNGA remains Native-led, and Native nations have ownership in the initiative
- To engage stakeholders at the institutional Tribal level (e.g., Tribal wildlife departments, Tribal councils, etc.) to build ownership and momentum for BNGA
- To tell BNGA's story about what we will achieve through this transboundary cooperative effort and increased funding

¹ Esterle, John, Kopell, Makla, and Palma Strand. November 22 2020. It's All About Relationships: Systems-Based Changemaking. Philanthropy for Active Engagement. Accessed: August 12, 2021 from <https://medium.com/office-of-citizen/its-all-about-relationships-systems-based-changemaking-470207584bf4>

² Rusmore, Barbara and Pam Mavrolas. 2006. Working Together: A Toolkit for Cooperative Efforts, Networks and Coalitions. Institute for Conservation Leadership.

³ *Ibid.*; Esterle et. al. 2020.

Principles for outreach and engagement

The following principles are the values and beliefs that will guide BNGA's approach to outreach and engagement:

- Build trust. Trust is fundamental.
- Focus on strengths, solutions, and communicating small successes.
- Be border crossers: engage the grassroots and flatten the hierarchy.
- Promote healing. Build solidarity and promote decolonization.
- Be flexible. Engagement and outreach is approached from the assumption that there will be ups and downs, rough spells, and different ideas, that not everything will go right all the time.
- Learn from other similar efforts and identify ways they were successful or overcame challenges.

Goals for outreach and engagement

BNGA will take the following major steps to achieve its outreach and engagement goals:

- Enhance communication flow among current and potential BNGA board members, steering committee members, and advisors, and increase opportunities for cooperation and participation
- Identify hunters, fishers, gatherers, ranchers, farmers, and Tribal natural resources departments' needs, co-determine which needs BNGA can help address, and clarify what BNGA can deliver
- Enhance communication channels and build working relationships to engage and seek support from a broad network of leaders from the 15 Native nations eligible to participate in BNGA, at least 4 federal agencies, and at least 5 non-governmental organizations
- Communicate BNGA's capability to reach its goals

Who is BNGA engaging, and how does BNGA reach people?

A stakeholder is anyone who may be affected by, or who has a significant, legitimate interest in BNGA's work. Stakeholders include BNGA's Board of Directors, advisors, and other supporters, but also people and organizations that may not be aware of, or agree with, BNGA's vision and mission. While it is recognized that "stakeholder" is not always a preferred term, especially when used to refer to Native nations, it is an internationally used term and is used in the outreach and engagement plan when referring to the whole range of people with something "at stake" in BNGA, both Native and non-Native people.

Engaging stakeholders is essential in order to:

- Avoid harm
- Build ownership and relationships based on shared interest and trust to foster endorsement and financial, political, and technical support
- Ensure all viewpoints are heard and considered (not only the most vocal people, organizations, and viewpoints)

- Understand needs of people who directly interact with the land in the Northern Great Plains
- Identify and address concerns and conflicts early before they become destructive
- Harness insights and creativity to enhance program adaptivity and effectiveness

Types of outreach and engagement methods

The following are the primary forms of outreach and engagement BNGA will use:

- Emails
- Weekly or monthly meetings
- Phone calls and/or visits
- In-person workshops
- Presentations
- Website
- Social media
- Focus groups
- Surveys

How will BNGA meet its engagement purposes?

BNGA's plan lists specific, actionable, outreach and engagement BNGA aims to achieve by August 2024. It also lists the activities BNGA will pursue to meet each objective. Please contact BNGA at info.bngalliance@gmail.com for more information about BNGA's specific outreach and engagement activities.