

# Implementation Guide

## Aboriginal Relations Behavioural Competencies



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BC Public Service Agency



Where ideas work



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### Natsa'maht

"Natsa'maht is a shared word among the many Coast Salish Nations, bridging between the Nations for a shared understanding to create collaboration. Natsa'maht in its simple translation means unity. In action it emphasizes working with one heart and one mind. We use it here today to bridge between the two worlds, provincial government and Aboriginal. Each of us has a role to play in building the bridge to meet in the middle, to ensure that future work is an intentional stepping stone for future relationships and communities."

– Bradley Dick



*We thank Bradley Dick, Lekwungen, Walas Kwagul, Ditidaht First Nations for providing us with a concept that describes the intent of these competencies. Bradley is a Provincial Roots Analyst at the Ministry of Children and Family Development.*



#### **Collective Vision:**

*"We envision a time when the British Columbia Public Service, First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal communities are working together, where shared stewardship, self-governance and respect for cultural differences guide our community-driven partnerships and collaborations."*

*"Collaborative visioning"  
participants from  
Aboriginal communities and  
BC Public Service employees  
across BC, 2009*



# Introduction

## “What are “behavioural competencies”?”

*A behavioural competency describes the result of taking attitudes, motivations or ways of thinking and turning them into actions that are essential for success in your job. Behavioral competencies describe **how** you carry out your work.*

*Competencies are determined by comparing the attitudes and behaviors of exceptional performers and satisfactory performers in their approaches to work and work relationships.*

*Experience and evidence show us that when desired behaviors are put into action, you will perform at a higher level and increase the satisfaction of those you serve.*

*As employees of the BC Public Service, we increasingly know **what** we need to do, because our commitments are outlined in legislation, treaty ratifications and other agreements. It's **how** we do it that makes all the difference.*



This guide is designed for all of us who are continually developing our ability to appreciate and empower Aboriginal people<sup>1</sup>. It helps us to understand the intention behind the new Aboriginal relations competencies, why they are important and how to put them to work in our jobs, whether we are field and line workers, supervisors or hiring managers, strategic directors or executives.

The 17 competencies came from listening to what Aboriginal people in British Columbia said works for them. They are for all of us who work in the BC Public Service and live on the traditional territories of Aboriginal people across the province.

All Canadians, with the exception of Aboriginal people, entered this nation from other countries. Although they have status as Canada's first peoples, Aboriginal people have had to learn and practice foreign behaviours in order to engage with government at any level. Thanks to a commitment to a new relationship between the provincial government and Aboriginal people, change is underway.

The Aboriginal relations competencies provide us with a roadmap for making behavioural shifts that will help us achieve our commitments.

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<sup>1</sup> We recognize and honour that British Columbia's Aboriginal population is distinct and diverse. Acknowledgement of this diversity is embedded in the phrase "Aboriginal people." When used in the competencies and supporting materials, this phrase honours all First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples of British Columbia. It encompasses individuals, communities, bands, nations, organizations and urban populations.

## Making the Shift

We are making the shift one person and one situation at a time. We make it when an Aboriginal person approaches our service counter and we show genuine interest and offer opportunities for independence. We make it when we are ready to send out a legislatively mandated letter and instead decide to deliver it in person to talk about it.

We make the shift on a larger scale. We make it when we go to the community before we write the plan. We make it when we spend time learning about the community and their previous interactions with government before the meetings. We make the shift when we set aside our formal agenda and instead listen and learn, and use that learning to get to where we want to go together. We make the shift when we participate in ceremonies with appreciation and respect, even if we fear doing something wrong.

*“Provincial / Aboriginal relations is all of our responsibility... it’s up to all of us, including you and me, to be more knowledgeable of the appropriate ways in which to conduct our work.”*

Steve Munro, Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations  
and Reconciliation

### We make the shift strategically.

We make it when we consider the impact of a policy on Aboriginal people, and then draw upon our good relationships within Aboriginal communities and governments to ask for assistance in implementing the policy in a way that works. We make the shift when our ministry work plans prioritize serving Aboriginal people in a way that works for them, reflecting sensitivity to cultural and community identity. We make it when we courageously champion across the public service an Aboriginal relations idea that could alter the very foundation of how we work.

We make the shift in our thinking, our attitude and our behaviours.

It begins and ends with each one of us.

**Natsa'maht**  
*Working with  
one heart and  
one mind*

# Why Behavioural Competencies for Aboriginal Relations?

History shows us that Aboriginal people in British Columbia have experienced working with the provincial government in a way that works best for government and not as well for them, their governments, organizations or communities. This historical relationship has contributed in part to today's socio-economic differences between Aboriginal people and other British Columbians.

This relationship is changing course. Thanks to several formal agreements, collaborative visions and commitments, the Province of British Columbia and Aboriginal leaders are now working in a new, government-to-government relationship. We have made commitments to work collaboratively towards improving social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Building a relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights leads to positive results and is the hub around which our goals, objectives, tasks and deliverables revolve.

As Aboriginal governments, communities and organizations take on governance responsibilities, we are learning how to empower and support their increased capacity. Our role as employees is evolving from that of architect, manger and regulator to that of facilitator, resource provider and advocate of quality service delivery by Aboriginal organizations and governments.

*"As employees of the BC Public Service, we want to serve all people of the province as effectively as we can. Working with Aboriginal people is different from working with other industry and stakeholders. There are significant cultural considerations with regard to attitude, thinking and behavior, and unless we have competencies to identify these, we never truly will be able to engage effectively. Aboriginal relations require a unique set of competencies developed over time. If you develop and apply these, you increase your ability to be effective and to contribute to an engaging experience for all."*



Bruce Low, Negotiations and Regional Operations Division, Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Fort St John

## Who Are the Competencies For?

The Aboriginal relations competencies are for all of us.

British Columbia's Aboriginal people and communities are diverse and dynamic in their politics, histories, traditions and relationships to the land. As the first peoples of British Columbia, Aboriginal people hold unique cultures that are essential to our distinctive character as a province. Whether or not we work in an Aboriginal relations branch, it is important to embrace these competencies, recognizing that the nature of our work as a provincial government has an impact on the Aboriginal people of the province.

Many of these competencies can be used by anyone in government regardless of their position. They are for the front line, the administrator, the manager and the executive. For those of us who work daily and deeply with Aboriginal people, these 17 competencies are even more essential for our success.

## How Do I Understand the Competencies?

The competencies serve as a guide for getting to good relationships and good results. They show us the range of behaviour from average to exceptional performance and give us something to strive for. The 17 competencies are grouped into a competency dictionary, available on MyHR.

A glossary of terms is provided for you because some of the words used within the competencies will have a slightly different meaning and application when we are thinking into other cultures. You will benefit from scanning the glossary to see what you may need to understand differently.

Each of the competencies includes a definition, a statement of why it's important, a list of key behaviours that show the competency in action, and a description of behaviours that show that further development is needed.

*"I use them every day. It's part of who I am and part of my work. It's not about saying 'maybe I'll use this competency today.' They should be integrated so that it becomes a way of being and doesn't require conscious thought."*

Bruce Low, Negotiations and Regional Operations Division, Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Fort St John

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## Change Leadership

*Change Leadership is championing the achievement of intended, real change that meets the enduring vision of Aboriginal self-determination in British Columbia. It involves collaboratively developing and implementing ideas to achieve positive change from anywhere in the BC Public Service. The change leader learns from other leaders and elders, models the vision, and encourages members of the public service to commit to and champion the vision. The change leader inspires others into new ways of thinking and doing business. The change leader routinely energizes the change process and removes barriers to change.*

### Why is this important?

*"The commitments of the provincial government to Aboriginal people mean that we need to move forward together. Ensuring that all employees work effectively and respectfully with Aboriginal people, communities and organizations requires a cultural shift across government. The task then becomes all of us leading from where we are, inspiring those within our sphere of influence to learn, stretch and act in ways that support and sustain Aboriginal self-determination, and support Aboriginal people in change leadership ourselves."*

*Lisa Mercure, Mikisew Cree  
Aboriginal Friendship Centre  
Program – BC Region  
BC Association of Aboriginal  
Friendship Centres, Saanichton*



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### Demonstrates the behaviour when...

- Understands the need for change and its benefits to Aboriginal people.
- Actively seeks out, listens to and learns from Aboriginal people, leaders and elders about what change is needed and how it should happen.
- Partners with Aboriginal people to define a specific area where change is needed.
- Partners in the design and explicit vision for change, sometimes redefining a previous vision.
- Challenges the status quo and is gently persistent in furthering change.
- Demonstrates patience during the transition and is comfortable with "growing pains."
- Champions the change from within one's own sphere of influence (work unit, branch, with colleagues, etc.).
- Takes specific and sustained action to ensure the successful implementation of the change.
- Reinforces the change message with personal attitude, behaviours and actions.
- Identifies potential risks and challenges to change vision and plans for them, thinking through all potential consequences from a cross-cultural perspective.
- Takes definitive action to align organization (policy, operations, budget, etc.) with the change vision.
- Publicly recognizes individuals who are demonstrating behaviours consistent with the new direction.

The definition provides a general description of the competency.

**Why it's important:** Aboriginal people and Aboriginal relations leaders tell why the competency is important.

**Demonstrates the behavior when...:** Describes what the competency looks like in action. The supervisor/manager determines the relevant behaviours for the role, checking the boxes next to the behaviours. The job may require one or all of the indicators. The indicators may be used in performance conversations and other performance engagement processes.



## Change Leadership

### Needs development when....

- States that Aboriginal people already get enough government support.
- Resists change and finds reasons for not making changes.
- Complains about the process of change or the reason for change.
- Shows frustration or gives up when change is slow or doesn't happen.
- States that supervisors and managers, or executive level employees, are the only leaders that can affect change.
- Designs a vision for change without Aboriginal people and then presents it to them, either for validation or approval.
- Places other priorities ahead of championing the change and aligning work to the new vision.
- Expects others to change while not modeling the actions and behaviours themselves.
- Remains silent when seeing potential risks or challenges that seem unaddressed in the change vision.
- Consistently refuses to lead and champion the change from within one's own sphere of influence.
- Enters into a token consultation with Aboriginal people and then proceeds without full collaboration.



Where ideas work

Related to corporate competencies: Change Leadership

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**Needs development when...:** Lists the indicators that show a shift in behavior and further development is necessary. The behaviours may be selected by the employee and/or the supervisor by marking the box next to the behavior(s). These provide the baseline from where changes in behavior will happen. The indicators may be used in performance conversations and other performance management processes.



# How Do I Use the Competencies?

All competencies could apply in some way to all jobs across the public service. However, there may be some competencies that are more critical to some positions.

Whether you are hiring, engaging employees around their performance, or determining learning and career direction, the first step is to identify those competencies that will lead to success in meeting the goals of our new relationship with Aboriginal people.

## Recruitment and hiring

Aboriginal people and public service employees say that it is critical to hire the “right person for the right job.” In Aboriginal relations, *how* you do your work is just as important as what you get done.

1. Review the job profile/job description.
2. Based on the accountabilities for the position, choose competencies that are essential for the employee to excel.
3. You may decide to choose a combination of competencies, from both the Aboriginal relations competencies (which are more externally focused), and the corporate competencies (like Teamwork and Cooperation or Business Acumen) for internal functions and relationships.
4. Throughout the hiring process, focus on those key behaviours to measure the candidates’ effectiveness in those particular competencies.
5. During orientation of the employee new to the position, take time to review the “indicators” of the competency (look under “Demonstrates the behavior when...”). Check the box next to the indicators that are critical to succeeding in the position and achieving work goals. These show the competency in action and provide roadmap for how to think and act.

The following table shows some examples of how competencies could apply to different jobs, depending on level of engagement with Aboriginal people, or the impact of the work on Aboriginal people. Please note that these are examples and that the supervisor/employee needs to identify those competencies specific to the position so that they support the employee’s ability to demonstrate exceptional performance. It’s important to choose the competencies critical to the job rather than strictly following the examples in the table.

“These competencies must be invested in across entire the public service. They are the competencies of a good public service employee and when we use them, then we will do well in many contexts. I’ve always believed that it is part of the fabric of everyone’s job.”

Kevin Kriese, ADM, North Area  
Ministry of Forests, Lands and  
Natural Resource Operations,  
Smithers



## Examples

Competencies	All BC Public Service Employees	*	**	***	****	*****
<b>Personal Effectiveness</b>						
Commitment		✓	✓	✓		✓
Empathy		✓		✓		✓
Ingenuity		✓	✓	✓		✓
Open Listening		✓		✓		✓
Self-Discovery and Awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sustained Learning and Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Interpersonal Relationships</b>						
Cultural Agility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Empowering Others		✓		✓		✓
Promoting Accord		✓	✓	✓		✓
Building a Trust-Based Relationship		✓		✓		✓
Aboriginal-Centred Service Approach		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Leading People</b>						
Change Leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Credible Champion		✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>Achieving Business Results</b>						
Managing Organizational Resources		✓	✓	✓		
Collaborative Planning, Organizing and Coordinating		✓		✓	✓	
Strategic Orientation		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Process Orientation		✓		✓		✓

\* Roles that provide **strategic leadership and support** for all positions working with Aboriginal people.  
Examples: Assistant Deputy Minister, Chief Financial Officer, Executive Director, Director, Deputy Minister

\*\* Roles that **manage programs, work on strategies, and/or set or interpret policy** related to Aboriginal people.  
Examples: Planning Analyst, Director Operations, Budget Manager, Financial Analyst, Senior Project Management Advisor, Project Assistant, Policy Analyst, Research Analyst, Economist, Contract Administrator, Crown Counsel

\*\*\* Roles that have **direct and ongoing customer interaction** with Aboriginal individuals, families, communities, governments and organizations.  
Examples: First Nations Coordinator, First Nations Analyst, Stewardship Biologist, Social Worker, First Nations Consultation Officer, Policy Analyst, First Nations Negotiator, Planning Officer, Licensed Land and Resource Planning Officer, Team Lead, Supervisor, Construction Project Supervisor, Negotiator, First Nations Stewardship Officer

\*\*\*\* Roles that provide **administrative or other support** for those who are in direct or indirect contact with the Aboriginal communities.

Examples: Strategic Human Resources Planner, Office Manager, Records Clerk, File Clerk, Administrative Assistant, Team Lead, Supervisor, Resource Coordination Officer, Paralegal, Training Consultant, Database Analyst, Learning Developer, Graphic Artist


\*\*\*\*\* Roles that **provide services directly to Aboriginal people on an individual basis for a short period of time** or for one time only.

Examples: Customer Service Representative, Employment Assistance Worker, Child Protection Worker, Receptionist, Human Resources Advisor, Probation Officer, Sheriff, Court Clerk, Compliance and Enforcement Officer, Paramedic, Correctional Officer, Forest Technician, Nurse

*Note:* When determining competencies for a job position, it may be helpful to use a combination of competencies, from both the Aboriginal relations competencies (which are more externally focused), and the corporate competencies (like Teamwork and Cooperation or Business Acumen) for internal functions and relationships.

## Performance management and “MyPerformance”

1. When annual work goals are determined, work with the employee to select those competencies and key behaviours that are most relevant to the employee’s success for the year. They may shift from year to year or even project to project in the course of a year. Ongoing performance conversations will ensure you stay in touch with what’s needed.
2. Incorporate them into the work goals section of MyPerformance Profile so that they are always at the ready for you and the employee. Remember, the competencies (and values) are *how* the work gets done. You can even attach the individual competency documents to the profile!
3. During conversations that happen on the floor and “on the fly,” bring those competencies into the conversations. Use a coaching approach to check in, provide reinforcement for excellent performance, and offer opportunities for learning and development right there in the moment.
4. When you see behaviours that detract from satisfactory performance, use the “Needs Development When...” section of the competency to define and discuss. Then return to the statements that describe the *successful* behaviours and set the course for change going forward.



**Natsa'maht**  
*Working with  
one heart and  
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## Learning and development

### *For Employees*

Want to choose learning and development opportunities that really makes a difference? Look at the competencies associated with your current job or with the career you want to cultivate.

**Scenario:** You want to develop your competency in “Open Listening” because your job requires it, and because you are motivated to do well. Measure your current capability to demonstrate open listening by reviewing the indicators under “Demonstrates the behaviour when ...” Ask others for feedback; ask them for advice and learning. Assess yourself; is there a difference between where you think you are and where your Aboriginal customers say you are? What statements within the competency show you where you can develop?

Where do you want to go? How will you continue to gain competency? What strengths can you focus on and develop further? What growth areas do you need to keep the focus on in order to serve well? What’s missing? How can you learn it? Where do you need to go to learn it? How can you learn differently? What resources are available? What is a new way to learn what you want to know? What can you do differently based upon what you are learning? How will you get support? How will you use what you learn?

### *For Supervisors*

What do you see in this employee (current performance and potential)? Where does the employee want to go? How will you challenge them to meet their potential? What in their performance do you see that may keep them from getting where they want to go? What will you ask them to help them see clearly? How will you “clear the way” so they can grow and learn?

What can you recommend? What risks will you take to get them to where they want to be? How will you measure the effectiveness of learning, both informal and formal? How can you ensure accountability for putting the learning to work on the job?

## Succession planning

Planning for the future is critical. Succession planning processes can be designed to focus on organizational needs for future Aboriginal relations roles. Competency-centred planning can enable the identification and accessibility of competent employees in the public service when needed. This can further serve in building accurate profiles across teams, functions, business units, divisions, ministries or the entire public service.



## How Did We Develop the Competencies?

These competencies began with the Aboriginal community. The subject matter experts reside on and off-reserve, in cities and in small towns. Some are part of Métis organizations, Aboriginal-run organizations, and First Nations governments.

In these competencies you may hear the stories of the negotiator, band chief, grandmother, hereditary chief, organization director, elder, young man, city councilor, Aboriginal governance champion, anthropologist, cloth spinner and weaver, young woman, social worker, education coordinator, grandfather, Aboriginal Youth Intern, and BC Public Service employee.

Relationships were forged in conversations with small groups and individuals around the province who provided the words and the meaning for each of these 17 competencies. Members of Aboriginal communities also recommended exceptional performers in demonstrating these competencies. Some of them are employees of the public service, and some serve Aboriginal communities in other ways.

A volunteer group of Aboriginal public service employees also contributed their considerable expertise as a uniquely qualified group within our organization. Many of them also reviewed and critiqued drafts, along with other Aboriginal people outside of the public service. Aboriginal Youth Interns contributed valuable perspectives as well.

Directors, managers, employees, community of practice members, supervisors, HR specialists, ministry strategic HR specialists, assistant deputy ministers, executive directors and champions across many ministries all contributed in unique ways throughout the course of development. A group of directors and assistant deputy ministers, named by the Aboriginal community as exceptional performers in Aboriginal relations, conducted a final review and validation to ensure that these competencies are relevant and will help us achieve our goals in Aboriginal relations.

We also conducted extensive research, learning from work in various ministries across the BC Public Service, and in New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Belgium and Canada.



## Recognition

These are the many who shared stories and experiences, connected us to others with knowledge, offered technical and human resources advice, reviewed documents, refined ideas, supplied information, provided resources and brought heart to the work. Our deep gratitude goes out to all of you for your contributions.

### Community Contributors

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Barb Ward-Burkitt

Ron Rice

Steve Roberts

Gwen Phillips

Jim McDonald

Cris Knight

Christa Williams

Warren Clarmont

Christine Atkins

Bob Adams

Karen Isaac

Jennie Walker

Catherine Pennington

Lyle Vierick

Gary Alexcee

Laura Miller

Shirley Bolan

Charlotte Guno

Don Roberts

Tanya Clarmont

Lisa Mercure

Susan Tatoosh

Cheryl Brooks

Gerald Wesley

Marilynn Taylor

Wendy Favel

Karren Harrison

Annette Loe

Erralyn Thomas

### BC Public Service Contributors

Bruce Leslie Poitras

Peg Christian

Shelley John

Bruce Low

Bradley Dick

Stephanie Papik

Bryan Dreilich

Cody Caruso

Patricia Geddes

Victoria Morgan

Charlene Adsit

Jan Gottfred

Sasha Hobbs

Allison Beardsworth

Carla Springinotic

Donelda Eve

Rob Rail

Bert Elliott

Arlette Malcolm

Erika Taylor

Cheryl Gilbert

Charlene Remer

Stephen Kearsey

Mariana Gerenska

Lars Hansen

Susan Kelly

Arlene Paton

Dena Carroll

Kevin Kriese

Vanessa Cartwright

Kate Daniels

Jeanne Zoschke

Erinn Brown

Jill Bryant

Lorne De Large

Elizabeth Maurer

Chris Hamilton

Lands and Resources

Community of Practice

– First Nations Relations

Sarah Quinn

Karen Macdowell

Kuldeep Tut

Kate Cole

Stuart Knittelfelder

Barb Shaw

Ashley Johnston

Milt Wright

Peter Cunningham

