

Wahnapiitae First Nation Media Relations Policy

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1. Introduction

Effective communication with the media is central to Wahnapiatae First Nation's ability to create awareness of the decisions and messages of Chief and Council, to inform the broader public on issues or programs of importance, and to pursue public advocacy. While clear communication occurs with members both on and off reserve through other avenues, it is nevertheless also useful to reach non-members, government officials, and others through the lens of the media.

More importantly, this work must occur in a way that ensures all media engagement conducted on behalf of Wahnapiatae First Nation (WFN) is done in a way that offers Chief and Council full awareness and oversight. This will also ensure that messaging is in line with WFN's established goals and is rooted in the wisdom of its people.

The **Media Relations Policy** outlines both the rationale and the process by which this work is to be undertaken any time that Wahnapiatae First Nation's official position is to be advanced or represented within the media. This has been designed to be in full compliance with existing processes as indicated within the **Wahnapiatae First Nation Governance Procedures Policy (emphasis added)**:

7.5 Chief and Council Communication:

The Chief may correspond with Federal/Provincial/Municipal Government, Industry Corporate Presidents/Vice-Presidents, First Nation Political Leaders, and/or representatives including Ministers, and ensures the Council receives copies of all such correspondence at the next regular scheduled meeting. **The Chief and Councillors must provide prior notice to Council if and when addressing the media on any Wahnapiatae First Nation matter.** The Council will cause an external meeting protocol to be developed, outlining authorities and permissions of leadership to attend and participate in, including the identification of necessary support staff.

The **Media Relations Policy** clarifies this approach in a way that protects elected officials, the administration, and the community by providing clear roles, responsibilities, and procedures around engaging with the media.

Specifically, it creates processes around handling of external media inquiries (including designation of media spokespersons), internal requests to conduct media outreach, media tracking, and media preparedness training.

2. Purpose

Media relations should support the goals, values, and aspirations of Wahnapiatae First Nation by fostering a positive relationship with the press to assist in effectively conveying key messages through a structured approach that provides clarity, oversight, and accountability for Chief and Council.

To this end, Wahnapiatae First Nation's **Media Relations Policy** formalizes existing processes while focusing coordination via a central point of contact between the media and Chief and Council, through which further strategy and preparation can be collaboratively developed.

This approach is specifically designed to allow for:

- Centralized coordination of media engagement in a way that maximizes awareness for Chief and Council, while minimizing confusion for administrative staff and media alike;

- Certainty for Chief and Council in determining messaging as well as who may best be suited to represent its views on a specific topic within the context of media engagement, i.e. its designated Media Spokesperson;
- Sufficient preparation for the designated Media Spokesperson to ensure their messaging conforms to WFN positions, and to provide them with the necessary material for a successful media interaction;
- Relationship-building with the media, which will allow for stronger and more consistent coverage;
- Media tracking and monitoring, which will allow for a tangible, cohesive monitoring of WFN's success in conveying its desired messaging. It also will assist in observing the potential challenges or successes in dealing with specific media partners and avenues, and in turn, help to drive targeted interview preparation. Monitoring, in turn, will allow Wahnapiatae First Nation leadership to be made aware of any unsolicited coverage, and provide opportunities to create responses or strategies as appropriate; and
- Media training, whereby Communications staff may provide targeted coaching to key WFN representatives who repeatedly serve as Media Spokesperson and may benefit from basic instruction on how to conduct oneself in a media interview in a way that protects them while best serving WFN communications goals.

This work must occur in line with WFN's established practices, its constitution, and the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

3. Definition of Media

For the purposes of interpreting this policy, "media" is defined as any media outlet, be they traditional (television, radio, newspaper) or digital (news websites, etc.), wherein news is reported by professional journalists adhering to commonly accepted journalistic standards.

This definition should exclude any interpretation of where and how WFN engages in social media spaces, which is to be addressed separately.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all Wahnapiatae First Nation elected officials and staff, which includes part-time and full-time employees; casual / temporary staff such as students, volunteers, interns; as well as employees and management of band-owned and -operated businesses such as Rocky's Restaurant and Marina.

5. Standards of Practice

As part of its efforts in dealing with the media, WFN must strive at all times to meet and uphold certain standards within that work:

- All efforts must be made to respond to media inquiries in a timely way, which may require collaborative efforts made outside of traditional hours or days of work.
- Material issued to media must be in conformance with professional journalistic standards: this includes the use of Canadian Press style, journalistic formatting and content, and industry-adherent timing.
- Interviews conducted with the media must be done with a high level of preparation and professionalism so as to continue to position Wahnapiatae First Nation as a positive, authoritative voice on issues of interest to its members.
- All direct interactions with members of the media, whether as an initial point of contact or within the scope of an interview, must be done with courtesy and respect.
- Any messaging or material issued to media must have sufficient news value, and be timely, clear, accurate, and accessible.
- Any representation of Wahnapiatae First Nation's positions within the media must be done with honesty and truth.

6. Internal Roles and Responsibilities

To effectively carry out the work of managing and fostering WFN's relationship with the media, the following roles and responsibilities must be established:

a. Media Contact:

The Communications Officer is the designated Media Contact within WFN for any media activity or inquiry. This role is tasked with coordinating media inquiries and working with the Executive Director, Chief and Council, and their designated Media Spokesperson to facilitate interviews and media coverage. As such, any inquiries received within WFN by anyone other than the Communications Officer should immediately be referred to them per the procedure outlined in **Section 7 (a)**.

Similarly, anyone who is not the Media Contact is restricted from initiating communication with the media; any requests to generate coverage through media outreach must proceed through official channels as outlined in **Section 8** of this policy.

The role of Media Contact is separate and distinct from that of Media Spokesperson. The Media Contact will rarely serve as Media Spokesperson, though as with any other relevant staff person, they may be assigned to this role if Chief and Council determines they are the most appropriate individual for a specific circumstance.

The process by which the Media Contact shall operate is outlined in **Section 7 (b)**.

b. Media Spokesperson:

An individual may only speak on WFN's behalf within a media context if they have been designated as Media Spokesperson by Chief and Council within the process as outlined in **Section 7 (b)** of this **Media Relations Policy**.

Any individual who has not thusly been officially designated as Media Spokesperson for a specific interview is therefore expressly forbidden to represent WFN with the media.

Note that the role of Media Spokesperson is always considered to be assigned on a situational, one-time basis, and should not be seen as grounds for the individual to continue to serve in that role for further interviews without explicit, additional approval from Chief and Council. Subsequent interviews on the same topic or with the same reporter will still require that the process for handling external media inquiries be pursued anew. This is to ensure that the Executive Director as well as Chief and Council are kept apprised of every potential media appearance, and that the Media Spokesperson's messaging is both factual and clearly in line with specific WFN goals. In addition, this will help to provide continuity for media tracking.

The Media Spokesperson will be selected by Chief and Council based on the relevance and appropriateness of their authority and expertise. This means that the Media Spokesperson will typically be Chief or a member of Council; however, depending on the technical nature of the discussion, it may be decided that the Media Spokesperson for a given interview should be whichever departmental Director or designated staff person has the most relevant knowledge.

The Media Spokesperson will, at the direction of Chief and Council, coordinate with the Communications Officer to ensure sufficient preparedness and that the core messaging as discussed and approved by Chief and Council is accurately conveyed.

7. Media Relations: External Requests

a. Procedures for Media Inquiries - General:

The Communications Officer is the designated Media Contact within WFN for any media activity or inquiry.

As such, any other individual who encounters a media request for an interview to represent WFN's views should engage in the following procedures:

1. Inform them that the Communications Officer is WFN's media contact, and will assist them in coordinating their request;
2. Provide them with the Communications Officer's contact information.

This process of encouraging media representatives/reporters to contact the Communications Officer directly with their inquiries – rather than having staff or others manage the burden of gathering

information to be forwarded to the Communications Officer – is designed to streamline the process and create familiarity and rapport with their office. This will in turn help to standardize a relationship with the media, and ultimately better serve WFN's long-term public messaging goals.

At no point in this process should the above individual consent to an interview or provide contact information for anyone other than the Communications Officer; Chief and Council will determine the appropriate Media Spokesperson after considering the information as provided by the Communications Officer.

b. Procedures for Media Inquiries – Media Contact:

Once media makes contact with the Communications Officer with a request for an interview or comment on behalf of Wahnapiitae First Nation, the following will occur:

1. The Communications Officer will gather from the reporter all information necessary to allow Chief and Council to make an informed decision about whether or not to proceed, and how best to assign the optimal Media Spokesperson.

This information should include:

- a. Who the reporter is trying to reach;
 - b. What information they're looking for, what general line of questioning they're pursuing, and what questions they may seek to ask (so as to better prepare the spokesperson);
 - c. The name of the reporter, their organization/news outlet, and their location (as the reporter may not necessarily be from the Sudbury district);
 - d. The format of the interview (i.e. telephone, TV, email, etc.), and
 - e. The reporter's deadline and contact information, including telephone and email address.
2. Chief and Council, as well as the Executive Director, are then notified via email about the request, with the information outlined per the above. This is to reflect the timely, pressing nature of media inquiries.
 3. Chief and Council will, with the advice of the Executive Director, then make the determination about whether or not to proceed.
 - a. If the interview is deemed to be of interest, Chief and Council will, with the advice of the Executive Director, then decide who to assign as the Media Spokesperson, based on the information provided.
 4. Chief and Council will then clearly outline what its key messages will be within the scope of this interview, if any.
 5. The Communications Officer will then be notified as to the Media Spokesperson, and the preferred messaging. At this time, the Communications Officer will also work with the Media Spokesperson to frame the preferred messaging as appropriate, and to provide any additional preparatory interview tips as may be desired or required.
 6. The Communications Officer will then connect the inquiring media with the Media Spokesperson.
 7. The Communications Officer will track the final product of the media coverage, and is to be included in their regular updates to Chief and Council and the Executive Director, as outlined in

Section 9 of this policy.

Note that all this should ideally occur in a timeline that is suited to the fast-moving deadlines often required by reporters. However, it should also be made clear to the reporter that while all efforts will be made to reply in as timely a fashion as possible, internal constraints may not allow for their requests to be accommodated in their preferred timeline.

c. Procedures for Requests for Quotes From External Partners:

From time to time, outside agencies, partners, or governments with which Wahnapiatae First Nation has a working relationship may seek an official quote to include in their own media materials. In these circumstances, the appropriate representative will typically be the Chief of Wahnapiatae First Nation, unless Chief and Council decide otherwise.

In these circumstances, the process should be as follows:

1. The request and contact information for the inquiring partner should be forwarded to the Communications Officer, who will then in turn forward it to the Chief for their consideration.
2. The Chief will then provide the Communications Officer with whatever relevant messaging and information they require to compose a quote on their behalf.
3. The Communications Officer will compose the draft quote, and provide it to the Chief for their review, change, and approval. In turn, the Chief will provide said quote to Council for their own review and approval.
4. Once approved, the quote will be finalized with the Communications Officer, who will in turn provide this to the inquiring partner for their inclusion.
5. The Communications Officer will track the release of the partner's media materials, and include this as part of their regular updates to Chief and Council as outlined in **Section 9** of this policy.

8. Media Relations: Internal Requests

In keeping with the policy that the Communications Officer serves as WFN's official Media Contact, all outreach to the media as initiated by WFN will be coordinated through their department.

This is to ensure the continuity of media relations, while also providing Chief and Council the assurance that no undue contact between the administration and the media is occurring without their prior approval. This will also allow for all appropriate preparation to occur and for messaging to remain consistent with WFN goals and standards.

The process for undertaking this work should proceed as follows:

1. Requests for media outreach may be directly initiated and approved by Chief and Council. However, any request initiated by WFN staff must first be approved by the Executive Director, and then by Chief and Council.
2. At this time, Chief and Council should also determine the Media Spokesperson and desired

messaging, and relay this information to the Communications Officer. This information will also assist in the creation of the media outreach materials.

3. In keeping with the Standards of Practice as established in **Section 5** of this policy, the Communications Officer will then coordinate with the appropriate individuals (i.e. Chief and Council, or the Director/staff who generated the request) in order to draft any media outreach pieces in conformance with approved messaging and journalistic standards.
4. These media outreach pieces will then be forwarded to the Executive Director, as well as Chief and Council for their review, modification, and approval prior to issue.
5. Upon approval, the Communications Officer will then ensure that the media outreach is conducted.
NOTE: The Media Spokesperson should at this time also ensure their own availability so as to ensure timely connection with any responding media outlets, as coordinated through the Communications Officer.
6. The Communications Officer will then coordinate any efforts to connect responding media outlets with the Media Spokesperson.
NOTE: In certain cases, such as the issuance of a sufficiently detailed media release, the media may not necessarily need to connect further with WFN to complete a story, and may instead rely upon the material as provided.
7. Any interviews or media coverage generated as a result of this process should be tracked by the Communications Officer and included in their regular updates to Chief and Council, as outlined in **Section 9** of this policy.

Please note that, as part of its duty to engage in proactive media outreach, the Communications Department will maintain a regularly updated directory of media contacts of interest to WFN so as to simplify the process of conducting media outreach.

9. Media Tracking

a. Purpose

The Communications department will be tasked with monitoring and tracking any mentions of Wahnapi'tae First Nation within any and all media coverage, including but not limited to coverage generated by activities outlined within **Section 8** of this **Media Relations Policy**.

As outlined in **Section 2**, this will provide a continuous, trackable view as to how WFN is perceived within the media, how that may evolve over time, and how successful WFN has been in conveying its desired messaging through these avenues. This will create opportunities for statistical analysis and strategic development to better position WFN for achieving its communications goals.

This tracking will also assist in observing the potential challenges or successes in dealing with specific media partners and avenues. In turn, this will help to drive targeted interview preparation.

This will also ensure Chief and Council and the Executive Director are fully up to date on the extent and impact of media coverage of Wahnapiatae First Nation, including any coverage generated without its input.

b. Process

To ensure that Wahnapiatae First Nation leadership is regularly informed about the emergence and impact of its media coverage, the Communications Department will prepare relevant briefing notes / reports and submit them to the Executive Director on a monthly basis so as to be included and discussed within a meeting of Chief and Council.

These briefing notes will summarize coverage, their tone and impact, and general messages. If proactive media outreach has been conducted, the Communications department will also summarize any resulting media coverage (or lack thereof.)

These updates will be provided even if no coverage has been generated, so as to clarify that this is the case.

10. Media Training

In order to ensure that Chief and Council and other potential Media Spokespersons (i.e. departmental Directors) are properly prepared to serve as Media Spokespersons on behalf of Wahnapiatae First Nation, the Communications Officer will, on occasion, conduct basic media training sessions.

These sessions will assist potential Media Spokespersons to grasp the potential opportunities and pitfalls of media interviews, how to handle difficult questions, and other necessary tips for demystifying the interview process and ensuring that the individual has the tools they need to succeed in this context.

The Communications Officer will work with the Executive Director to determine the appropriate frequency with which these sessions can and should occur.