

Appeals and Submissions to Media: News and magazine articles, videos, and press releases from non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups can be useful because they often provide different information and points-of-view than government communiqués.

Online Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns: Online petitions, websites, and YouTube videos can be used to provide information and generate support amongst community members and the general public.

Non-Governmental, Community Service, Advocacy, and Faith-Based Organizational Cooperation: They can help to 'drum up' awareness of issues and support for causes, although different organizations may necessarily have different motivations and levels of commitment.

Board Membership: More Aboriginal people should seek to sit on both public and private Boards of Directors because these bodies can be quite influential

PROJECT AND ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This pamphlet is one of a series of four produced by the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) through a larger initiative titled the Aboriginal Civic Literacy Initiative. The project aims to increase Aboriginal community members' ability and desire to pursue effective civic engagement with all levels of government, in ways that will result in increased governmental attention and resources for urban Aboriginal community needs and aspirations. **Project funding provided by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) through its Aboriginal Urban Strategy is gratefully acknowledged.**

The Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council is a not-for-profit policy and research organization that addresses social determinants to improve and enhance the social, economic and cultural base of Aboriginal peoples in the City of Toronto (for more information, please visit www.tassc.ca on-line or contact a representative of the organization by phone at 647-748-6100 or by e-mail at info@tassc.ca).

ABORIGINAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: OUR OPTIONS FOR ACTION

Pamphlet 4 in a Series of 4
Aboriginal Civic Literacy Pamphlets



Photo: Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press

1. DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT

Voting: This is the most vital component of civic engagement. Our community should vote for political candidates who will help us to get the things that we want from government, rather than ones who are merely charismatic.

Direct Lobbying: This can mean anything from signing a petition or writing a letter to speaking personally with our political representatives face-to-face to make certain that community wishes are known to them.

Needs Assessments, Policy Documents, and Funding Proposals: These originate with and are developed by research and policy and social and community service organizations for the public good. They are not overtly political and go to government workers, not politicians.

Personal Political Activism: Joining a political party or a political cause is personally empowering and garners useful contacts that are politically savvy and influential.

Political Candidacy: More Aboriginal people should seek election to public office because they would definitely have our community's best interests at heart.

Picketing and Political Rallies: These events are a more sporadic form of political activism, and attract more participants because they are one-time-only affairs. Care must be taken, however, not to hurt public sympathy through rash actions.

Appeals to Tribunals and Other Watch-Dog Agencies: In Canada, this means taking our grievances to ombudsmen and human rights commissions when it's legally possible to do so, in hope of obtaining fair remedies for our complaints and concerns.

Legal Action: Reasons for going to court range from seeking injunctions, contesting or helping to prove allegations of criminality, and insisting upon or defending our rights. Both individuals and organizations may go to court.

Self-Governance: An especially effective means of ensuring that government better meets Aboriginal needs would be for our community to gain a measure of self-government at the municipal level in Toronto. This would also enable us to interact with mainstream governments on a government-to-government basis.

2. GENERATING SUPPORT FROM NON-ABORIGINAL PARTIES

Personal Service with Non-Governmental, Community Service and Advocacy, and Faith-Based Organizations: Much like personal political activism, this too is personally rewarding and can garner useful contacts and connections with sympathetic supporters.

Informative Cultural and Awareness Events: We can do everything from public awareness events and gatherings (powwows even) to simply setting up booths at events hosted by others to generate awareness of issues.

Social Expression Through Art: Art can be deliberately shaped to create greater awareness about social justice and responsibility. Such messaging can be as blatant or subtle as artists wish (sometimes, controversy can be a good thing if it generates good discussion of issues).



Photo: Fred Chartrand/The Canadian Press