

The Value of Collaboration

The driving force for solving complex problems

Because of complexity and number of institutions and scientific questions surrounding salmon reintroduction, no one organization will be able to tackle this important issue alone. Instead, successful outcomes will depend on a strong commitment to collaboration that is built on a foundation of **empathy and trust** between participants. While collaboration is always challenging, more confrontational alternatives including litigation are slow, expensive, risky, and often counterproductive. This handout outlines key elements of successful collaboration to inform your work within the Columbia River Basin.

Collaboration Beats Confrontation

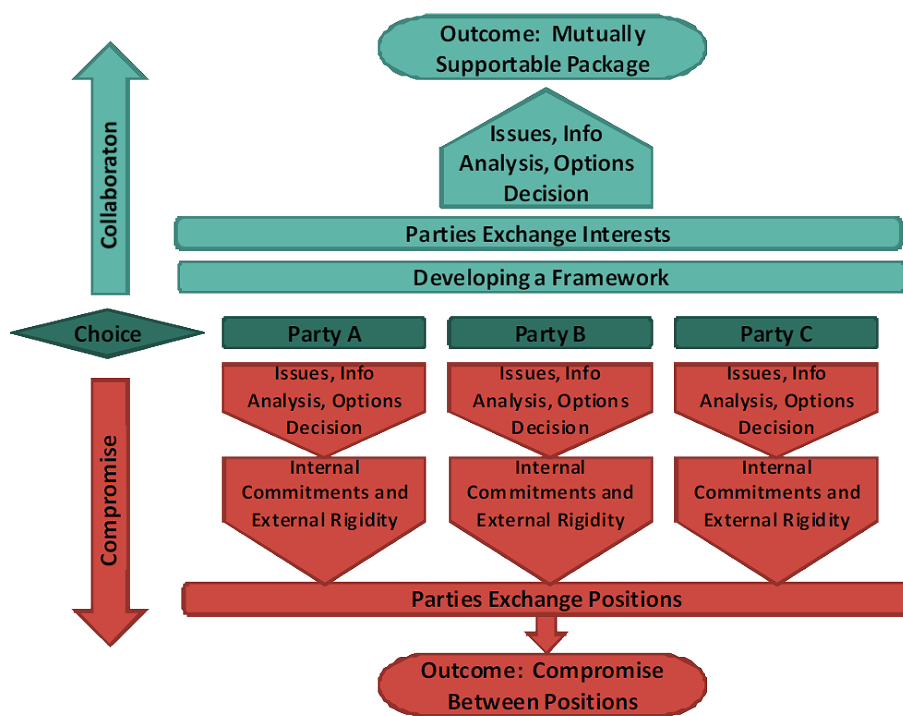
Collaboration can be defined as two or more people working together using specific processes & techniques towards shared goals and outcomes, and it is something all of us do every day.

Sincere collaboration leads to more effective decision-making with a broad basis of support (greater buy-in) and more enduring outcomes. Many examples illustrate the “pay now or pay later” principle (Greig et al. 2013). In essence, either take the time and put the effort in up front or you will need to do it later, and usually at greater cost (Booth and Halseth 2011, Saarikoski et al. 2013).

Many facilitation practitioners lament to one another that “collaboration is hard”, and this is true. But confrontational alternatives such as litigation are even harder, not to mention risky, slow, expensive and damaging to relationships needed to effectively implement solutions.

Figure 1: Collaboration focuses on the interests of all parties and is different from “compromise” and quick fixes that often sacrifice good solutions for expediency and the needs of a narrow set of authorities. Collaboration aims for enduring long-term solutions for all. Source: Sigurdson et al. 2011.

Furthermore, issues like reintroducing salmon to the Canadian portions of the Columbia Basin in the presence of advancing climate change are highly complex and involve more demands and difficult trade-offs to be met by multiple elements of society. No single group has either the requisite experience nor capacity to meet these challenges on their own.



Element 1: Recognize Multiple Values & Decisions

"It is not that I am mad, it is only that my head is different from yours." - Diogenes

What we believe and who we are is in part a result of what we've experienced. What we experience is different for all of us. Because of this, we all see the world differently. We will see its problems, its paths and each other differently. While we are looking at the same world, it is worth keeping in mind

when interacting with one another that the motivations and values of the people around the table will be different and diverse. The majority of successful partnerships understand this and work by accommodating differences rather than by eliminating them (Johnson et al. 2019).

Value Description

Example Indicators



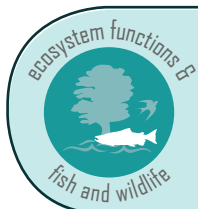
Designing optimal hydropower and dam operations that consider other valued components (especially fish conservation) while meeting region-wide electricity demands.

- Power generation revenues
- No. sustained power generation interruptions
- Customer satisfaction scores for value & reliability
- Clean energy GHG emissions reduction



Evaluating multi-scenario flood risk and associated costs to society; Scenario-based flood inundation mapping/modelling.

- Reservoir elevation relative to flood protection & dam safety guidelines
- Maximum river flow thresholds relative to flood guidelines
- Discharge variability and bank erosion potential
- Sediment deposition rates as function flows



Defining flow operations and conducting studies to balance ecosystem based functions (e.g., fish habitat) and sentinel species management (e.g., salmon) while considering other valued components and evaluating performance towards goals and objectives.

- Riparian vegetation richness & diversity (Kinbasket)
- No. bird nests inundated (Arrow)
- Fish spawning habitat availability (e.g., whitefish, trout)
- Magnitude of dissolved gases
- Primary littoral productivity indexed by reservoir stability



Designing river operations to optimize recreational benefits (e.g. boating in Arrow Lakes); evaluating recreational use and costs/benefits to society.

- Recreational boating access as function reservoir elevation
- Shoreline recreation access as function reservoir elevation
- Change in classes of recreational use by reservoir elevation, by location



Evaluating reservoir management for flood and inundation risk to important cultural and archaeological sites.

- Protecting cultural, spiritual, archaeological sites from flooding & erosion
- Allowing access to archaeological sites by appropriate people
- Max/min. reservoir elevations



Ensuring the wellbeing and health of communities

- Dust generation risk
- Water quality
- Change in relative abundance mosquitoes
- Improving availability of natural foods

Element 2: Use Best Practices for Fostering Collaborative Relationships

Collaborative processes are participatory rather than authoritative. It takes a sincere and sustained effort to build tailored processes for bringing people together and helping them more efficiently align. This also includes differentiating “consultation” from “collaboration”. Using explicit procedures, collaborative processes place the participants in a **decision-making role** rather than in a mere advisory capacity whereby they have been “consulted” and their views considered by another authority who ultimately makes the decision. Participants are free to support and accept an outcome only if they are satisfied

their diverse values and interests are sufficiently met and that they can recommend the decision for implementation. If participants (including statutory authorities) do not believe an agreement is consistent with their mandates and responsibilities, it is their duty to say “NO”. The act of building a culture of collaboration to help resolve conflicts and make decisions can follow many different pathways. Although there is no single recipe for success, there are many individual ingredients that represent proven best practices for bringing people together. Some of these best practices are outlined below, and in Figure 2.

- 1. Ensuring strong executive leadership and direction** encouraging each party’s participation. Strong executive direction is critical in spurring and sustaining action (Greig et al. 2013).
- 2. Use an open, participatory process to define clear guiding principles or “ground rules”** for the problem to be solved and for working together. Collectively setting clear expectations about purpose, roles, responsibilities, and procedures helps all participants decide the most effective ways of working together and fosters a sense of mutual respect, inclusion, and accountability for the process and its outcomes.
- 3. Bring the right parties together at the appropriate time, in the appropriate sequence**, to improve efficiency and avoid gridlock. This might involve breaking down discussions into a series of tiers, for example:
 - **Tier 1 Dialogue** – between individuals with a very similar sphere of values and interests, e.g., Indigenous Nation to Indigenous Nation or a dialogue between the Provincial Government and BC Hydro.

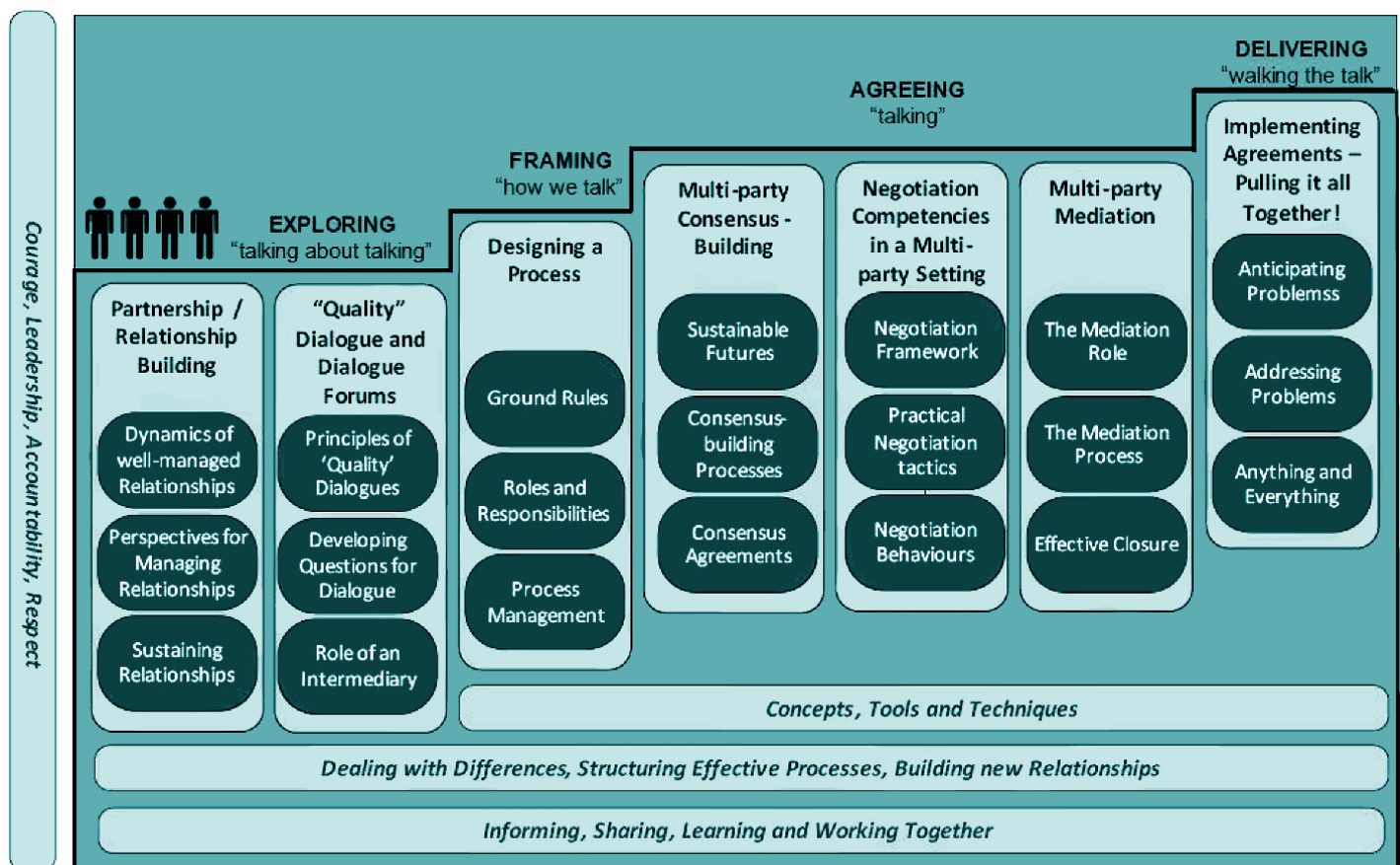


Figure 2: Examples of best practices across different stages of collaboration. Source: Sigurdson et al. 2011.

- **Tier 2 Dialogue** – between two groups, e.g., Indigenous Nations and a Federal or Provincial government agency
- **Tier 3 Dialogue** – between all interested participants, e.g., Multiple Indigenous nations, Federal Government, Provincial Government, BC Hydro, Independent Science Advisory Teams, BC Wildlife Federation, Nature Conservancy of Canada, local community groups, etc.

4. **Break-down topics and goals of collaboration into an appropriate set of (iterative) stages.** For instance: (i) exploring interest in participation, (ii) framing expectations and ground rules (aka Terms of Reference), (iii) generating and disseminating best-scientific evidence and conducting and managing the collaborative technical process and (iv) implementing the agreement and monitoring results (e.g., Figure 2). Recognize that collaborative work that occurs will be iterative, not “one and done”.

5. **Sequester and characterize sources of conflict and dispute** by differentiating problems arising because of (i) different perceptions or **values**, (ii) reliance on **different sources of evidence** and understanding and (iii) reconciling and balancing **trade-offs**. It can be much harder for someone to accept information from a source believed to be a threat to their home turf. This is okay, so long as the reluctant party acknowledges that this may be a values problem rather than a technical problem. A transparent and collaborative process is designed in a way that teases apart differences around values, evidence and trade-offs. Promoting better understanding and respect for these differences contributes to clearer communication and building bridges rather than trying to coerce people into thinking a certain way.

Element 3: Create Enabling Conditions for Good Relationships

Beyond establishing effective guidelines and processes for collaboration, it is also necessary to create the more intangible enabling conditions for the interpersonal relationships that drive collaboration. Relationships that are high on **communication, empathy and trust** are the engines that drive effective collaboration. These

relationships must also be patient and prize working within an iterative “learn by doing” culture. Participants are also more likely to gain understanding and trust the credibility of scientific evidence where there is a premium placed on recognizing one another as contributing experts (vs. recipients hearing information as if knowledge deficient), getting to know participants and ensuring that the results of analyses are relatable (provided in scales and forms people can easily understand).

$$\text{Trust} = \frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Self-Orientation}}$$

Credibility = Qualified, necessary skills and experience.

Reliability = Do as they say, high quality performance, on time.

Intimacy = Comfortable talking about difficult/sensitive topics.

Self-orientation = Level of concern with one’s own desires, needs and interests as opposed to those of others.

Resolving hard problems – like it or not – is fundamentally a team sport where the game is highly iterative in search of a single voice that speaks to all interests by questing to find innovative solutions for balancing trade-offs. The obvious benefits of having played such a demanding team game is to achieve lasting and enduring success in implementing the agreement.

Further Reading

Booth, A. and Halseth, G., 2011. Why the public thinks natural resources public participation processes fail: A case study of British Columbia communities. *Land use policy*, 28(4), pp.898-906.

Greig, L., Marmorek, D., Murray, C. and Robinson, D., 2013. Insight into enabling adaptive management. *Ecology and Society*, 18(3).

Johnson, D.S., Lalancette, A., Lam, M.E., Leite, M. and Pálsson, S.K., 2019. The value of values for understanding transdisciplinary approaches to small-scale fisheries. In: Chuenpagdee, R. and Jentoft, S., eds. *Transdisciplinarity for Small-Scale Fisheries Governance* (pp. 35-54). Springer, MARE Publication Series.

Runnebaum, J.M., Maxwell, E.A., Stoll, J.S., Pianka, K.E. and Oppenheim, N.G., 2019. Communication, Relationships, and Relatability Influence Stakeholder Perceptions of Credible Science. *Fisheries*, 44(4), pp.164-171.

Saarikoski, H., Raitio, K. and Barry, J., 2013. Understanding ‘successful’ conflict resolution: policy regime changes and new interactive arenas in the Great Bear Rainforest. *Land Use Policy*, 32, pp.271-280.

Sigurdson, G., Stuart, B., and Bratty, J. 2011. A Practical Guide to Collaborative Fisheries Governance: A Guidebook for BC Salmon Fisheries. Report from the Integrated Salmon Dialogue Forum. 30 pp.