

Lake Superior Headwater Sustainability Partnership

Community Engagement Framework

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There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?” Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.

Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

Talk to people you know.

Talk to people you don’t know.

Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.

Expect to be surprised.

Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what’s possible.

Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.

Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

Rely on human goodness. Stay together.

- Margaret Wheatley, “Turning to One Another”

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OUR SHARED COMMITMENT

The Lake Superior Headwaters Sustainability Partnership (“Headwaters Partnership”, “Partnership”) was founded on the belief that meaningful stewardship begins with relationships between people and the lands and waters that sustain them. This includes the people, lands, and waters of the St. Louis River Estuary and surrounding watersheds. Communities bring deep knowledge, experience, and care for local landscapes. Engagement strengthens stewardship when that knowledge is recognized and honored and when people are invited to help shape decisions that affect their communities. Through this Community Engagement Framework (Framework), the Headwaters Partnership affirms a shared commitment to building relationships with communities and supporting engagement that strengthens stewardship across the region.

The Framework reflects the Partnership’s learning from 2023 to 2026 through collaborative work, community conversations, and the guidance of the Headwaters Partnership Community Council. It captures the values, commitments, and practices partners and community leaders have identified as essential for meaningful engagement. It provides a common foundation for both theoretical and practical considerations that helps partners coordinate engagement efforts that are responsive to community priorities and needs.

The Community Engagement Framework supports the Headwaters Partnership by:

- **Clarifying how we work together**
Outlining Partnership commitments that strengthen collaboration, shared learning, open communication, and coordination across organizations to support meaningful engagement.
- **Guiding how we engage with community**
Presenting a set of Principles and Practices for Engagement that translate partnership values into practical approaches for building relationships, supporting inclusive participation, and grounding engagement in place.
- **Connecting partners to tools that support the work**
Linking partners to practical resources, including the Community Atlas for understanding community context and the Community Engagement Toolkit for designing engagement plans aligned with the Principles and Practices for Engagement

The Community Engagement Framework builds on the Partnership’s shared Vision and Guiding Principles (Figure 1), which describe the collaborative approach partners use to support a thriving estuary landscape and community. The Framework is intended to be a living guide that evolves through continued partnership learning and community collaboration.

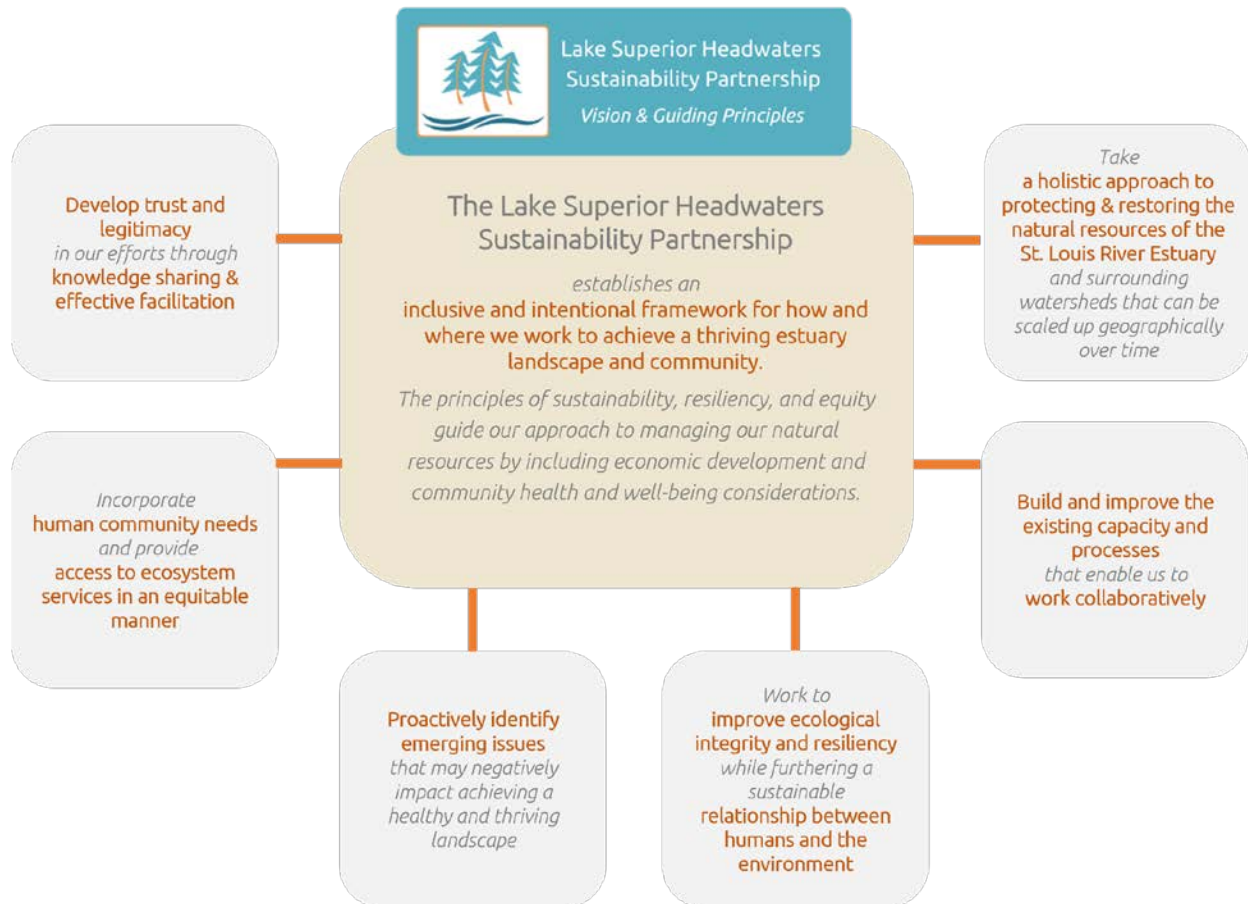


Figure 1. Headwaters Partnership Vision and Guiding Principles

Throughout this document, we use the term “community” or “communities” to refer to the many groups of people connected to the land and water within the Headwaters Partnership region through residency, work, recreation, care for this place, and/or cultural or historical ties.

HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

“Most people love the idea of collaboration... as long as it promises to do exactly what they want it to do. But that is not how collaboration works. Collaboration is not forced or coerced.”

- David Ehrlichman in Impact Networks

The Headwaters Partnership is a voluntary, collaborative partnership of over 30 agencies, organizations, local governments, and tribal entities working together to protect, restore, and steward the natural resources of the St. Louis River Estuary and surrounding watersheds. As such, we

approach community engagement as a shared practice that strengthens trust, collaborative capacity, and stewardship. The following commitments describe how the Headwaters Partnership works internally to support engagement across organizations. We strive to model within the Partnership the same values that guide our work with communities. Together, these commitments create the foundation for effective collaboration across the Headwaters Partnership region.

WE PRACTICE SHARED LEADERSHIP

The Headwaters Partnership fosters a culture of shared leadership, recognizing that strong internal relationships create the conditions for meaningful collaboration with communities. By developing participatory leadership skills and experience, partners build truly collaborative teams that engage with openness, respect, and shared responsibility.

“Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those led. The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders.”

- Mary Parker Follett

In our practice, we:

- Focus on building relationships
- Approach work with a collaborative mindset
- Establish shared leadership within teams and workgroups
- Foster shared responsibility for group work
- Implement participatory decision making within teams
- Establish shared collaboration agreements and partnership norms that guide how we work together
- Recognize and actively check power dynamics in Partnership processes
- Support accountability and follow-through on shared commitments

Key resources:

- Collaborative mindset and leadership
 - **Collaborating Well: The Four Cornerstones**
 - **Institute for Conservation Leadership’s The Less Visible Leader**
 - **Building Collaborative Capacity: Designing for the Multiple Dimensions of Trust**
- Participatory decision-making
 - **Sam Kaner’s Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making**
 - **Circle Forward’s Consent Based Decision-Making Protocol**

WE BUILD THE CONDITIONS FOR CONNECTION

The Headwaters Partnership supports information sharing, communication systems, coordination structures, and regular opportunities for partners to exchange knowledge. These elements build trust within the Partnership, which is vital to strengthening relationships and allowing us to work more effectively together toward our shared goals.

In our practice, we:

- Share Partnership information and data openly to support transparency and trust
- Maintain Partnership communication systems, including the website, email list, and newsletter
- Develop and support onboarding systems for new partners
- Create opportunities for partners to connect formally and informally
- Create pathways for connection between partners and community leaders, including supporting the Headwaters Partnership Community Council
- Host regular convenings, forums, and learning gatherings, including a networking session at the St. Louis River Summit and the fall Gathering Grounds event
- Provide effective facilitation for meetings

Key resources:

- Headwaters Partnership [website](#) and [resource library](#)
- Headwaters Partnership [Communication Strategy](#)
- Partner onboarding materials (under development; to be posted in the Headwaters Partnership resource library)

WE LEARN AND ADAPT TOGETHER

The Headwaters Partnership expands engagement through a culture of curiosity and learning. We recognize that engagement improves through learning and practice. We establish systems and norms for shared reflection and learning, capacity building, and accountability.

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.”

- Albert Einstein

In practice, we:

- Lead with curiosity and openness to learning
- Learn through inquiry and participatory approaches

- Support partner-to-partner learning and knowledge exchange
- Provide training in participatory facilitation, collaborative leadership, and inclusive community engagement practices
- Recognize and learn from partner-led engagement efforts across the Partnership
- Strengthen facilitation, reflection, and follow-up practices that support learning and growth

Key resources:

- Participatory facilitation
 - Art of Hosting & Harvesting Conversations that Matter **practice guide**
 - **Open Space Technology: A User’s Guide**, book by Harrison Owen
 - World Café **resources and global community**
 - **Liberating Structures Menu** for designing routine and group interactions
- Participatory action research
 - **Headwaters Partnership Putting the Voice of People in Your Projects** **handout**
- Headwaters Partnership community engagement resource library (see the Partnership’s **Google Drive**)

Together, these commitments strengthen our collaborative capacity and create the foundation for the Principles and Practices for Engagement that shape our work with communities.

HOW WE ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY

The following Principles and Practices for Engagement, developed with community leaders and the Headwaters Partnership Community Council, offer a shared foundation for building relationships, supporting inclusive participation, and working alongside communities in ways that reflect shared stewardship of the Headwaters Partnership region.

PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The Principles for Engagement presented here were developed based on conversations with community leaders at a special event hosted by the Headwaters Partnership in January 2025. The principles, listed below, are intended to guide engagement both within the Partnership and with the broader St. Louis River estuary landscape community:

CENTER PLACE: GICHIGAMI-ZIIBI (THE ST. LOUIS RIVER) AND HER CONNECTED ECOSYSTEMS

We center Gichigami-ziibi and her connected ecosystems in our work. We foster place-based experiences and connections to nature. We center our shared love, passion, and care for the river in all our work. We act sustainably to steward our home.

BUILD COMMUNITY

Building community means we gather people together to find common ground, recognize both shared and unique experiences, and establish shared goals. We emphasize relationship building and collaboration, and we focus on making sure we communicate plainly, clearly, and effectively. We look for opportunities to bring people together to share food and experiences, celebrate, and grow relationships with one another in place.

ACT WITH INTEGRITY & MUTUAL RESPECT

Integrity and mutual respect mean that we do our work with high ethical standards and respect for one another and the estuary. This includes practicing deep listening to one another, fostering trust, and showing up consistently, authentically, and with humility. We act with purpose and intention, and practice taking accountability for our commitments. We seek to repair trust when it is broken.

FOSTER RECIPROCAL CONNECTIONS

We center the mutual connections we have with one another and with our place. We act with reciprocity to give back to our communities and our place, supporting one another where we need support, and empowering one another. We prioritize learning from others and sharing our knowledge with each other. In all our work, we engage with our community's diverse cultural ties including storytelling, faith, tradition, history, art, and more.

FOSTER BELONGING FOR ALL

Fostering belonging for all means creating safe, accessible, and inclusive spaces that invite diverse members of the community, of all ages and backgrounds, into our work. It means we recognize the value in many perspectives and ways of knowing and contributing, especially those rooted in Indigenous, ancestral, and historically marginalized knowledge systems. We welcome dialogue, even when it challenges us, and we make space for disagreement, learning, and growth. We acknowledge the power dynamics and histories of harm that shape participation, and we work actively to shift those dynamics by empowering community leadership and sharing decision-making.

CENTER JOY, HOPE, AND LOVE

In all our work, we center joy, hope, love, gratitude, and appreciation for one another and our place. We embrace laughter and play, envision positive futures, and celebrate our place and each other.

PRACTICES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The Practices for Engagement (“Practices”) and associated engagement strategies presented here were developed by the Headwaters Partnership Community Council, which was convened in October 2025 to guide the Partnership’s community engagement efforts. The Practices for Engagement translate the Principles for Engagement into practical ways partners can implement engagement efforts.

The Practices were developed by the Community Council based on two core beliefs: 1) strong community engagement grows from authentic relationships with people and with place, and 2) engagement must begin by recognizing and honoring community strengths.

Authentic relationships invite people to show up as whole human beings, bringing their experiences, culture, knowledge, and feelings into the work. They are built through listening, honesty, consistency, and care. As trust grows, people feel more comfortable sharing ideas, asking hard questions, and helping make shared decisions over time. This relationship-centered approach supports people’s sense of belonging and creates space for joy, hope, and open conversation. When we build our work through authentic relationships, we honor our shared connection to the places that are important to us.

Every community holds strengths, stories, leadership, and deep knowledge of the places they live and love. Authentic community engagement must begin by recognizing these strengths and investing in the people, relationships, and traditions that already sustain the community. As community members help guide decisions and lead action, relationships deepen, trust grows, and shared stewardship becomes stronger and more sustainable.

The four Practices for Engagement (Figure 2) are interconnected rather than sequential. All are necessary for authentic engagement with communities. However, building organizational readiness provides the foundation that is essential for the work. As we work to develop and strengthen our community engagement skills, it is essential that we recognize the need for flexibility and adaptability as we learn and grow together. There is no one right way to approach community engagement, nor do all of these Practices need to take place at once. The Practices and associated strategies outlined below can be used as a starting point and guide.



Figure 2. Headwaters Partnership Practices for Engagement Developed by the Community Council.

Practice: Communicate in Ways that Resonate

Clear and simple communication helps people connect with your work. Explain ideas in ways that feel familiar to your audience. People learn in different ways, so use tools like music, maps, stories, or art to make your message clear and personal. Clear communication builds understanding and helps people feel included.

Strategies:

1. **Plain Language Communication:** Use clear, simple language in all public communication. Limit technical terms and define them when needed. Avoid acronyms. Share key information and provide ways for people to learn more.
2. **Multimodal Storytelling:** Use art, music, theater, maps, and storytelling to share information. Invite community members to share their own stories and creative work. Seek out community organizations that already connect with community members in unique ways.
3. **Cultural and Cognitive Framing:** Recognize that people process information differently. Listen to the community of people you are connecting with. Use examples, visuals, and stories that reflect their culture and lived experience. Choose words that connect with your audience and explain how the work may affect their community.

Practice: Grow Trust and Long-Term Relationships

Building trust takes time. It grows when partners show up, listen, and follow through. People build trust with each other through repeated interactions, shared values, and honest communication. Long-term presence helps relationships deepen and grow stronger over time.

Strategies:

- 1. Relationship Centered Engagement:** Listen with curiosity and humility as a member of the community. Create space for open conversation without a set agenda. Ask open questions and invite stories. Reflect back what you hear in future communication. Share what inspires or excites you in this work. Align projects with community values and involve multiple levels of your organization to show commitment.
- 2. Consistent Presence:** Be visible and reliable. Attend community events and stay connected with the same groups over time. Share information through flyers, digital platforms, and in person outreach. Repeat key messages.
- 3. Low-Barrier Participation:** Make participation easy and welcoming. Host free, family-friendly events like meals, art activities, outdoor activities, or hands-on workshops in familiar places. Provide needed supplies and gear. Reduce common barriers like cost, transportation, food, and childcare. Invite all ages. Provide clear directions, visible signage, and greeters so people feel confident and welcome.

Practice: Acknowledge Community Strengths

Authentic engagement begins by recognizing the strengths and assets within a community. Every community has knowledge, traditions, members, and leaders who care deeply about their place. Good partners take time to learn local history and culture and honor community strengths, including working alongside Indigenous communities and others with deep ties to the land and water. Starting with strengths builds trust and shared leadership over time.

Strategies:

- 1. Local Strengths Focus:** Learn who lives in the area, what matters to them, what programs are already in place, and where the community gathers. Shape outreach and programs around local needs and strengths. Consider **mapping community assets** such as skills, spaces, culture, stories, and organizations.
- 2. Culturally Rooted Approaches:** Respect traditions and cultural practices. Work alongside Indigenous leaders and trusted local voices.
- 3. Institutional Acknowledgment and Reciprocity:** Seek to understand historical, political, and economic forces that affected communities. Acknowledge past harms and disconnection.
- 4. Shared Leadership Pathways and Community Activation:** Include community members in planning and decisions. When possible, pay people for their time and expertise. Create clear paths for deeper leadership roles. Partner with trusted local groups and build on existing efforts.
- 5. Interactive Learning and Participation:** Use hands on activities such as community science, stewardship projects, outdoor events, and interactive maps to help people develop personal connections to the land and water around them.

Practice: Build Organizational Readiness and Shared Learning

This Practice provides the foundation for all others. Organizational readiness is essential to support authentic community engagement. Organizations must prepare before engaging the public. This means building skills, understanding power, and aligning on shared values. Staff need time and training to prepare. Readiness helps teams engage with care and respect.

Strategies:

- 1. Internal Capacity Building:** Provide or seek out training in equitable engagement, open conversation skills, facilitation, trauma-informed communication, and responding to hard questions.
- 2. Partner Alignment Sessions:** Plan time for partners to align on values, language, roles, and expectations before public engagement begins.
- 3. Power Awareness, Repair, and Accountability Practices:** Reflect on how institutional power may affect trust and participation. Use language that reduces hierarchy, for example describe an invited speaker as “knowledgeable community member” instead of “an expert in the field.” Acknowledge mistakes and repair harm when needed. Create clear processes for feedback, conflict, and accountability.
- 4. Feedback and Evaluation Loops:** Regularly gather input through surveys, listening sessions, or other tools. Use feedback to improve future efforts. Let the community help define what success means.

MESSAGES FROM THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

To hold Nature in Reverence

“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. ~Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac”

The restoration projects of the Lake Superior Headwaters Partnership continue, mitigating the legacy damage that occurred over many decades in seeing nature as a commodity. With this environmental restoration and the intention to protect, restore, and steward the natural resources of the St. Louis River Estuary also comes the consciousness of an environmental justice philosophy: recognizing Nature, its significance in our lives, and the continuing development of our relationship to it.

Environmental exploitation is deeply embedded in the human condition, creating a separation from a true relationship with Nature and our inner nature. This inner nature might be defined as innate intelligence.

Nature heals...and our Innate intelligence melds together with nature in connecting with an inherent, inborn wisdom guiding living being's growth, health, and self-healing. Operating outside of conscious thought, it is often described as the body's natural ability to function and adapt, coordinating processes like tissue repair, chemical reactions, and homeostasis through the nervous system. The bridge between Nature & our innate intelligence has no differentiation.

Les Blacklock, a leading wildlife photographer wrote a book titled Meet my Psychiatrist where he iterates that growth, health, and self-healing can be found “...like sitting on an old mossy log just thinking about nature and beauty and how easily the meaning of life and the hunger of people for communion and wholeness can be satisfied...that Nature...is a great psychiatrist.”

Jerry Mander, (a proponent of The Deep Ecology Philosophy) even back in 1992, in his book In the Absence of the Sacred states...”It is not too soon to observe that the technology revolution may not be living up to its advertising, at least in terms of human contentment, fulfillment, health, sanity, and peace. And it is surely creating terrible and possibly catastrophic impacts on the earth.

The Deep Ecology philosophy defines self-realization (at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs on the journey toward human potential) as achieving a deeper sense of self by identifying with all living things, fostering a more compassionate relationship with nature. To hold Nature in reverence & acknowledge its significance in our lives, being open to healing on a physical, psychological, & Spiritual level: yes, the path to greater human potential.

Leah Prussia, DSW, a faculty member at the College of St. Scholastica and founder of Natural Connections LLC states “The inner trauma of disconnection is healed through restoring the relationship with the natural world. When humanity embodies personal healing, it leads to mutually beneficial actions with Earth and all that lives.”

And one more...Richard Louv, author of. "Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" states "Time in nature is not leisure time; it's an essential investment in our children's health (and also, by the way, in our own)."

I continue to ask the question...what is lost in the process as too many of our socio-cultural practices have been moving farther away from our connection with Nature. The answer goes beyond survival but to our capacity to evolve as a species...attuned with nature!

The current move toward recognition of these legacy practices and the programs established to mitigate the damage done is re-directing our focus on to the significance of our connection with Nature, the intuitive connection with our innate intelligence...and healing!

A focus on our relationship in community with all living beings is imperative to both our survival & our growth. The intention of the Partnership to protect, restore, and steward the natural resources of the St. Louis River Estuary is highly significant in restoring that relationship.

– Michael Anderson

What I appreciated most about being on the Community Council was the pace at which the work unfolded. There was intentional space to build relationships, to learn about one another beyond our roles, and even to occasionally "get off track." I came to see those moments not as distractions, but as essential—this is where creativity lives and where new ideas begin to take shape. When we loosen rigid structures and show up with a willingness to listen, we create the conditions for more meaningful and innovative work. This is not always easy when a deadline is approaching, but the work always gets done.

This experience deepened my understanding of what authentic community engagement looks like. It is not a one-time task or a box to check on a grant application; it is an ongoing process and a practice. It requires returning again and again, showing up consistently, and investing in relationships over time. To be willing to change course and adapt along the way. Stronger relationships lead to deeper trust, and that trust makes space for more honest dialogue and better outcomes.

I also learned that meaningful engagement requires a genuine commitment to place and to people. It means taking the time to understand the community you are part of, valuing the perspectives of everyone who comes to the table, and recognizing that each voice contributes to a more complete picture. Ultimately, this experience reinforced for me that good work doesn't just come from efficiency—it comes from connection, patience, and a shared willingness to listen and learn together.

– Alyssa Johnson

It was a privilege to participate in the Community Council alongside individuals with diverse experiences, values, and perspectives. Being in a space where we were given permission to show up authentically enabled us to learn from each other and look for ways to best represent our community. The Framework has been developed into a guide that we are proud of. It allows organizers to pursue intentional and reflective facilitation while strengthening their relationships with individuals and groups. As a council, we talked a lot about human connection and how the ways we interact with our neighbors and spaces impact our lives. We hope that local workgroups use this as a tool to have more meaningful interactions with people and spaces in our region.

– Megan Lidd

The record will show that I have contributed to community council, leveraging a decade of outdoor education and community building work for the cause - that would be a stretch of the imagination.

In reflection, I was just a willing participant in, student of, and witness to the masterclass on effective community engagement Gini and Sarah dreamed up and realized through this council. Every step of process revealed intuition, intention, and in-spiration, and we would all benefit to internalize their process and apply it in our practice.

I would like to eternalize my gratitude to Gini Breidenbach and Sarah Beaster, in no particular order, for their presence & awareness in seeing our potential and encouraging us to participate; coaxing out our strengths and equitably honoring them while tactfully dispelling our doubts; creating space for the odd platypus (you had to be there, man); and, at least for me, restoring a sense of humanity. What a beautiful turn of events...

– Amir Najam

Involvement with the Headwaters Partnership as a community council member has translated my voice into collective philosophy; into frameworks. This organization, and those they draw in, are beautifully holistic souls, with diverse backgrounds & perspectives, who enrich the entire space with the birth of new & novel types of community connections.

With an Environmental Science background, I arrived with a scientific appreciation of the local watersheds, as well as a recreational appreciation from all the hiking & nordic skiing I love to do. Now, being on this council, I come with an inseparable adoration: personal, scientific, recreational, social, & artistic passion. The interaction with other council members, other partners---hearing their story---has awakened within me how each of their lenses through which they see the world, are in which I have, too. The community-ties has internalized in myself outside of the partnership space and manifested in my daily life, in micro moments or larger glimmers. I already arrived with a love for the environment, but now appreciate nature's presence even more, something I didn't imagine possible.

Beyond the council, I've always loved my job as a research assistant, and now I love my work even more. I collect data, prepare and care for plants, and I feel the connection with the earth. My hands in the soil, and the therapeutic impacts. The uniqueness of each tree seedling from another in research, how artistic their varying morphology becomes. How the impact of this research, to sustain forests in the northwoods, keeps the breathtaking views I always marvel at when skiing. Rather than seeing only a big-picture at the end of a project, I feel that appreciation in my daily life, work or not; whether listening to a seminar lecture or having a brief conversation. Everything is more meaningful. It is equally the journey as is the destination is for me. My art feels more inspired by the land & waters, my social experiences outdoors more frequent. And so with a science background and an artistic/recreational appreciation background, combining this in an interconnected context feels so freeing. Growing new appreciation in one's job---I imagine this is what the partners feel.

The Headwaters Partnership sheds appreciation and highlights all their hard work, and facilitates that into community engagement: community & partners mutually benefiting each other with holistic appreciation for the restoration work, natural resources management, as well as cultural, spiritual, recreational, artistic, and many more ties. I imagine everyone; both partners and community individuals, feel each other's perspectives giving new insight & intrigue to their own. The science in the art and the art in the science and more. I have seen the value & beauty in bridging the gaps between technical work and community outreach, and how the partnership's

work is already making a difference in strengthening this connection for all. Building trust & mutual interest. I already know the Partnership's vision is coming true, because I as a community member already feel engaged with the estuary, and inspired to share that zeal with others. Serving on the Community Council has truly been amazing. I am so excited to see the Headwaters Partnership flourish even more!

– Taylor Ranum

I am a plant lover. I am a lover of plant stories. I find healing in working with plants and learning about the different relationships they have with other plants, animals, water, soil. Who do they like to grow by? Do they like their roots wet? What do they look like in different seasons? Can I eat them or make tea with them? How do they taste in the spring? How do they taste in the fall? What kind of nutrients do they offer me? Do they have other practical gifts to offer?

I love sharing plant knowledge and particularly helping kids see that plants have gifts to share with us. And by getting to know them, we can relate to plants and build relationships with them that can bring us wisdom, strength, and help us understand the ways that we belong in the world, and belong to the world. In my work I have gotten to see kids and adults experience really profound healing through building these relationships.

I came to this council with a desire to find more place-based opportunities to build relationships with my plant and animal relatives, in community with other people. What I want to see for our community is more opportunities to build reciprocal relationships with plant and animal communities so that more members of our human community are able to read the landscape and understand on a deeper level how we maintain a balance that benefits all of our relatives. In our world today we all exist in a lot of spaces that dehumanize us and distort our understanding of our relationship with the natural world. Authentic community engagement to me is an opportunity to re-humanize community engagement, and ground it in joy, belonging, and love. I find so much hope in the work being done.

– Katie Schmitz

TOOLS THAT SUPPORT THE WORK

The Headwaters Partnership provides practical tools that help partners understand community context and design meaningful engagement approaches. These resources support early project planning and design of engagement efforts to meaningfully engage the communities connected to the work. Together, they help partners apply the Guiding Principles and Guiding Practices described in this framework.

COMMUNITY ATLAS

The Headwaters Partnership Community Atlas is a starting point for understanding the communities and places connected to a project. It brings together publicly available data, maps, and local information to help partners identify who may be affected, understand community characteristics and assets, and inform early engagement planning. Insights from the Atlas are intended to be complemented by direct engagement with community members and local knowledge.

Key resources:

- [Community Atlas](#)
- [Community Atlas case studies](#)
- [Community Atlas training video](#)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

The Headwaters Partnership Community Engagement Toolkit builds on the principles and practices presented here to help partners design engagement approaches that are practical, flexible, and responsive to the communities connected to their projects, while also ensuring that engagement is aligned with project goals.

Key resource:

- [Community Engagement Toolkit](#)

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The Headwaters Partnership is committed to strengthening relationships with communities through continued collaboration and meaningful engagement. As partners apply this framework, practices will grow and adapt through experience and community insight. In keeping with our commitment to shared learning, the Partnership will periodically review how these practices are used and identify opportunities for training, outreach, and support to strengthen this work.

