
STAYING

Discussion Guide

For citizens ages 18 to 34 · Two hours, in person

The plan has a target: 80% of young adults still at Bay Mills in 2045.

You are the people that number is about. The draft is written and a lot of people have shaped it, but it is not finished — so this is the point where what you say still moves the document.

Please read this before you come — about ten minutes. Section 3 tells you honestly what can still change and what cannot. Section 6 has one thing worth thinking about in advance.

1. Where this sits in the process

The Master Plan runs from 2025 to 2045. It covers housing, work, health, schools, elders, language, roads, power, and how the tribe governs itself. It is not a wish list — it has dates, numbers and money attached.

This plan did not start with a blank page. It rests on work going back to 2020, and a lot of people have already put their hands on it.

2020–2023	The groundwork	A tribal census, and a series of community conversations and talking circles across Bay Mills. This plan grew out of that work.
Early 2025	Planning workshops	Workshops and discussions with Tribal Council, senior staff and department staff, and with citizens and other stakeholders. These set the context, gathered data on current conditions, surfaced the key initiatives, looked at regional trends, and considered what the organization itself needs to carry the work.
2025	Chapters written and reviewed	Each chapter was drafted and shared with Council and staff, and meetings were held with every department to gather feedback on the initial drafts.
Now	Staff and community review	Feedback is still coming in from tribal staff. Alongside it, community sessions are being held with youth, BMCC students, adults 18 to 34, adults 35 to 54, and Elders 55 and older. This is one of those sessions.
Next	A near-final draft	Everything gathered from staff and from these sessions is worked into a near-final draft, which goes to Tribal Council for review and comment.
Then	A final draft, adopted	Council's comments are incorporated into a final draft, which Council formally adopts.

You are being asked before the near-final draft is written — not after it is finished.

That matters. Once a document goes up for adoption it gets harder to change, and the useful moment is now.

2. Why this age group

Between 65 and 70 percent of Bay Mills young adults stay. That is roughly double the average for tribal communities, and it is not an accident — it is the result of decisions people made over the last forty years. On top of that, 15 to 20 citizens move back every year.

The plan wants 80 percent by 2045. Getting from about 67 to 80 means two things must happen at once: whatever holds people here must get stronger, and whatever pushes them out must get weaker.

Nobody can work out what would do that except the people making the decision. That is you, and most of you are making it now or have made it once already.

Some of you never left. Some left and came back. Some are working out whether to go. All three are useful, and the third is the most useful of all — so if that is you, please come and say so.

One more piece of arithmetic. In 2045, when every number in this plan comes due, you will be between 38 and 54. You will live with the result of this document longer than anyone else being asked about it.

3. What can still change, and what cannot

This is the part most consultations leave vague. We would rather be straight with you, so nobody spends two hours on something that was never going to move.

	Detail
OPEN — this session can change it	Whether an objective is aimed at the right problem. Whether a target is the right number — too high, too low, or measuring the wrong thing. What must be true for an action to work here, and what would stop it. The order things happen in — what must move earlier, what could wait. Anything missing that should be in. Anything in there that should come out.
SETTLED — not changing here	The seventeen core areas and the four-level structure of the document. That framework came out of the 2025 planning workshops and has been worked through by Council, senior staff and every department. The twenty-year horizon and the four phases.

	Detail
COUNCIL'S TO DECIDE	Council has already helped shape this draft through the 2025 workshops and by reviewing the chapters as they were written. What comes next is theirs: they review and comment on the near-final draft, and then formally adopt a final version. What this room can do is send Council a clear message about what it found, so that message is in front of them when they take it up. That is what the last part of the session is for.

4. How the plan is built

Four levels. Here is one worked all the way down:

Seventeen core areas	Culture, housing, economy, infrastructure, health, education, governance, environment, energy, finance, youth, elders, regional leadership, community spaces, sustainability, public safety, justice.
Objectives	Inside Core Area 5, Health: reduce behavioral health waiting times.
Sub-objectives	Under that: integrate behavioral health into primary care.
Actions, with dates and numbers	And under that, the commitment you can actually hold somebody to: waitlist cut by half by 2030, zero waitlist for urgent cases after that, embedded providers in primary care by 2032, and at least 50% non-grant funding by 2033.

The bottom level is what this session tests. A plan written in general language cannot be broken — but it also cannot be kept, and nobody can be held to it.

The whole plan runs about \$380–485 million over twenty years. Phase 1, from 2025 to 2030, carries roughly \$110–145 million of that and is by some distance the densest phase.

5. What we will do

Two hours, four parts, with a break. We start on time and finish on time.

PART 1 · WHY PEOPLE STAY, AND WHY THEY GO

You will pair up with one other person and interview each other — three questions each way. Then the room builds two lists together, side by side: what holds people here, and what pushes them out.

This is not a warm-up, and the second list is not a complaint box. Moving retention from about 67 percent to 80 means strengthening one and weakening the other, so both halves are needed. Those two walls then become the yardstick for the rest of the session — you will hold the plan against your own answers, not against ours.

The three questions

1. **Why are you here?** Not the official answer — what actually keeps you at Bay Mills, or what brought you back?
2. **When did you most seriously think about leaving — or when did you leave?** What was going on? What would have changed it?
3. **Think of someone your age who left and has not come back.** Why did they go? What would have kept them?

PART 2 · TESTING THE PLAN — THREE ROUNDS

Six stations around the room, one per table. Each holds a cluster of the plan's real objectives and the actions underneath them — the actual wording, the actual dates, the actual numbers. They are listed in section 7 so you can read them before you come.

Every action gets three tests:

DOES IT REACH YOU?	Would you or somebody you know actually use this? Or is it aimed slightly past the people it is written for?
IS IT ENOUGH?	Does the number move anything? Would it strengthen something on the first wall, or weaken something on the second? If neither, why is it in the plan?
IS IT IN TIME FOR YOU?	When would you need this by? Work out your own age at the date on the page. A commitment that lands in 2038 does not affect a decision somebody makes in 2027.

- **Round one — your own station.** Work through the actions with all three tests. Mark up the sheet.
- **Round two — you move to a different station.** One person stays behind to explain what was written. You read what the first group said, then add, disagree, and sharpen.
- **Round three — back to your own station.** You return to find what visitors added. Your job is to narrow it: the two things this station must tell Council.

PART 3 · THE MESSAGE TO COUNCIL

Each station reports its two items and they go up on a wall, in front of everybody. That wall is what this room is sending forward — twelve specific, tested statements about a plan that has not yet reached Council.

Then one open question: what is missing from the whole plan?

PART 4 · WHAT YOU WILL CARRY

On your own, on paper nobody else reads. Four lines, and the last one is the reason this session exists at all.

What would have to be true for you to still be here in ten years?

There is also a line asking what part of it you could carry yourself. That is not a trick. Some of this plan needs a Council decision and forty million dollars. Some of it needs six people who care enough to keep showing up.

6. Before you come

1. **Have an answer ready for question two.** Reflect on the time you nearly left Bay Mills or did actually leave the community. That one is harder to produce on the spot than it sounds, and it is probably the most useful thing you will say all evening.
2. **Think of one specific person who left.** Not people in general — one person, and the actual reason. They are not in the room, and somebody must speak for them.
3. **Read section 7 and pick the station you would most want to be at.** Tell us and we will try to seat you there.
4. **Do the arithmetic on one date.** Pick any commitment in section 7, look at the year, and work out how old you will be. It changes how the page reads.

7. The six stations

These are real objectives and actions lifted from the draft, with their dates and numbers intact. Read whichever ones interest you; nobody is expected to read all six.

STATION A · SOMEWHERE TO LIVE (Core Area 2)

- Plantation Road Phase 1: 94 lots with full infrastructure by 2030 — 65 single-family homes, 9 multi-family apartments, 8 elder units, 12 mixed-use residential. \$6M committed tribal investment.
- Phase 2: 60 additional lots between 2030 and 2035, including workforce housing, student housing and three commercial units.
- Deliver 20+ workforce and student housing units by 2030.
- Section 184 loans, a three-year lease-purchase program, down payment assistance and credit building.
- Emergency and transitional housing including confidential, trauma-informed domestic violence units.
- Starting point: 410 housing units on the reservation and a homeowner vacancy rate of 0% — nothing currently available to buy.

STATION B · WORK AND MONEY (Core Area 3, Core Area 10)

- Reduce gaming from roughly 70% of tribal revenue to under 40% by 2045, across six non-gaming priority sectors.
- Establish the Bay Mills Economic Development Authority as the central coordinating entity for all non-gaming enterprises, with annual strategic plans and performance reports (2025–2030).
- Capitalize a \$5M Native CDFI lending fund: \$1.5M across 30 loans supporting 25 businesses in Years 1–5, building to \$15M cumulative by 2045; 40 jobs in Years 1–5 rising to 200+.
- Complete a compensation analysis against the State of Michigan, Sault Tribe and regional employers, and implement a hybrid model balancing cost-of-living with performance and specialized position premiums.
- Launch Bay Mills Federal Contracting, Inc. as a Section 17 subsidiary and secure 8(a) certification (2030–2035).
- Strategic retail acquisition in priority order: full-service grocery, then hardware and building supply, then automotive service. Marina Phase 1, \$5M, 2026–2029.

STATION C · LEARNING AND TRAINING (Core Area 6)

- BMCC: 15,000 sq ft STEM and Allied Health facility by 2029; nursing program graduating 25+ a year by 2030; renewable energy technicians by 2028.
- Build 100-bed student housing at BMCC by 2031.
- On-campus BMCC childcare for 100+ student parents by 2029.
- \$12.5M in scholarships and student support over twenty years, with loan forgiveness from 2026 for citizens who serve the community five or more years.
- BMCC dual enrollment for 100% of eligible Ojibwe Charter School students by 2027.
- Provide 200+ tribal government internships annually by 2030, and a Youth Energy Leadership Program with paid internships by 2030.

STATION D · FAMILY AND HEALTH (Core Area 5, Core Area 6)

- Expand childcare to 6:00 PM minimum with a dedicated sick daycare program, addressing the 125+ tribal employees currently affected; deliver to 100+ tribal employees by 2028.
- Launch full Anishinaabemowin immersion preschool in 2027 serving 30–40 children annually, extending immersion to all Head Start and early childhood settings by 2028.
- Achieve 95% kindergarten readiness for all tribal children by 2035.
- Reduce the behavioral health waitlist by 50% by 2030 and achieve zero waitlist for urgent cases thereafter; embedded providers in primary care by 2032.
- Implement gambling and opioid use disorder screening in primary care by 2027.
- Reduce diabetes as a significant household concern from the 55.1% (2022) baseline to 45% by 2030, 35% by 2035 and 25% by 2045.

STATION E · LANGUAGE AND CULTURE (Core Area 1)

- Reach 5% community conversational fluency in Anishinaabemowin by 2030, 15% by 2035, 25% by 2040 and 30%+ by 2045 — roughly 900 speakers.
- Family language nests for 25–30 families from 2028, building to 100+ Anishinaabemowin-speaking households by 2045.
- Pair 100+ young people annually with cultural knowledge keepers by 2028, plus traditional arts apprenticeships for 30–40 people a year.
- Build a 25,000 sq ft Cultural Center (2028–2032), with a four-season lodge and expanded powwow grounds (2026–2032).
- Cross-deputized cultural protection officers operational by December 2026 — flagged in the plan as a critical priority — with zero theft incidents sustained from 2030.
- Restore 50+ acres of manoomin by 2033, expand maple syrup to 5,000+ gallons annually by 2038, and build a fish hatchery with capacity for 1 million+ whitefish annually by 2030.

STATION F · GETTING AROUND AND GETTING CONNECTED (Core Area 4, Core Area 9)

- Complete broadband expansion in Phase 1 (2025–2030) and achieve 100% community coverage by 2035.
- Expand transit to 5 daily round trips by 2030, add weekend service by 2033, and install 15 bus stops with shelters and real-time arrival information by 2035.
- Develop 20 miles of ADA-compliant sidewalks — first 8 miles by 2030 — and 15 miles of dedicated bike and shared-use paths by 2040.
- Install LED street lighting with smart controls on 50% of tribal roads by 2030 and 100% by 2037.
- Build 1–2 MW of solar in Phase 1 rising to 8–11 MW by 2040; 90%+ renewable electricity by 2045; community energy costs cut 65–70%.
- Build a \$2.5M waterfront trail and boardwalk with interpretive signage in Anishinaabemowin.

8. What happens to what you say

- Everything is written down without names. We record what gets said, not who said it.
- It goes into the near-final draft, alongside what the other community sessions produced and what tribal staff have said.
- Some of it will change the plan. Some will not — and you will be told which, and why.
- The message wall from part 3 goes to Council with the revised draft, as the record of what this room found.
- You get one page back on what changed, by September 30, 2026 .
- What you say belongs to Bay Mills, not to any consultant, and is handled under the tribe's own rules for community information.
- Nothing from the session goes on social media by us, and no photographs without asking.

Two things worth saying plainly

A lot of people in this room will work for the tribe or one of the enterprises. No supervisors, department directors or Council members are attending as observers — that is a rule for this session, not a preference. You are here as a citizen, not as a job title. If there is something you would rather write than say, part 4 is unsigned.

And the obvious limitation: everyone in the room stayed. The people who could tell you most about why young adults leave Bay Mills are not at Bay Mills. That is why question three asks about somebody who left. Answer it carefully — for the length of that conversation you are the only person who can speak for them.

The honest version of why this session exists

This plan commits somewhere between \$380 and \$485 million over twenty years, and one of the things it is trying to buy is your decision to stay. It should not be guessing about what that would take.

If it turns out that the thing which would keep you here is not on any of the six stations, that is the single most valuable sentence this session could produce — and two hours before it reaches Council is a cheap way to find it out.

Gichi-miigwech. See you there.