

Governance Pilot Project: Matsqui First Nation

The Matsqui First Nation's governance project goal was to:

- design an improved personnel policy manual to respond to changing roles and responsibilities of staff,
- create a more effective approach to managing human resources, and
- build greater capacity in preparation for self-government.

Matsqui First Nation utilized the expertise of a consultant to assist two community members with the facilitation and development of the project. The project engaged community members through numerous community meetings, helping the project to identify human resource needs in all functional areas of the First Nation's administration.

Once needs were identified, the First Nation created policy statements, followed by further policy review and development. The second phase of the process involved a presentation of draft policies to community members at a general meeting, with an opportunity for comment and feedback to be provided. In the final stage of development, the Matsqui Governing Body and project team proceeded to make changes based on input from the community. The process also provided mentoring and job paralleling opportunities designed to help First Nation members learn about First Nation administration.

The human resource policy produced by Matsqui is a concise and clearly presented document. It is sensitized to the cultural responsibilities and practices of staff, allowing up to six weeks of cultural leave without pay so employees can participate in cultural activities. The policies developed provide sound guidelines for improving the human resource management capacity of the First Nation, supported by interesting and helpful documentation in the appendices, such as a code of conduct and employee appraisal form.

The Code of Conduct or 'ethics contract' provides Matsqui First Nation employees with an incentive to familiarize themselves with First Nation policies and procedures, and to act in accordance with ethical standards. The guidelines include provisions respecting confidentiality, drug and alcohol abuse, respect for authority and in serving First Nation members, loyalty, self-improvement, integrity, and workplace harmony. The employee appraisal and self-appraisal forms are original, asking staff and supervisors to rate performance in terms of effectiveness, attitude, quality of work, attendance, work habits, communication skills, organization, and leadership ability. To provide community members with incentives to complete high school, the Matsqui Policy Manual includes guidelines for the provision of rewards to successful graduates.

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