



governance toolkit

best practices

Principle: Strategic Vision
Government: Tsleil-Waututh Nation

OPPORTUNITY

The Tsleil-Waututh are a Coast Salish people who live in a community located on the north shore of Vancouver, B.C. The Tsleil-Waututh have worked hard to protect their community identity and culture in the face of rapid urban expansion. Community leaders, including Chief Dan George and John L. George, have spoke strongly of the need to maintain aboriginal rights and title.

In the early 1990s, the leadership began a revitalization process to mark their presence within Tsleil-Waututh traditional territory and to ensure their community's survival in the growing urban environment. Three critical steps were undertaken to ensure their success. First, a vision for the community, land and people was developed. Second, Tsleil-Waututh enrolled in the treaty process and engaged with numerous partners who operated within their traditional territory and share common goals. Finally, Tsleil-Waututh developed and used a planning process to facilitate the achievement of their goals.

NCFNG

is a national, independent, First Nations-controlled organization dedicated to supporting First Nations as they work to implement their inherent right to self-governance. The development of a set of shared principles that clearly articulate our approach to effective governance is one way in which we support that work. This NCFNG Effective Governance Case Study profiles a best practice in the principle "Strategic Vision".

To learn more about this case study, contact:
Tsleil-Waututh Nation
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PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

Tsleil-Waututh developed a vision for the community, land and people through a six-stage process. In the first stage the Tsleil-Waututh began an extensive visioning process, looking at what an indigenous government should be and how the community could function within a sovereign model. A series of principles were developed and accepted based on the vision.

In the next stage the community reformed their internal governance process and developed a constitution. The resulting restructured government now includes administrative functions (but no band manager), elected positions, representatives from the nine traditional families of the nation, and the community whose role it is to oversee the entire governance process. In the third stage, an inventory of existing community resources was undertaken. Historical development of the territory over the previous 140 years was researched and maps were developed showing biophysical and cultural territory features. Once the inventory was in place, the community was ready to begin developing plans.

The fourth stage consisted of the design of the plans. The community identified two types of plans: planning long term (referring to conceptual plans based on the principles of seven generations) and planning for the short term (referring to operational planning for the eco-cultural units and watersheds).

With planning complete, the community began the fifth stage – implementation – with an inclusive conference of stakeholders who held interests within their traditional territory. Protocol agreements and memoranda of understanding were developed with a range of government and non-government organizations.

The final stage of the planning process is self-reflection where the community, administrators and leadership conduct ongoing reviews of the goals ensuring they remain relevant and aligned to the vision and revise accordingly. The end product is a powerful statement

of their vision captured in the Tsleil-Waututh Nation Declaration.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The visioning process was successful because Tsleil-Waututh had an approach to planning that was consistent with their community values.

The approach used in the six-stage process ensured that it was a community driven process, incorporated traditional and contemporary practices, focused on sovereignty and community management, and respect for the natural environment.

A further reason for Tsleil-Waututh success was their ability to develop from the vision the following set of core principles to guide them in developing more specific community plans:

- Create “Engines” for Opportunity
- Employ Community-Based Governance
- Map the Biophysical, Cultural and “Power” Information in the Traditional Territory
- Adopt the FNLMA and Develop a Community Plan
- Create Partnerships
- Pursue Innovative Economic Ventures

The final key to success was the presence of strong, determined and consistent leadership.

CHALLENGES

Community engagement can be considered the heart of a strategic vision. However, in developing a vision for a nation it is often times difficult to maintain a high level of community participation in the process. This could be due to a number of factors. For example, community members could be unable to participate due to lack of time, family commitments, or indifference, etc. As a result, nations need to be aware of these challenges and do everything they can to mitigate these potential issues and encourage engagement.

Our Tsleil-Waututh Nation is moving into our future. Our children and our land are our future. Our future will bring enough for our children’s children to thrive. We are looking forward, we are ready to meet the next millennium.

— Excerpt from the Nation Declaration

Inaccessible information can also be a challenge to creating a nation’s strategic vision. Often times, language and formal education barriers faced by some of a nation’s community members prevent them from fully understanding the information they are being consulted on. As such, nations need to ensure that any information shared or distributed to their community members is in an easily understood format and is explained in non-technical language.

Further, all information should be easily accessible to community members, i.e. distributed door-to-door, posted on a website, mailed out, etc.

Once a vision is endorsed there are still challenges associated with its implementation. First Nations need to be aware of this challenge and make a conscious effort to make their strategic vision continually relevant in both their planning and day-to-day operations.

A final challenge more specific to Tsleil-Waututh First Nation was their urban setting. The nation’s urban environment posed unique issues dealing with the preservation of community identity and culture within their community plan. This challenge required a balancing of interests for the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation.

NCFNG GOVERNANCE LESSONS LEARNED

Strategic Vision is the shared, long term dream of a nation and charts the course from where the people are to where they want to be. Articulating a shared strategic vision is the necessary starting point to effective governance. Tsleil-Waututh recognized the importance of shared vision as an essential foundation for nationhood.

LINKS AND MORE INFORMATION

Tsleil-Waututh Nation Declaration

www.burrardband.com/pdf_files/declaration.pdf

First Nations Stories

<http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/R2-305-2004E.pdf>

First Nation Land Register

<http://pse3-esd3.ainc-inac.gc.ca/FNLRS/content/main/fnlrs-login.asp>

Say Nuth Khaw Yum Park Management Plan

www.burrardband.com/treaty/PDF_Documents/SNKY_PublicDraft_Sept1007_FINAL