



# governance toolkit

## best practices

**Principle:** Human Resource Capacity

**Initiative:** First Nations Public Service Initiative

### OPPORTUNITY

*First Nations communities in B.C. and Canada, operate in a complex policy and legal environment that must be navigated by the administrators, directors, band managers, and program staff in our governments. This First Nation public service is responsible for implementing the direction and decisions of our leadership within the constraints imposed by federal and provincial legislation, policy, and programming. In most cases, this must be accomplished with inadequate financial and human resources. Reflecting this reality, the success of a First Nation community can often be directly linked to the effectiveness and capacity of its administration. The First Nations public service is key to a community's viability and well-being.*

The knowledge and skills First Nation public servants require to do a good job are varied and extensive and include financial management, strategic planning, asset management, leadership, aboriginal law in Canada, community development approaches, land use planning for both on and off-reserve, government and community relations, and skills for re-building historic nation alliances and institutions.

### 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 "Human Resource Capacity".

To learn more about this case study, contact:  
First Nations Public Service Initiative  
[www.firstnationspublic.service.com](http://www.firstnationspublic.service.com)

To learn more about the NCFNG:  
[news@fngovernance.org](mailto:news@fngovernance.org)  
Toll free: 1 866 922 2052

Since the 1970's the role of the First Nation public service has steadily increased in its significance and importance. These key administrative positions play a significant role in the success of any initiative at the community level – including the broad goal of moving away from the Indian Act towards inherent right based self-governance.

In 2008, the First Nations Summit and the B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation partnered to support the development of a provincial First Nations public service strategy. The strategy will focus on identifying knowledge and skills for capacity building related to three areas:

- Developing effective leadership
- Maintaining and supporting the core functions of a First Nations public service through the skills and knowledge areas noted above
- Supporting the effective management and administration of specific sectors of First Nations communities such as health, education, lands and resource management, economic development, housing, social development, etc.

### PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

In 2008, four pilot programs began to identify and implement activities that will result in measurable changes in strengthening their individual First Nation public service. The four pilot communities are Chemainus First Nation, Musqueam Indian Band, Tsleil-Waututh First Nation, and Osoyoos Indian Band.

The purpose of the pilot projects is to:

- Develop partnerships between First Nations to further strengthen their human resource capacity
- Produce a set of best practice tools that would be available to other First Nation communities
- Document and share the resulting products and outcomes of the pilot projects with First Nations in B.C.

The intent is to build on these pilot projects and share the results with First Nations across B.C. Through this work, the First Nations Public Service Initiative hopes to recognize the value of the First Nations Public Service in B.C. and to strengthen the capacity of First Nations for success.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS**

It is important to note that support to First Nation governments, from the Canadian and B.C. governments, while welcome, has come as a response to the evolution of aboriginal law in Canada and the subsequent emergence across the country of increasingly strong and autonomous First Nation governments. The need for increased human resource capacity in First Nations communities has always been identified by the communities themselves. The emergence of a B.C. First Nation public service is one example.

Another example of such aboriginal-led work is the 2008 forum co-hosted by the NCFNG-BC Region and the AFOA-BC Chapter to engage First Nation administrators in a discussion about the need for an association of band administrators and for professional certification. The forum was attended by approximately 40 B.C. First Nation administrators. There was overwhelming support from participants for the concept of a First Nations public service association and certification.

## **CHALLENGES**

The Discussion Workbook, *Building Capacity in the BC First Nations Public Service*, identifies a set of significant challenges to developing capacity required for effective governance:

- Conflict between the vision of communities and government programs and policies
- Inadequate resourcing
- High turnover and burnout of public servants
- Poor compensation and lack of job security
- Significant diversity in size of First Nations communities leading to a broad range of needs and challenges between communities

**The reality is that we already have a First Nations Public Service, but we don't acknowledge it and work to make it effective and credible**

— Grand Chief Edward John

- Low success rates in formal education
- Lack of relevant formal education opportunities

These continue to be the challenges that will slow human resource capacity development in First Nation communities. However, a clear, high-level strategy for HR development as envisioned in the First Nations Public Service initiative will be the most effective way to build the capacity required for self-governance.

## **NCFNG GOVERNANCE LESSONS LEARNED**

First Nations can only achieve effective governance with the right human resource capacity in place. The principle of *Human Resource Capacity* speaks to the skills and abilities of the people that govern our communities and implement our community programs and services. With the right to govern comes the responsibility to govern well. The expansion of our human resource capacity, including the professional development of the next generation of leaders and managers, is a necessary investment to see that our nations possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to govern effectively.

Of the critical factors that have come together to realize the First Nation Public Service Initiative, many are grounded in the NCFNG principles of effective governance. These include:

- Shared strategic vision for the initiative
- Commitment to meaningful information sharing through consultation with First Nations communities, organizations and workers
- Creation and support for partnerships
- Effective working relationships with inter-government partners: federal, provincial and First Nations

## **LINKS AND MORE INFORMATION**

Discussion Paper on Advancing a Certification System for First Nation Administrators  
[www.fngovernance.org/pdf/Advancing\\_Certification%20.pdf](http://www.fngovernance.org/pdf/Advancing_Certification%20.pdf)

Joint Planning and Policy Forum,  
[mainc.info/bc/whho/wkptsh/jppdf/anfor/2001/fnpspr\\_e.pdf](http://mainc.info/bc/whho/wkptsh/jppdf/anfor/2001/fnpspr_e.pdf)

Recruiting a First Nations Administrator: Toolkit  
[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/bc/proser/fna/fngas/fnpsi/tolkt/tolkit\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/bc/proser/fna/fngas/fnpsi/tolkt/tolkit_e.html)

Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada (AFOA), [www.foa.ca](http://www.foa.ca)