

Moving Forward on Housing & Infrastructure Reform in BC

What was the process that you went through to build a full service FN controlled Institutions?

We needed to define the issues we were trying to focus on, understand the current political and fiscal environment. We examined options that we believed would address the issue(s). We then developed a work plan to do the necessary research and report writing that was needed initiate discussions with Government and Communities. We then went out and spoke to communities and political bodies. At this point there are over 200 First Nations scheduled to the Act, 100 have been certified by the FMB and the FNFA has lent to First Nations over \$400M. We have succeeded but the time it took was longer that we anticipated.

To begin with we had to consider the following:

- 1) Name the players who will influence the debate. Beside First Nations who needs to be engaged consulted? This is about systemic change, not program tweaking
- 2) Do the research necessary to be able to articulate to a wide variety of stakeholders with varied interests to describe why an FN institutional approach can produce better outcomes.
- 3) Accepted that this needs to be a coalition of the willing. Consensus while an admirable goal is most often not achievable. The lowest common denominator is not the formula for success.
- 4) Be honest, recognize that no one initiative is going to provide the silver bullet solution. The aboriginal file is very complex in today's legal and political environment. Be part of the solution.
- 5) Develop an outreach and communication strategy specific to the stakeholder group you are before. Language is very important.
- 6) Recognize everyone is measuring your initiative against the principles of aboriginal rights and title and treaty entitlement and now UNDRIP
- 7) Describe how your initiative is going to be of benefit to the local community.
- 8) Be part a part of the legislative development process and secure through an MOU with government agencies confidence in having input into the legislative drafting instructions.

- 9) Identify the leadership group. Usually these people should come from representative of First Nations who agree to act as proponents in the political and public arenas.
- 10) Put in place a technical team that supports the process throughout the development, legislative and implementation phases. Find the people who can tell you how to do things and avoid the people who dwell on why we can't do things.
- 11) Recognize the needs are so great and the gap so large and that decisions at the community level were going to determine success or failure. Communities will have to be on Board.
- 12) Determine what skills and capacities are needed at the leadership level.
- 13) Have answers to questions before they are asked. You have to be prepared to sell your idea.

What advice can you offer when creating a FN Housing Authority?

You will need champions to advance to discussions. You will need political discipline. You need a team that can find its way through the maze and find a way to do things and not accept the 10,000 reasons central agencies will tell you it can't be done. I suggest you consider the following:

- 1) Consult First Nations on what the scope and authority of the institution might look like, but understand that while there may well be a BC Region service delivery vehicle this conversation means changes to a National policy and you must try and work with the AFN.
- 2) Prepare an exposure draft on the issues involved in housing and infrastructure that concludes by laying out FNHA objectives, how this approach will be a help and what the relationships between Canada, First Nations and the Institution would look like. How will this initiative replace the services and resources offered by INAC or other Agencies?
- 3) Define and clearly articulate the opportunities and benefits of moving in this direction. Will this institution be able to eliminate the housing and infrastructure backlog?
- 4) Determine which federal government departments or agencies need to be involved.
- 5) Identify your spokespeople and get them in from of parliamentary committees

- 6) Attempt to secure INAC, CMHC, AFN and Regional Support from First Nations. Go out and talk to people on the ground.
- 7) Develop and explain the implementation plan
- 8) Secure agreement on how the Institution be funded?
- 9) Constantly review the political landscape and other initiatives that have the potential to impact the efforts of the institution. Things like fiscal relations, securitization of Federal Transfers, market housing on reserve.
- 10) Define information you will need and put your technical team together early.
- 11) Be aware of the federal election cycles and the timing of the legislative calendar.
- 12) Estimate the capacity development requirements at the local level for communities to participate and benefit from FNHA initiatives. Develop programs and certification processes to fill the gaps.
- 13) Think big, think of this as the future and you are one of the emerging First Nation Central Agencies.
- 14) Don't take on the issue unless there will be changes to the fiscal framework. More efficient program management can only address a minor part of the cumulative deficit.
- 15) Secure a commitment to long term capital contributions to First Nations that they can opt to securitize to expedite the provisions of infrastructure
- 16) Get ready to go to parliamentary committees. And be prepared to do outreach with the individual politicians in Ottawa. You are going to have to explain why there should be a FNHA.
- 17) Change the acronym to something like FNIHA or people will confuse you with the First Nations Health Authority FNHA.
- 18) Explain why the creation of this institution is in the interest of all Canadians, not just First Nations. Point to the social consequences for poor infrastructure and housing and the positive economic impacts for all if we were to address the current gap.

What are some of the tools that the FMA institutions (FNFC, FNFA, and FMB) have that might support a FNHA?

At the time of the development of the FMA proponent First Nations recognized the need for First Nation Institutions that could serve as a platform for a new fiscal relationship. This new fiscal relationship needed to transfer fiscal powers to First Nations and their Institutions, provide First Nations access to capital as governments for their debt and equity needs, and provide an accountability framework that responded to the needs of our membership, the capital markets, and those to fund programs and services. The three institutions that were created by the FMA respond to these needs. We can support you in the following ways:

- 1) We can support your outreach to communities and politicians through the institutional development process.
- 2) We can support the development of an accountability framework for the institution and communities it serves that Canada and the capital markets trust.
- 3) We can provide access to capital that uses revenue streams not assets as the means to secure debt.
- 4) We and AFOA BC can partner with you in the delivery the capacity development tools and certification programs.
- 5) The FMB's Financial Management Systems Standards requires community planning, five year financial forecasts, an assessment of the risks facing the community through the creation of a risk register.
- 6) Working to develop financial literacy on what a fiscal relationship is and why it is important and how it impacts the communities and institution's needs.
- 7) Support your participation in a First Nation central agency type of structure.
- 8) Be a shoulder to lean on.