

## **NOMINATION OF TZEACHTEN FIRST NATION FOR**

### **AFOA BC 2017 BEST PRACTICES AWARD**

Tzeachten First Nation located in Chilliwack in the Fraser Valley is a vibrant and progressive community with a population of over 600. Over many years, Tzeachten First Nation has taken a bold step forward in embracing best practices in all aspects of community governance and administration. As an outlook Tzeachten views itself as, “a small community that could”, in the pursuit of best practices.

Tzeachten First Nation’s governance structure starts with the membership who elect a council comprised of a Chief and four Councilor’s. The Chief and one Council member are full-time salaried councilors. Chief and Council hires a General Manager as the only employee who reports directly to Chief and Council as a whole.

The General Manager is mandated by Chief and Council to develop administrative capacity. As best practice, Administration is comprised of senior management and staff who do not report directly to Chief and Council, thus ensuring the separation of programs, services and administration from political governance. It must be pointed out that Chief and Council do provide clear direction regarding program, service design and development through policy and strategic planning.

In 2008, Tzeachten pursued and became one of the earliest First Nations to sign the Land Management and Control Agreement with Canada and consequently Tzeachten proceeded to develop the best practices in Land Management and Control with regards to their reserve lands. Since then Tzeachten has developed many land management related laws, policies and procedures that have served the community in a very effective and efficient manner. Examples of best practices that are related to the Land Management and Control is the Land Code or Law which enables Tzeachen’s Chief and Council as well as membership to directly regulate and control all matters concerning lands. Tzeachten has a land use plan, a zoning law, development approval and permitting policies and procedure.

One of the best practices that Chief and Council established regarding Land Management and Control is establishing a Tzeachten Land Management Advisory Committee that draft lands related laws and policy and facilitates community engagement in providing input to the laws prior to making recommendations for approval and enactment by Chief and Council.

In 2011 Tzeachten First Nation also resolved to pursue to establish best practices in financial management by drafting and eventually enacting the Tzeachten Finance Administration Law which consequently required Tzeachten to develop and implement over thirty financial policies which have provided an excellent framework for best practices in financial management and controls within Tzeachten.

Tzeachten Chief and Council went further and committed to have Tzeachten go through the First Nations Financial Management Board (FNFMB) Certification for Financial Management Systems. Working with FNFMB for a period of approximately three years undergoing extensive scrutiny and auditing Tzeachten was successful in achieving certification and recognition on October 14, 2017.

Some of the best practices that Tzeachten Chief and Council applied to achieve the above certification was to establish a Finance and Audit Committee comprised of Council members and community members at large.

Chief and Council working in a team approach with the Finance and Audit Committee and Administration created over thirty finance policies including a Personnel Policy and Procedures manual. These were drafted, reviewed, discussed, enacted and implemented to guide Tzeachten as an organization to apply best practices.

For many years Tzeachten Chief and Council had undergone an annual strategic planning session that focused on one fiscal year at a time. In 2014, Tzeachten Chief and Council resolved to embark on developing and establishing multi-year, long term strategic planning and review framework.

Chief and Council recognized the importance of setting overall community strategic goals and developing a plan that would achieve those goals through effective and efficient allocation of both financial and human resources.

Chief and Council also recognized that the strategic planning and review process was a best practice to allow the community to engage in defining community strategic priorities over the long term. For example prior to the November annual strategic planning retreat Chief and Council seek input from the Tzeachten Family Advisory Committee which is comprised of representation from the nine Tzeachten Families, the Elders Advisory Committee and Senior Management who gather departmental input from employees.

In 2014 Tzeachten Chief and Council developed and established a three year detailed Strategic Plan (2015-2018) plus two additional years of very general goals and objectives which overall was a five year outlook.

There were seven key strategic goals identified by Chief and Council which included:

1. Culture and Language
2. Economic Development
3. Health and Safety
4. Environmental Stewardship
5. Leadership and Governance
6. Infrastructure
7. Administration

As best practice, Chief and Council along with senior management conduct Strategic Planning in November to plan and review processes which results in the establishment of strategic priorities for the next fiscal year.

Once strategic priorities are clearly establish by Chief and Council the General Manager and senior management are directed by Council to develop departmental work plans and associated operational and capital budgets.

The General Manager and senior management must ensure that there is a high level of understanding and involvement of employees and their contribution towards the success of the implementation of the Chief and Council strategic priorities.

In addition to the annual review of the strategic plan by Chief and Council, Tzeachten has also established best practice of quarterly review and reporting by management to Chief and Council. Through this activity Chief and Council are able to monitor the implementation of their strategic priorities.

At the end of the fiscal year Tzeachten First Nation also conducts organization wide employee performance evaluations which reviews how effective each employee has performed in contributing towards the implementation of the Chief and Council's strategic priorities. This is why it is important that employees understand how their work contributes towards the community's strategic goals and quality of life.

In conclusion, Tzeachten First Nation has demonstrated that pursuit of best practices in governance, administration, financial management and controls, land management and controls, policy development and implementation and strategic planning and review processes is a worthwhile commitment.

Respectfully submitted by James Atebe, General Manager

