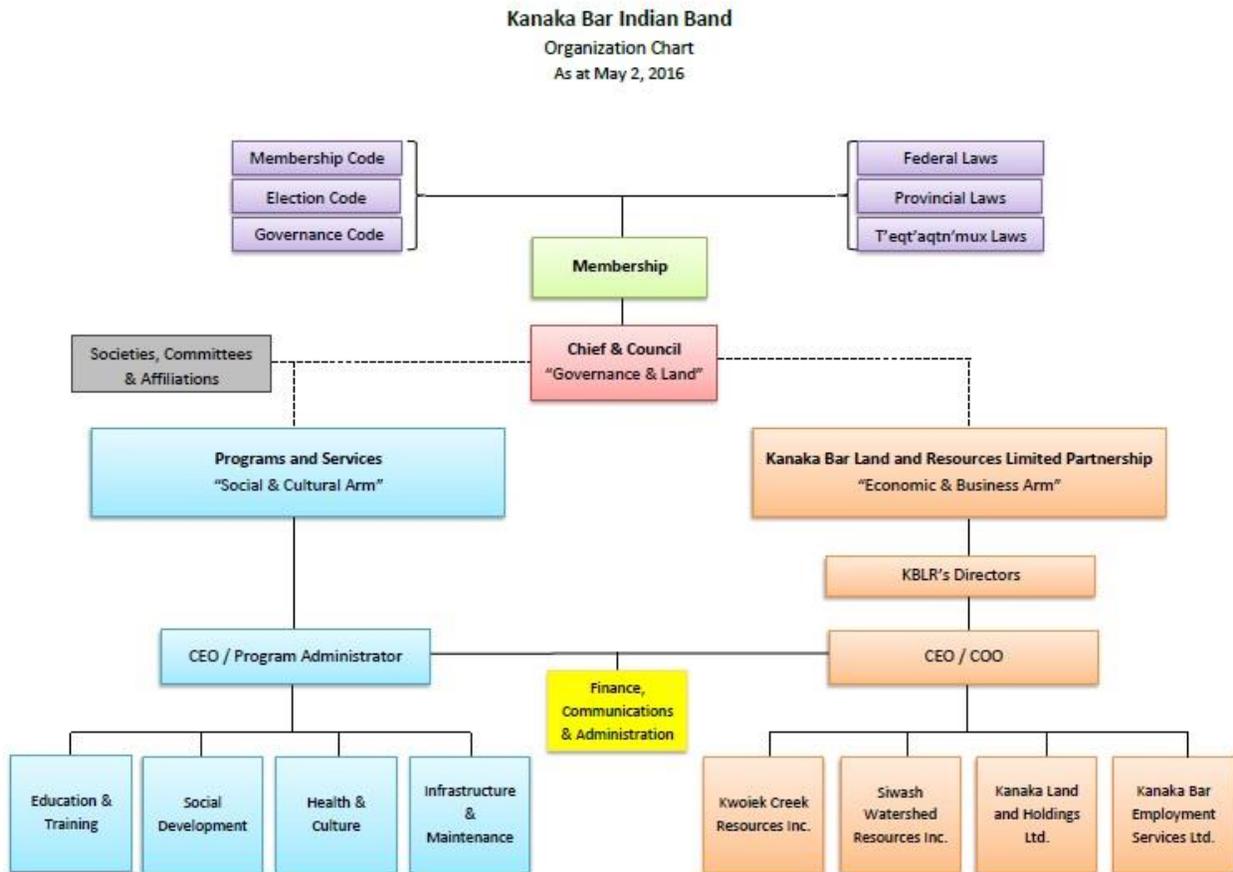


AFOA Nomination for Best Practices – Small Community

BMO is proud to nominate Kanaka Bar Indian Band for the AFOA Best Practices Award – Small Community



Kanaka Bar is a small community (237 members) situated south of Lytton, BC. The above organizational chart and the structure and practices that have come out of it is why we believe they are deserving of this year’s award.

In 2012, the community introduced a new constitutional framework that laid out clear and precise rules pertaining to membership, elections, and wider governance. This governance structure separated the social and cultural arm of community leadership (BLUE), which was responsible for education, training, social development, health, culture, and infrastructure, from the economic and business arm (ORANGE), which was focused on the community’s businesses and holdings. Both arms were ultimately responsible to the chief and council, who were now elected by community members. The community also created a new chief executive officer position in 2013, which helped to separate both social and economic

business from politics and kept decision making distinct from implementation. This system created a clear separation between business and politics, streamlined communication, and ultimately sought to reduce business risks and liabilities for the community.

The community's economic development arm aided the economic development planning process; by the end of 2015, the community had established four new business entities. Kanaka Bar Land and Resources Limited Partnership was formed as the main holding company for other businesses and acted as the liaison between council and those businesses. Siwash Watershed Resources Inc. was created to develop another micro-hydroelectric project. Kanaka Land and Holdings Ltd. was established to own and manage all immovable assets on behalf of the community. Finally, Kanaka Bar Employment Services Ltd. was created to provide hands-on field work and training for community members.

The community also integrated processes that were designed to be fully transparent and accountable. More than 500 pages of laws, policies, and plans were written down, distributed, and posted online for everyone to read, and a formal financial administration law was introduced in 2014. Leadership also updated the website weekly. Since 2013, council meetings had been held regularly every first Monday and third Thursday of the month. The Thursday meetings were followed by community meetings, during which the leadership engaged with members about what had been done during the last 30 days and what would be done during the next 30 days. Additionally, the community created a summer and a winter plan each year. These plans, which were posted on the website, assessed the preceding six months, brought up challenges, shared how issues would be addressed during the next six months, and focused on new projects and programs.

In 2014, the community began developing its first land use plan, which focused on identifying the lands and resources that the community could access and use. The land use plan also formalized the official vision of the community: "Kanaka Bar is committed to using its lands and resources to maintain a self-sufficient, sustainable, and vibrant community." As of 2017, Kanaka Bar's land was home to a host of wildlife, including mountain goats, deer, salmon, elk, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, and rattlesnakes, 23 and the community is flanked by government-protected wildlife habitat areas. The wider region had become increasingly well known for white-water rafting, fishing, and camping, with mountain ranges and forested areas providing mountain biking and hiking opportunities, all of which boosted tourism in the region. 24

By mid-2015, building on the success of the hydroelectric project, Kanaka Bar began the process of identifying potential development initiatives that could improve the community's social and economic situation. It conducted community meetings to hear ideas and to identify capacities, skills, and knowledge. Although community members recognized that there were limited reserve lands available for community development projects, they identified 17 opportunities, which were ultimately judged and ranked. The outcomes of that ranking became the basis for a five-year community economic development plan (CEDP).

The CEDP was launched in mid-2016, after two reviews by community members. At the core of this plan were the following general goals: to support the scaling up of projects; to create employment, capacity,

and wealth for community members; to sustainably generate revenue for the band; and to work towards community self-sufficiency regarding finances, employment and community readiness, food and energy, and foundational infrastructure. The goals of the CEDP would ideally be realized through working with appropriate partners; striving to protect traditional values, practices, and land; and fostering and supporting community-owned endeavours.

The CEDP mapped out specific targets and objectives in support of these general goals. These objectives included increasing the number of community members engaged in traditional practices around food and medicine to 100 per cent; introducing 20 backyard gardens and creating two community gardens (from none in 2015), while providing educational resources (books, soil, and seedlings) to members who wished to tend home gardens; and introducing three beehives (from one in 2015). The community also planned to acquire strategic off-reserve lands of interest and properties within the territory; to strive towards producing 100 per cent of the energy needed for community use (from 0 per cent in 2015) through initiatives such as the Siwash Creek hydropower project and solar power pilot projects; to drop the unemployment rate by more than half; and to increase the community's own-sourced revenue by 20 per cent. The community achieved these goals through pilot projects that ensured continual and sustainable capacity building and generated interest and benefits for the community.

While facing an unemployment rate of 11 per cent in 2015, community members work primarily in agricultural, forestry, energy, and mining activities. Members maintain a myriad of traditional skills including catching, smoking, drying, canning, and cooking fish; hunting; beading and sewing; gardening; working in lumber and forestry; and practicing traditional medicine. Approximately 18 per cent of the community reported having knowledge of their traditional language, 29 and over 60 per cent of the adult community members hold high school diplomas or trade or apprenticeship certificates. 30

The community noted a need for trained and skilled labour to run daily operations of the various projects; there were challenges around staff turnover, and there had been discussions about how to support education, training, mentorship, and social development. By late 2017, the community recognized that it needed to recruit an education officer, a social development worker, and project-level experts, such as a farming expert who could support plans regarding food self-sufficiency and at the same time mentor the local people. Human resources constraints were seen to reflect a challenge in understanding the relatively new governance system.

While there have been noted struggles since the inception, Chief and Council will cite the separation of politics, social care, and economic development as providing true freedom for each area to excel in delivering the best services to their membership.

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