

From Small Seeds Grow Mighty Trees

How a small BC Indian Band is raising the bar for Financial Management among smaller First Nations communities.

By: Yogita Grover (FMB)

Merritt, BC: Shackan Indian Band is an Nlaka'pamux First Nations government located in the Nicola Valley, approximately 20 km east of Spences Bridge and 40 km west of Merritt on Highway 6 in BC. Shackan is also known as "14 Mile". The Scw'exmx – People of the Creeks – is taken from the Nicola River, Scw'ex, meaning creek. Shackan is a small Nation with 136 registered members.

In May 2019, the Nation earned the distinction of being the smallest band in Canada to receive a Financial Management System (FMS) Certificate from the First Nations Financial Management Board (FMB).

The reserve location along Highway 8 is not a high traffic route and has limited economic development on reserve due to being primarily resource based. Shackan participates in forestry and mining and has a greenhouse operation on reserve that grows traditional plants for reforestation in the Nicola Valley. Limited resources and funding limitations have limited desired economic development opportunities for this Nation.

The Nation realized that they needed to get creative if they wanted to achieve the goal of functioning independently without external funding.

The first step in achieving the desired self-sufficiency was to introduce strong financial management systems through working with the FMB. On this journey, the Nation developed a Financial Administration Law (FAL) and received a Financial Performance Certificate that allowed the Nation to become a borrowing member of the First Nations Finance Authority. To achieve FMS certification, the Nation began working closely with the FMB staff to bring their FAL to life.

Chief Jordan Joe said, "The process of putting the FAL and receiving approval for the FMS certification was a lot of work. To understand the process, current practices and improvements to the systems took some time and effort from all staff and leadership at Shackan".

Heather Fader, Executive Director at Shackan said, "while the experience was challenging at times the benefits of the outcome are:

- Stronger relationships within the membership and Chief and Council through increased transparency and accountability

- Improved trust as everyone is realizing that finances are processed the same for everyone
- Helps staff stay organized and clear about financial processes
- Building relationships with potential business partners to build more economic development on and off reserve
- Positioning Shackan as a reputable organization locally, provincially and nationally.”

Harold Calla, the FMB Executive Chair and a member of the Squamish Nation said, “This milestone will allow the Shackan Indian Band to expand their economic development opportunities through increased capacity and access to capital. Shackan has set an example for other smaller Nations. Smaller Nations would greatly benefit from the FMS Certification and should not be deterred on account of their size and capacity.”

The FMB congratulates Shackan Indian Band on this incredible achievement!

About Shackan: Shackan is a member of Nlaka’pamux Nations located in the southern interior of British Columbia. Shackan Band distinguishes themselves as “Scw’emx from other divisions of the Nlaka’pamux Nation by the geographic location along the Nicola River. For more information, visit www.shackan.ca

About FMB: The Financial Management Board is a First Nations-led nonprofit organization that supports First Nations in developing sound finance and governance practices. The FMB was created under the *First Nations Fiscal Management Act* in 2006. Services are offered at no charge to First Nations. For more information on production and services, visit www.fnfmb.com

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