Good Governance and Stability: Lessons from Indian Country

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Frontier Centre for Public Policy

• Independent, non-profit think tank
  – Funded by foundations, individuals, and event revenue

• Aboriginal Frontiers Project- Policies that promote individual empowerment and improvement of socio-economic outcomes.

• AGI in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.
International data

• OECD reports connection between good governance and positive socio-economic indicators, as well as stability

• Participatory (involves community)

• Transparent (information and access)

• Effective and efficient (best use of resources)

• Responsive (serves all stakeholders)

• Accountable (govt held to account)
Principles of Effective Governance

- **High-Performance Government** - Creating smarter public services and institutions based on these principles:
- **Transparency** - Full cost accounting so can measure service delivery
- **Neutrality** - Civil servants do not have lock on service delivery, alternative providers as well.
- **Separation** – Elected officials/managers separate. Officials set policy, not administer. Govt purchaser, not provider.
Aboriginal Governance Index

Five areas of Governance are:

• Elections: How fair and impartial are voters for leaders?
• Administration: How effectively is the band’s business conducted?
• Human Rights: How much regard is given to basic rights?
• Transparency: How well are citizens informed about government?
• Economy: How good is the community at providing Economic development?
Aboriginal Governance

• 2003 Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development
• Elements that characterize successful tribal governance. Good governance in any context
• a clear separation between politics and day-today administration and service delivery,
• a competent and ethical bureaucracy,
• Fair dispute-resolution mechanisms
• Stable institutions and policies
Two models of governance

- **“Standard” approach**
  - emphasis on short term political, economic gain, spoils,

- **“Nation building” approach**
  - Assertive decision making, strategic vision, effective institutions
AGI Information

- The sample size this year is 4,871
- Of these, 4,354 are short surveys and 517 are long form.
- Seventy eight bands were surveyed in the three provinces.
Relationships over the years

• Transparency and Overall Score
• Administration and Overall Score
• First Nations that adopt transparency and accountability reforms score higher and enjoy more prosperity
Administration and Elections

![Graph showing the relationship between Administration and Elections with a trend line.](image)
Human Rights on Reserve

Does the Council force people off the Reserve (with a Band Council Resolution - BCR)?

- Not Really: 27%
- Perhaps Sometimes: 30%
- Never: 30%
- Definitely: 13%
Separation of Business and Politics On Aboriginal Reserves

Do members of your band council or their family members run the Reserve's independent service outlets?
Transparency In Aboriginal Government

*Does the band allow access for its members to its business plan and financial statements?*

- **Definitely Sometimes**: 32%
- **Not Really**: 25%
- **Never**: 23%
- **Definitely**: 20%
Elections

In the last Band election, were rightful voters able to trust that their votes, and only their votes, would be counted?"
Conclusions

• Clear statistical relationship between adhering to principles and good overall community health.

• As First Nations transition to better governance, they improve conditions and enhance stability.

• Importance of measuring governance and publishing everything is relevant for all govt.
Threats to stability

• Bellicose self-govt rhetoric/unwillingness to work with Ottawa
• Internal governance squabbles
Elections and rule of law

• Bear resemblance to fragile states
• Leadership selection issues (Indian Act system vs. band custom elections)
• INAC needs legitimate leaders. If not, intervenes, takes over service delivery
• Creates division and instability in community
Band electoral reform

- Senate report, FN elections threat to stability
- Self-govt, means will need to move towards independent appeals process to overcome FN problems with Canadian state
Youth- double edged sword?

- Youth highest demographic among First Nations
- Ochap, 50% are 19 years old and younger
- 1) Youth are leading on governance reform, not afraid to challenge elites
- 2) Youth also involved with radical action, self-govt movement
Final conclusions

• Good for FNs and Canadian state to adopt band governance reform
• Movement towards self-govt must include governance reform
• Fragile/failing states- governance is essential