



INDIAN ELECTIONS MANIFESTO

A Guidebook to Engaging Members and Making Better Elections

Lawrence Lewis



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Table of Contents

Indian Elections Manifesto eBook Introduction	4
Chapter 1: It's never too early to appoint your Chief Electoral Officer.....	6
Chapter 2: My Vote Counts - membership lists matter	8
Chapter 3: Keep Me Informed – communications are key, dah!.....	10
Chapter 4: Use the modern moccasin telegraph – social media.....	12
Chapter 5: You get what you pay for – cheaper is not better	14
Chapter 6: Be transparent in process, purpose and people	16
Chapter 7: Every elections number one complaint – and it shouldn't be!.....	18
Chapter 8: My free elections checklist.....	20
Chapter 9: A profile of a great Elections Official – guess who?	22
Appendix: Contact Lawrence Lewis	24
Appendix: Indian Elections BC Website.....	25

Indian Elections Manifesto eBook Introduction

I have spent the majority of my professional career working with BC First Nation organizations and governments - over 20 years now - always with a passion and purpose of contributing to the growth, success and wealth of my people, and First Nation peoples in general. I am an Indian and member of the We Wai Kai First Nation (more commonly known as the Cape Mudge Indian Band) on Vancouver Island, BC. One of my singular passions and focuses throughout my career has been working with Indian communities to execute and deliver their Band election processes. I am happy to report that I have conducted dozens of elections and not a single one has been formerly appealed!

My motivations for creating this Election Manifesto eBook were the real life events and experiences of conducting First Nation elections over the past 12+ years. It has always struck me how often the same sentiments, some might call them complaints, emerge through the election processes of Nations regardless of the type of election: custom codes, treaty regulations or acts, or Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) election regulations. Those sentiments or complaints, in my view, have always been rooted in 3 core election elements that could be corrected:

1. An election processes that is typically far too brief and compacted.
2. A minimalistic or more often absent communication strategy or plan.
3. The selection of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Even early on in my career conducting First Nation elections these sentiments of distrust, confusion, lack of transparency and anxiety affecting communities during these critical and important governance events troubled me. In addition, it's seemed evident to me that the people being appointed as Chief Electoral Officers were not always best qualified for this important task. There were, now in the distant past, election training sessions being conducted by INAC for Nations wanting to train their own personnel to conduct elections, but with no entry or prerequisite experience required - the resulting capacity was not optimal.

Then as more and more Nations moved to more complex Custom Codes (and First Nations demanded more control and responsibility in their own governance and self-determining processes), and the understanding of appointing Election Officials free from potential conflict of interest took hold, less and less First Nation's chose to appoint within their own ranks. The last of these INAC training sessions in BC were around 2005, with the final straw likely the elimination of INAC (government) funding for these training sessions.

Around this time, my close colleague and friend Fred Schiffner and I spearheaded the creation of the First Nations Electoral Officers Association (FNEOA) - a western Canada association of professional Electoral Officers. The idea behind the association was to create an organization focused and dedicated to providing training and capacity building of election officials, develop supports and resources to First Nations, and builds a network of qualified and credentialed Election Officials for First Nations to recruit from. I served as Chair of the FNEOA for nearly 3 years, but sadly 2 years later the organization languished under reduced INAC funding and eventually ceased to exist.

FNEOA MISSION STATEMENT

The First Nations Electoral Officers Association is a self-regulating, non-political, incorporated, not for profit society established to promote professionally conducted First Nation Band elections. (2005)

It's my hope that some of the objectives and considerations developed for the FNEOA can take some root here in this Indian Elections Manifesto eBook and be shared with First Nations communities and

governments and individuals. It's not my intent to be overly critical of past practices or stress unrealistic expectations for your Nations future elections. On the contrary, this eBook has been created with a view to providing a resource and tool that confirms best practices and pathways to successful and stress-anxiety-free elections.

There are three basic tenets of my Indian Elections Manifesto that I believe are central to assisting your Nation have better elections and engage members more effectively:

1. Appoint a well qualified Chief Electoral Officer at least one year in advance of the election date.
2. Develop a clear and modern communications strategy or plan to engage your First Nation.
3. Use this new approach to Nation build and strengthen your First Nation community.

I will keep the observations brief and concise, and attempt to look at each challenge as an opportunity, and every opportunity one to be exploited for the enhancement of the election processes. I have conducted dozens of elections for Chief & Councils and variety of other offices from Custom Codes, Treaty Acts and Legislation, and the dreaded Indian Act – and in my experience all have something to learn and just as important something to share.

Please feel free to share this eBook with whomever you choose, and print or reproduce any part or portion you want. I can think of no greater honor than for you to share my work with other people, and please do not hesitate to contact me directly with your comments and feedback - I would like to hear from you!

Lawrence Lewis

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lawrence Lewis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chapter 1: It's never too early to appoint your Chief Electoral Officer

When is the best time to appoint a Chief Electoral Officer for your First Nations elections?

Truth be told - no one ever asks this question...which is really too bad, because honestly the answer is really to do it as soon as possible. In fact, I would suggest that it should be done at least 1 year before the election and maybe even earlier if your First Nation has a particularly large Membership. There are lots of good reasons to do this of course, the key points of which I will get to momentarily, and the one perceived myth of increased costs associated with an early appointment of the Chief Electoral Officer.

The conventional wisdom and practice is to appoint the Chief Electoral Officer (almost to the minute) no sooner than required under the governing election rules or code. Often, and not without community discontent, it seems the appointment of the election official is left to the last minute and not a high priority until it is a crisis that needs to be dealt with. I could go in to a whole diatribe about effective governance practices and community leadership - but not here. Suffice it to say however; there are some real benefits to appointing your Chief Electoral Officer sooner than later. Not only may it save the First Nation some big coin by avoiding appeals and court actions, it will certainly improve the community perception of election processes, build knowledge and understanding, and enhance transparency and communication.

It's not something that gets talked about - the court costs of First Nation election appeals - more often costing tens of thousands of dollars - money that could certainly be spent on more important issues like housing and education. Consider though that a well thought out election governance policy practice could avoid the whole matter all together.

Here are 3 immediate benefits to appointing your Chief Electoral Officer as soon as possible and ideally at least one year in advance of the scheduled election date:

- **Enhanced Communication** - allow more time to communicate election processes and procedures. This is an opportunity to inform Members through newsletters, community meetings or information sessions, through the First Nations website and other social media (like Facebook), and allow for feedback and discussion. This is increasingly important for off-reserve members who often feel left out of the community discussion...and really given today's free modern communications media there is no excuse for anyone to feel left out.
 - ***Have the Chief Electoral Officer develop a communications plan that maps out a strategy to inform the community leading up to the election which complements the communication 'requirements' of your election rules - the more time to do this is what really matters.***
- **Transparency and Openness** - the discussion is what matters not the opinions. Generally, people just want to be heard and engaged and acknowledged. Distrust emerges when people are denied the opportunity to be heard, and community discord emerges when people are denied the opportunity to participate in their own governance. Election appeals can be a costly endeavor that also further divides a community and negatively impacts all Members, not to mention impedes the progress and ability of the sitting Council to serve the community!
 - ***Appoint a Chief Electoral Officer that has no familial or employment connections to your community. Having an election official with no real or perceived conflicts of interest is of course imperative AND will, coupled with a communications plan, demonstrate a completely transparent elections process.***

- **Demonstrate Leadership and Commitment to Members** - safeguard your Nations governance and community interests by treating your election processes and procedures with due diligence and attention. When you get right down to it, the election of your governing body is the very first event that sets the stage for all other priorities during the term of elected office...problems with the election often cripple the community and undermine their effectiveness - the community suffers, wealth and opportunity are lost, and 'nothing' gets done.
 - ***Appoint a well qualified Chief Electoral Officer at least one year in advance of the election date, work with them to create a communications plan that builds awareness and educates, provides a safe and useful forum for feedback and community input, and sets the tone for a successful and positive election process.***

The Myth

The idea that appointing a Chief Electoral Officer at least one year in advance of the election date will cost a large fortune is...well, just does not have to be true. Think of it in this context: the average First Nation should expect to pay a "*base contract cost*" between \$20-\$30 per elector (plus travel costs for election officials and unique election requirements - like paid advertising for example but not mail in ballot costs) to conduct their elections. Very small Nations (less than 150 members) will have inflated per Member costs of course and Nations with a large portions of Members living off-reserves may also have increased per member costs - each Nation will have unique considerations. But my experience so far is that the average noted base contract cost above is pretty accurate.

Calculating the costs of appointing a Chief Electoral Officer at least one year in advance of the election date would add about \$2.00 per elector - or about \$0.07 cents on the dollar increase in base contract costs. If you consider all the added benefits to the community and Members, and avoiding the costs of an expensive election appeal, and not to mention eliminating lost productivity and lost opportunity - **clearly this is 7 cents well spent.**

If you are still unsure or you simply don't believe me, "...say what?", contact me and I will take your particular First Nation information and schedule it out for you in some detail - **at no charge**. The astute will see an opportunity to also get baseline cost information for what your First Nation election process and procedures **should really cost** (some First Nations are probably paying too much).

I guess that's all I have to say on this topic at this point. Tell me, what do you think about the idea of appointing the Chief Electoral Officer for your First Nation election at least one year in advance of the election date?

"We are imperfect. We cannot expect perfect government." – William Howard Taft

Chapter 2: My Vote Counts - membership lists matter

Membership lists are the critical first document of every election because they inform the creation of the Electors list (you know, the voters list - the members who get to vote in the upcoming election). The creation of and management of the electors list falls directly to the Chief Electoral Officer, but the membership list is the responsibility of the First Nation or Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) depending on the type of First Nation election.

In creating the electors list the Chief Electoral Officer will typically ask for the following member/elector information: last name, first name, middle name(s), alias, date of birth, status/registry number, mailing address, phone number and confirmation of residency 'on' or 'off' reserve. A current electors list is clearly an essential document in engaging the Nation through the election processes, sharing important information and their participation, in particular in nominating candidate(s) and voting!

In the elections that I have conducted, on average as many as 30% of notices and documents sent to electors are returned undelivered as a result of members moving and not updating their First Nation with new contact information...or the First Nation having poor systems and practices in place to manage membership lists effectively.

Membership lists regardless of who is ultimately responsible for their management always fall to the First Nation and members to update with current information. If the list is maintained by INAC then members should inform their First Nation of current contact information like: mailing address, phone number, email, etc - the First Nation then advises INAC of the updates. Certain static information like date of birth and status registry number of course never changes. If the First Nation manages their membership list then INAC is simply removed from the process.

Ultimately however it falls to the member to keep their contact information current with the First Nation, and the First Nation has a responsibility to maintain/update the official member registry accordingly. During the election cycle it is not the Chief Electoral Officer's duty or responsibility to seek out members with absent or incorrect contact information - like a current mailing address. Quite the contrary in fact, the Chief Electoral Officer is typically only required to send documentation to the last known mailing address for those electors provided by the First Nation, generated through membership list, at the start of the election process or as defined by the election regulation!

Despite the members or electors perception, and even expectation, it is **never** the mandate or authority the Chief Electoral Officer to seek out and find missing contact information of electors. This is solely the domain of the Member and the First Nation!

Of course, during the election cycle the Chief Electoral Officer should advise the First Nation of any member/elector contact information which is updated by the elector so that following the election the First Nation has updated contact information on its members. This happens as a natural course of the business of the election as word gets out that notices and mail in ballot packages are reaching members, and not others. Remember - the Chief Electoral Officer has no mandate to seek out members to gather or confirm correct mailing/contact information.

My Vote Counts...

Membership lists are often a point of contention between members and the First Nation, and there is no shortage of reasons and blame for why a membership list may be out of date or incomplete. From a simple premise of good governance and responsibility to its people the First Nation should make every best effort to maintain a current and functional date base of member information - and each First Nation depending on their governance model will have some mandate and provisions for doing so.

In the final analysis though the ultimate responsibility lies with the member to ensure that their contact information is current, and failing the ability of the First Nation to do its job, inform the Chief Electoral Officer during the election cycle of current contact information. This is not ideal of course, but given the nature of our familial contacts and social media and the moccasin telegraph - you should never be in a situation where you did know an election was underway.

Remember - the Chief Electoral Officer is a 3rd party contractor that has no vested interest in any candidate or the outcome of the election. They are there to deliver a fair and properly executed election process - and serve the electorate to ensure this. Do not hesitate to contact them during an election to ensure your participation and ensure that your vote counts!

“When the people fear their government, there is tyranny; when the government fears the people, there is liberty.” – Thomas Jefferson

Chapter 3: Keep Me Informed – communications are key, dah!

There is always a lot said about the value of good communications and a well thought out communications plan...still it is one of the most underutilized tools of the election process (not to mention as a practice of First Nation governance). The general standard seems to be generate a couple notices as required by the elections regulations post them at the administrative offices, post on the Nation's website that no-one visits, and if you are lucky placed in a newsletter delivered to houses on reserve (and if you are really lucky have the notices mailed to members residing off-reserve – which generally does not happen).

I shared in Chapter 1 the value of establishing a communications protocol or plan well in advance of the election date - at least 1 year. This is a great opportunity to draw in and begin engaging your members/electors not only about the election processes but also build a culture that understands and embraces your election processes, the benefits it brings as a component of self government and self determination, and remove the uncertainty and build trust. Take the time early on to communicate and celebrate transparency, embracing self-determination and governance ownership, and with a focus on using the imminent election as an opportunity to continue building a strong, healthy and successful First Nation.

Sitting Chief and Councils (or whatever your elected office title) should also see this as an opportunity to share their successes, triumphs and challenges. It's important that your people see that you have worked hard and remained dedicated to the Nation and done your very best to bring prosperity. It is equally important that your people see that you have made mistakes and stumbled, and made the tough decisions and continue to stand by them, and while not always perfect, you struggled and toiled to make the best decision possible with the information available at that time.

Your election communication strategy should, and effective communications strategies always, utilize the variety of available communication media to your First Nation: print (newsletters and notices), community meetings, forums and gatherings, and the web (your Nations website and social media - more on this in the next 2 chapters). Not all media are created equal of course but what's important is not to put all your eggs in one basket and expect your communications to reach all members and have a positive and meaningful impact.

In addition, having a plan for your communications strategy will help establish and manage costs, provide an assessment tool to determine which elements are working, which need to be adjusted and which can be eliminated. Be sure to build in a feedback channel and use this as an opportunity to develop and focus your messaging...try to be fluid and able to build a great communications effort around your elections process. Consider these pointers in building a communication strategy:

1. **Share the background of your previous elections processes and results, and why you are launching this communications strategy.** This is where you begin to tell the story and celebrate and own this self-government process.
2. **Establish the communications objectives** - tell it like it is - you want to build election awareness and understanding and engage members/electors more effectively.
3. **Define who your audience is and where you'll find them** - this is where your current and up-to-date memberships list or data base becomes important. This is also where you determine where best to connect with your members through their preferred media.
4. **Decide your tactical communication strategies.** Set a calendar early of all communication media, establish your feedback channels to inform you of your reach and impact, and

then over the fullness of the communication strategy focus the calendar of events on the media that work the best.

5. **Determine who the most powerful 'sneezers' are and encourage them to talk, share and engage in this communications strategy** - in fact, invite them to be part of the whole process. The goal here is to reach as many members/electors as possible through word-of-mouth...the best invitation is always one from a trusted friend or family member.
6. **Explain how the communications strategy and activities will be assessed, monitored and used to benefit the Nation and the election process.** Also share how feedback and input will be consolidated, formatted and shared back through this communication process. Be sure to set a tone that ensures participation is safe, and when needed confidential and protected.
7. **No communication strategy, or for that matter any plan, is every perfect at outset.** Consider the communications strategy a fluid and evolving plan - leave room to adjust and refocus as necessary. Let the people guide the discussion toward the stated objectives and purpose.

Seth Godin, the celebrated author and expert of modern communications and marketing, coined the term "sneezer" to refer to those folks who are most likely to share an idea with other people. They are also people that others listen to and acknowledge as an authority or trusted source - someone worth listening to and following their lead.

You might also want to consider, once you've found some success using a communications strategy for your upcoming election process, transferring this tool to other activities and processes of your First Nation. Ultimately, keeping the members of your First Nation actively engaged in the business, governance and happenings will only contribute to a strong, purposeful and successful Nation.

"The art of communication is the language of leadership." — James Humes

Chapter 4: Use the modern moccasin telegraph – social media.

I am a big fan of modern social media like Facebook, Twitter and blogs - it is the most powerful communication means of the history of the world, and if used smartly can (and often does) change the world. Still it more often gets hijacked by old world communication strategies and purpose, clutters our life with meaningless information, and creates more havoc it seems than good. However, you know social media is everywhere and its impact is only escalating - more and more people engage and rely on social media channels every day - in fact its use is so pervasive in our society that to not engage it would mean your certain exclusion and disconnection from your friends, family, and community.

In 2010, 80% of individuals aged 16 years and older used the Internet for personal use (86% of British Columbians)...almost all (92%) had a Facebook profile...and among Internet users, one-third (33%) went online with a wireless handheld device. Source - [Statistics Canada](#)

In the past effective communications took place in community meetings, with family/clan heads, newsletters and other social and cultural gatherings where the message was received and then shared orally from one family/community member to the next and then to the next and so on - in what we oft refer to as the moccasin telegraph. Granted...the message authenticity would be slightly modified with each successive messenger recital, but it was amazingly fast and could still be considered reputable enough...and being an oral culture we were excellent at populating the moccasin telegraph with huge amounts of information, stories and news.

Today - we continue to use modern social media like FaceBook and Twitter in exactly the same way we would the old world moccasin telegraph. In fact the evolution of these technologies has if anything intensified our ability to share and extended our ability to reach more friends and family more rapidly and at almost zero cost. It has also, and this part of the challenge, removed many of the cultural and social filters that moderated the moccasin telegraph message. With so much more sharing now (it was pretty hard to send a photo through the moccasin telegraph!) and because anyone and everyone can do it, it sometime feels more like clutter than helpful messaging and sharing.

Therein lies the challenge in using social media during your First Nation election processes effectively and with purpose - and for that matter your Nations ongoing communications and messaging. The biggest challenge will be to cut through all the clutter and voices - and find a place for your election process message and story to take root, find a following, build a discussion, and grow. Here's the thing...it takes time and it requires patience and perseverance, and most of all it demands faith that the effort will find a life of its own...your own Nation's social movement if you will.

"But even though social media has great potential, many organizations do not properly integrate social media in their marketing and communication efforts, or only use it as a one-way communication channel instead of listening, analysing, and driving conversations." - Anne Herngaard

The central underlying message of this elections manifesto has been to start the conversation early. It's important to realize that a half-hearted or delayed effort will likely cause more harm and not reach many of your members/electors, and make the next effort even harder to launch because of lost credibility and significance. If your First Nation website is stale and out-of-date or the last post made on Nation's FaceBook page is 6 months old...pause and give some thought and time to consider how you will proceed. Remember that modern social media is permission based - meaning members/electors can just switch you off - so proceed with purpose, a plan and commitment.

I wish I could tell you that there is a magic formula for a successful social media strategy - one that would reach and engage all your members and prove to be the perfect communication tool it is unfailingly touted to be...unfortunately I must advise that none exists (and anyone who says they have the magic formula is a charlatan). What I can suggest, as it has been shared with me through dozens of books, CD's, seminars and conversations are these following tenets:

1. Start the conversation now - tomorrow is too late.
2. Tell a story - do not sell (a product, a brand or an agenda).
3. Be honest, transparent and invite feedback.
4. Listen.
5. Share meaningful information - become a trusted resource not a sales agent.
6. Invite 'Seezers' to participate (see Chapter 3).
7. Engage regularly and often.
8. Be "Remarkable" (generate content that will others will remark on).
9. Drive the conversation (not to be confused with forcing an agenda or stifling discussion).
10. Nurture and reward participation.
11. Never stop.

Using modern social media effectively for your next elections process is not something that should be a last minute consideration. Start now - tomorrow is too late. Use this next election cycle as the opportunity to plant and nurture an effective social media communications channel and then continue using it beyond the election date and continuous until the next election and so on...never stop. It could just be the thing that unifies your Nation like never before, saves your culture and language, builds wealth and prosperity...CHANGES YOUR WORLD.

It might seem daunting, labour intensive and expensive - but do this right it shouldn't be. In fact, it can be done for less than the printing costs you presently incur for the newsletters you probably publish on at least a monthly basis now!

"When you give everyone a voice and give people power, the system usually ends up in a really good place." - Mark Zuckerberg, CEO & Founder of Facebook

Chapter 5: You get what you pay for – cheaper is not better.

Of course you know this maxim to be true...but when looking at equally qualified candidates for the position of Chief Electoral Officer it seems...only logical to choose the one that costs less than the other(s). I would acquiesce of course to this decision making model if in fact the candidates were equally qualified, however, I would suggest that upon closer analysis it is truly unlikely any two candidates would ever be truly equally qualified. We are human after all, and each of us has traveled a different path and had varied experiences both in technical training and work experience and life experience...if we looked closely at the route it took each candidate to reach this point of consideration before you, it would reveal much more than what is simply written in a resume, application or proposal submission.

Your potential Chief Electoral Officer hire should at minimum meet screening requirements for the essential core competencies of the Office. These are the key performance indicators that define the skill sets for high level proficiency in conducting elections. Not only are these skills and abilities that cannot be imitated by the less qualified, they are the fundamental competencies that add value through a diverse background of productivity and experience, multiple streams of technical expertise, communication prowess and leadership intelligence, and a deep commitment to the integrity and depth of their profession/industry.

When taking a closer look at your potential Chief Electoral Officer hire consider these core competencies as a starter checklist - these are not listed in any particular order or priority - they can be ranked more appropriately both in weight and priority by your management/leadership/selection team as part of the assessment process.

1. **Cultural Consciousness** - *what is the level of First Nation awareness, understanding and knowledge?*
2. **Technical Aptitude - Custom/Treaty/INAC Elections** - *is there direct experience in executing your election type? Are there references to corroborate successful election events and processes?*
3. **Communications, Collaboration and Relationships** - *select a candidate with strategy for community building around your election processes - what is the communications strategy and how will they connect with your Members?*
4. **Modern Social Media Expertise** - *there must be the ability to incorporate these preferred communication channels with your Members.*
5. **Appeal Risk Assessment** - *how many appeals have been filed and how many successful with this candidate? A slip here could cost you tens of thousands of dollars later!*
6. **Performance and Change Proficiency** - *what is the candidates proven track record when under intense pressure...do they resign or see the obligation through to completion?*
7. **Analytical, Conceptual, Strategic and Forward Thinking** - *what are the demonstrated abilities to anticipate the implications and consequences of situations - problems – challenges...and then to take appropriate action and to be prepared for possible contingencies...without reacting impulsively?*
8. **Initiative, Thoroughness and Decisiveness** - *your selected candidate should be a self-starter, demonstrate capacity and knowledge, and not be perceived as wish-washy, weak or indecisive.*

9. **Pervasiveness and Strength of Leadership** - *is the candidate self-confident and do they make an impact with their audience...are they confident and persuasive in communications, mannerism and actions?*
10. **Integrity and Strength of Character** - *is the person trust worthy, is there a proven track record of accountability and persistence...will they execute their duties and obligations without compromise and to the highest standards?*

Once you get through this process and select the **best** candidate to be your Chief Electoral Officer then consider how much to pay them at the same time you are reviewing their proposal for service delivery. Even if the submitted proposal, while meeting the technical and service delivery requirements, sets a price beyond what you are willing or able to pay. It is after all a proposal - and it is perfectly okay to use this as the negotiation starting point. The goal here is to get the finest Chief Electoral Officer for your upcoming elections...don't let an initial difference in opinion over the cost close the door to the preferred and best qualified candidate.

In the final analysis, make your selection based on criteria other than money...because compensation is always negotiable! Any contractor providing services understands that the price for their services is negotiable - take advantage of this when hiring your next Chief Electoral Officer.

Select the best candidate and then negotiate the price you want.

"Advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer but wish we didn't." - Erica Jong

Chapter 6: Be transparent in process, purpose and people.

It's one of those things that might seem self evident...but it's more often overlooked than you might think and done for what are believed to be the right reasons - often touted to save \$\$\$\$. Unfortunately, though the end result is loss of faith and trust in the election processes and the governing Council, and sometimes an increased cost as much as ten-fold...I am speaking about appointing internally from the Nations own Administration Staff, Legal Counsel or Membership the Chief Electoral Officer.

I have to say that I have never in my experience found, or are aware of, any Nation to be intentionally fraudulent in this matter, but I am aware of dozens of successful elections appeals which resulted in all or part of the election to be redone...not to mention hundreds of elections, while not successful in appeal, which have created a culture and perception of distrust and angst in their communities about elections.

The former has both a financial cost and social impact that is immediately damaging in so many ways, not the least of which is the lost opportunity of using the money spent on lawyers, court costs and other related cost - those funds are lost forever and no longer available for other more meaningful and positive community priorities like health, housing and education for example.

"O Great Spirit whose voice I hear in the winds, I come to you as one of your many children. I need your strength and your wisdom. Make me strong not to be superior to my brother, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy: Myself." - Chief Dan George

In both cases the social and community damage done can take generations to heal - and makes each successive, if the same practice is continued, election process a period of heightened anxiety and distrust. The election process and regulations are intended to provide a framework for transparency, fairness and certainty. However, having a person who is linked to the community through family or employment or contract - regardless of their capacity and expertise - appointed as the Chief Electoral Officer can call in to question the integrity of your entire election process (and create disrepute for the appointing Council and administration).

Even while the technical meaning of 'conflict of interest' may not exist or occur - the perception of conflict of interest can be even more damaging precisely because it is shrouded in assumptions and perceptions (real or imagined). The solution of course is to appoint a Chief Electoral Officer that is free of any perceived or potential conflict of interest - someone who is both well qualified, proven in their ability to conduct open and transparent election processes, and who has absolutely no affiliation whatsoever with the Nation.

TRANSPARENCY IS ASSURANCE - TRUST AND ACCEPTANCE IS BUILT ON THIS FOUNDATION.

I would take the whole process even a few steps further and remove the whole matter from any doubt, and create an opportunity to establish and reinforce trust and integrity in your election process. It's not necessary to attack or point out the specific people or shortcomings of elections processes and appointment of electoral officials from the past - but it is essential to publicly acknowledge any shortcomings of election process and the community sentiments or concerns, and then get on with implementing a selection process designed to built trust, heal any community distrust and restore faith in your election processes.

Here is what I suggest for the selection process steps for your next Chief Electoral Officer:

1. Plan to appoint your Chief Electoral Officer at least 1 year in advance of the Election Date.

2. Develop a plan for announcing, recruiting and selecting the Chief Electoral Officer.
 - Announce and unveil the selection process/plan at a community meeting or appropriate social/cultural event.
 - Set the required qualifications, timeliness for selection and appointment, and creation of selection committee.
 - Make clear the expected and desired outcomes, for example, build trust and restore community faith in election processes.
3. Appoint the selection committee and provide a clear mandate and directions.
 - Appoint 3-5 committee members from a cross-section in your community.
 - Set clear selection rules, qualifications and contract deliverable requirements for the Chief Electoral Officer.
 - Have a definite appointment deadline.
 - Have the committee provide progress and final report of the selection process to the community.
 - Have Council endorse the selection without delay - officially appoint the Chief Electoral Officer.
4. Reveal Chief Electoral Officer and reinforce items announced in Part 2.
 - Announce the communications plan and efforts to engage community throughout the election processes.
 - Publicly declare the transfer of all election processes, authorities and decision making directly to the Chief Electoral Officer.
 - Execute the communications plan and contract requirements without exception.
 - Allow the election processes and community engagement/participation to evolve without undue pressure or compromise.
5. Create a strategy following the election process and outcome to maintain community engagement and participation in the governance of your Nation - keep the discussion going until the next election!

The key message here is to build open and transparent processes and then execute it. While this chapter is focused on appointing a Chief Electoral Officer through an open and transparent process it is also advocating for much more. It's about building a strong, focused and successful First Nation based on good governance and trusted community leadership.

“Truth never damages a cause that is just.” — Mahatma Gandhi

Chapter 7: Every elections number one complaint – and it shouldn't be!

If you first scroll down to the bottom of this post and read the quote from Seth Godin you may understand in better context and purpose this chapter. You will have picked up by know that what I am advocating is an extended election process for your First Nation leading up to your next election, including and not least of which a well formulated communication strategy and strategic elections plan that accomplishes a few basic outcomes:

1. Community Building - Acceptance and Endorsement of Elections Process.
2. Extended Reach - Use of Modern Communication Tools to Reach All Your Members.
3. Engagement and Input - Build a Stronger United Nation.
4. Self Governance - Own the Importance and Processes Governing Your Elections.
5. Successful Elections - Conflict and Anxiety Free Elections - Eliminate Appeals - and Save Money.

The alternative is to once again have another election that while technically elects another group of (or affirms some) people to leadership positions and governance office does very little to neither build and strengthen your community, nor add trust and acceptance of your elections process. In fact the opposite is true - the election process continues to divide the community, reinvigorate feuds and distrust, and worst of all enhances apathy toward the Nation and its Leadership!

Often before a Member reaches the point of indifference they have already experienced plenty of frustration, mystery, and confusion about their Nation's elections processes, rules and purpose. The number one complaint in every election I have every conducted is always the same basic sentiment...

"No one told me there was an election...and I don't understand or the election process...and what are your qualifications to be the Chief Electoral Officer!?!?!?"

I am not sure why this complaint continues to surprise me...regularly the complaint will emerge with Nation's who have had the same election regulations since the 1970's or earlier? With modern custom election codes and treaty election acts it is equally evident as their language is often very tedious and lengthy (it is my opinion that simpler is better, but it seems lawyers and bureaucrats have a different opinion) and members are perplexed and remark the nomination and elections processes seems very alien to being 'Indian'.

Regardless of your acceptance of my last observation, it seems deplorable that in to today's era of modern communication and countless media channels to select from that a better effort is not being utilized by First Nations to connect with, share, and dialogue about such an important matter - it's never been easier or cheaper to engage their members!

The argument of high cost can easily be debunked - considering most if not all of modern media channels like Facebook, Twitter and Blogs are **FREE** - and that the nominal increase in cost to your entire election process if you follow the prescription of appointing the Chief Electoral Officer at least 1 whole year in advance (*as laid out in Chapter 1*) is only about 7%!

The idea of sticking with the tired notion of conducting your future election processes unchanged because this is "the way we've always done things" is not only lazy and demonstrates weak leadership - it's slamming the door an opportunity to build a stronger community. It is also not a trait shared or celebrated by successful, high performing, wealthy organizations and communities. What this means of

course is that if you want to see a different attitude, perception and understanding of your election processes you must choose to take a different approach to executing your elections.

Like all governance and leadership decisions - the easiest and first evident choice is not always the best decision - and sometime the best decision cannot be rendered until a couple wrong decisions have been made. The challenge for First Nations (and for all organizations) is to make the most effective decision possible in that moment in time - and given that the landscape is always changing and evolving - simply defaulting to do things like they have always been done is a proven recipe for failure. In the final analysis, the legacy left by any Council will be the decisions it made and equally the decisions it did not make.

Chose now to do things differently - use the processes provided here in this Indian Elections Manifesto to create a new and excited culture of continuous learning and engagement about your election processes (and in fact all your governance processes). Take this opportunity now to build and strengthen your Nation.

"The less people know, the more they yell." — Seth Godin

Chapter 8: My free elections checklist

My motivation for writing this Indian Elections Manifesto, what truly compelled me, were my real life experiences working with First Nation communities and the evident need and desire from Electors, Members and Leaders for their Election process to unfold in a much more involved and engaged manner. It's my contention that Nation's take a much bolder step in governing their election processes well beyond the essential directives and limitations contained within their regulations and rules. I am speaking about extending the "intent" of this important self-governance tool through a strategic objective designed to build stronger, healthier and more successful communities...to build awareness, purpose and acceptance of your election processes.

People... especially people in positions of power... have invested a tremendous amount of effort and time to get to where they are. They really don't want to hear that we're on the wrong path, which we've got to shift gears and start thinking differently. - David Suzuki

Here are my 6 key checklist items for your next election:

1. **Appoint Your Chief Electoral Officer Early** - I have advocated this number one priority from the very start of my Elections Manifesto, and debunked the notion that there is a huge additional cost to doing so...the earlier the better...and remember, select the best Electoral Officer and negotiate the price you want.
2. **Engage Your Members/Electors Early and Often** - this is an opportunity to enhance and refine your membership list, and to set the stage and tone for the upcoming election as well as establish member responsibility for your election processes.
3. **Design and Implement Your Strategic Communications Plan** - this is where the rubber hits the road, and where you can guide the conversation and truly begin to build a nation committed to its own determination, success and wealth.
4. **Listen...Take It All In...Re-Engage** - what's important here is that you are using the discussions and inputs across all media, including social media, to inform the discussion further and direct it toward the outcome needed. Remember communication goes both ways - use it with respect but use it with purpose.
5. **Align the Community and Learn** - the desired outcome is to create an election process that is fully understood and engaged by the community, but even more importantly creates a modern culture and ritual that accepts the election process and eliminates/removes all the distrust and anxiety so often connected with this critical event.
6. **Own This Process (and think outside the box)** - ultimately the success or failure of every election (in the context of this manifesto) is a direct reflection of the leadership, government and administration that preceded it. Growth and change happens when we chose to do things differently, apply what we learn from that experience, and do things differently again...and it's okay to make mistakes along the way (in fact I would suggest it's unforgivable to not make any!)

Every leader's temptation is to deal with what's directly in front, because it always seems more urgent and concrete. Unfortunately, if you do that, you put your company at risk. While you concentrate on steering around potholes, you'll miss windfall opportunities, not to mention any signals that the road you're on is leading off a cliff. - Paul J. H. Schoemaker

I hope this helps and makes sense to you...my purpose here is not be overly critical, but to provide a new context that can be used to build better election processes with your First Nation. I appreciate and

understand that the governing a First Nation is no simple task - it is wrought with endless challenges and complexities - my message I trust is received in context it was intended: The appoint of the right Chief Electoral Officer early can do more than simply conduct your election, they can be an important and essential tool used to help build and strengthen your community around this critical governing event.

"Preparedness, when properly pursued, is a way of life, not a sudden, spectacular program." - Spencer W. Kimball

Chapter 9: A profile of a great Elections Official – guess who?

The essence of what you are looking for in a great Elections Official is a unique combination of a number of qualities, skill sets and experience...of course. Understanding the difference and compliments between these qualities will assist you in identifying a solid candidate to consider as your Chief Electoral Officer. Use the profile sets presented here as a baseline and in conjunction with “*Chapter 5: You get what you pay for – cheaper is not better*” to help build your own ideal election official profile, and your eventual evaluation process and assessment tools.

Executive Set

- Leader – plans for tomorrow. Strong at utilizing and motivating people. Brilliant at enhancing performance.
- Manager – delivers today. Strong on process and following rules. Brilliant at utilizing full potential.
- Administrator - organizes people. Strong on effective use of resources. Brilliant at reaching objectives.

Elections Set

- Culture - has an awareness, understanding and exposure to working with First Nations.
- Experience – has delivered successful elections processes across a variety of types.
- Appeals - how many appeals filed? How many appeals successful (these are failed delivery of elections processes)?

Communications Set

- Technology - computer and application knowledge, and can clearly demonstrates expertise.
- Social Media – user and advocate, and understands the techniques and technologies essential to exploit this media.
- Communications - can convey message clearly, delivers the message effectively, and illicit feedback on the message.

Everyone you consider should have some mix of these qualities, and what you are looking for is the right mixture that is the best fit for your First Nation. Every First Nation will be slightly different in how these profile evaluations sets might be weighted (and in fact weighted differently within each of the profile sets), and may in fact change from one election cycle to the next. You may require in your next election cycle a Chief Electoral Officer that is more heavily weighted in these qualities and in this order: Administrator, Social Media, Communications, Experience and Appeals. The next election cycle may be different: Manager, Appeals, Technology, Leader, and Culture.

When used in full conjunction with the core competencies checklist provided in *Chapter 5* it does indeed seem a little over-kill in formulating your Chief Electoral Officer selection criteria and process! Remember these checklists are both suggestions for your consideration (meaning take from them what you want and disregard the rest) and a framework for information and capacity building (think of it as stepping outside the box and looking a little deeper and further in how you select the election officials which represent your Nation during this critical and important Nation building event). In both instances the intent is only to provide tools and resources that I hope will be useful and beneficial, with the full

understanding that thoughts and opinions presented in this Elections Manifesto may not be relevant to every First Nation.

One last shout out, that the content of this Indian Elections Manifesto is to have your Chief Electoral Officer appointed at least one year in advance of your next election. When developing your posting and/or call for proposals be clear on the qualifications and competencies of the Chief Electoral Officer you are looking for and set clear objectives, and describe the delivery of services, events and outcomes you want realized. Also be sure to highlight the submission details you are looking for...for example, a communication plan including the use of social media platforms, the number of community meetings required, a demonstrated understanding of your elections code/rules (did they even read it?) and of course a proposed budget.

YOUR SELECTION PROCESS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A NEGOTIATION - ONCE YOU HAVE THE BEST CANDIDATE MAKE SURE YOU GET THE BEST PRICE FOR SERVICES.

A final word on the budget proposed...it should be detailed enough that it provides you with a comfort level that what is being proposed can be accomplished. Is there enough \$\$\$ to meet the deliverables and objectives - cheaper is not better if after a few months the Chief Electoral Officer quits because they can't afford to do the work, or they did not have a clear grasp on what it takes to work with and in your community, or did not know the first thing about setting up a FaceBook page.

Good luck! Let me know how it goes, and if you need any further assistance in your upcoming election process and/or the selection of your next Chief Electoral Officer please give me a call or send me an email. I would be happy to provide whatever assistance I can at no charge.

"Using the power of decision gives you the capacity to get past any excuse to change any and every part of your life in an instant." ~Anthony Robbins

Appendix: Contact Lawrence Lewis

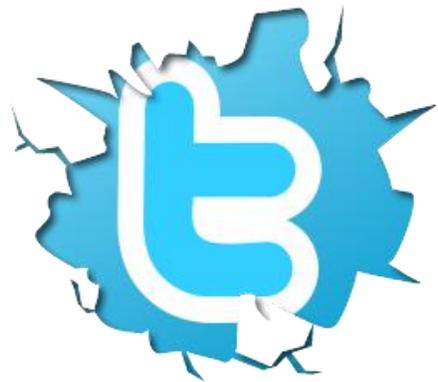
Click the images to follow links (not operational in draft document).



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Appendix: Indian Elections BC Website

Click the images to follow links (not operational in draft document).



www.indian-elections.ca