

First Nation Governments Demonstrating Accountability – Sagamok Anishnawbek's Story

Assembly of First Nations' 2010 Fall Planning and Dialogue Forum
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Overview



- Sagamok Anishnawbek – Who We Are
- Sagamok's Vision
- How ISO 9001 fits into Sagamok's overall objectives, goals, and plans
- Pros, cons, benefits & risks of Sagamok's decision to implement ISO 9001
- How Sagamok achieved ISO 9001 certification
- What Sagamok would do differently if they had to do it all over again.

Who We Are

- 2000+ community members with over 50% of the population residing on reserve
- 140+ Band Employees
- Chief and 12 Councillors elected every 2 years
- Management Team consists of 6 Directors
- Departments: Administration, Education, Finance, Health and Social Services, Lands and Environment, Planning and Technical Services

Sagamok's Quality Management Vision

Recognizing the need for change, the Sagamok Anishnawbek underwent a series of organizational reviews and management assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses of Sagamok Anishnawbek management practices and performance in all aspects. These reviews include (among others):

- **Sagamok Community Story and 10 Year Action Plan**
- **2002 Four Worlds Report on Sagamok Nation Building Project**
- **2001 and 2002 KPMG organizational review, assessments**
- **2000 Health and Social Services Review**
- **1998 Community Accountability and Management Assessment**

Based on these findings, Chief and Council wanted to develop a quality management system that would support the transition to a stronger government and a stronger community.

This meant that Sagamok would not only change the way they conducted business, but would continuously improve the level of performance and the level of accountability, transparency, representation, and responsibility to the community.

How ISO fits into Sagamok's goals and objectives?

The 2003 Community Story was produced after a one-day community meeting held on December 12, 2002. In attendance at this meeting were approximately 180 people (including Chief and Council, all Band staff, and a sizeable representation of community members). The Community Story resulted in a rich description of what was happening in the life of Sagamok people (children, youth, adults, women, men and elders, and in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the community). The process looked through three “lenses”:

- a) the current conditions, so we knew what life was like at that very moment within the community.
- b) lessons from the past (how the past has shaped the present and what we can learn from the past)
- c) pathways for the future (what the future would look like if it were healthy and good for each of the categories being discussed such as children, or politics or family life).

After this first reflection meeting, a draft community story document was produced and distributed within the community. Once staff, community members and Chief and Council had the opportunity to review and affirm the document, the document was passed for implementation. The document established how and on what basis programs should be planned and laid the foundation for moving our community forward.

Overview of Sagamok's Quality Management System



Parallel View

What is the most important element?

The most important aspect Sagamok learned through the implementation of its quality management and community development initiatives was we knew we wanted to move forward. And we found that whatever we regularly measured, tended to improve. So we worked from that basis, and this was a key component to moving our quality management and community development programs forward. It was key because staff knew that programs, services and processes would be measured to determine its effectiveness and further to determine its relevance to community needs .

Just to name a few things we measured:

- number of cheques being produced and why (cost efficiency)
- we measured workplans to ensure that objectives were being followed and if they weren't, we looked to find why they were deviated from. We also looked at them to determine if they were in line with community needs.
- we reviewed log books on a monthly basis to determine when and where departments were not following processes and made necessary changes, but more importantly used the data to chart trends within the community.

What are the key steps / activities necessary for Nation building?

Through Sagamok's experience, one of the key steps to understanding and moving our nation from one point to the next, required knowing who we are as individuals, families and communities.

- It required that we recognize and accept diversity within our community.
- It required capacity building not only for our staff but for our members
- But most importantly creating a system of accountability, transparency, representation and responsibility to the community was the most critical step we took towards moving our nation forward

The most important resources for Sagamok...



Are plain and simple, its people. And we know this because, our community development and quality management systems for Sagamok Anishnawbek were developed, implemented and continue to be monitored, measured and maintained through its own internal resources.

No data, information or skill sets from anywhere but Sagamok Anishnawbek would have enabled us to move forward because we know that although we are similar to other First Nations we still differ in many ways and that only our people can decide which way is best for them.

Sagamok Anishnawbek knows it is well on its way to a better future and the Sagamok Chief and Council recognize that people were always and will always be our biggest and greatest resource. Furthermore, we know that no plan, guide or manual could or would have ever motivated our community to move forward because movement is created by the people. Our decision to develop and map our own future has truly aided in good governance and nation building for our community the, Sagamok Anishnawbek.

How governments and/or private sector can assist in supporting Nation building?

Due to on-going development within our community, we have been received greatly from businesses and both the federal and provincial governments.

Through the process of our development, we have been able to access new funding, and are currently developing partnerships and working with companies such as Vale-Inco, Becker Engineering, ANMAR, My Smart Simulations, Xstrata, and the GW Group. Most recently, Sagamok entered into a partnership with Bayer Inc and PharmaTrust for the installation of its first MedCentre within a First Nation community.

If governments and/or private sectors can or want to assist Nation building, they have to accept that it must be on the terms of the First Nation. And further, they must recognize that many First Nations are only at the very beginning stages of their development and progress may be slightly slower than there accustomed too. Governments especially need to recognize that communities require financial resources to support nation building and that establishing systems today will result in greater First Nation prosperity for the future.

If we had to do it again...

- We would develop and know the history of our community, and immediately move beyond past practices
- We would implement a quality management system to standardize day to day operations
- We would clearly define objectives that were measurable and look for records of proof that the objectives are being met.
- When establishing objectives, they would be based on communities requirements and the First Nation's direction (Where does the First Nation see itself 2-5 years from now?).
- We would build capacity, at the political level, the Administration level and at the community level to ensure everyone understands the goals and direction of the community

Questions



Thank you. For more information, please contact:

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