

Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association: Moving Forward as a Co-operative Enterprise

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Key Objective

The objective of the study was to identify key factors that contribute to the success of organizations that have faced challenges similar to those faced by the Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association. Some of the main issues included:

- transparency
- accountability
- policies and practices
- member engagement
- organizational structure
- differing socio-historic backgrounds
- representation with government and other outside bodies
- integrating traditional trapper governance into co-op governance

Outcomes

Nearly forty years after being established, the Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association (NSTA) has transformed its organizational structure, incorporating as a not-for-profit co-operative at the beginning of 2007. From the standpoint of the government, the primary funder of the organization, the restructuring enhances and formalizes the NSTA's operational accountability and transparency. To ensure the legitimacy of the co-op and its board of directors in the eyes of its members, the benefits of the co-operative model and of legal incorporation need to be effectively communicated. To build trust with its major stakeholders, the newly established co-operative must effectively address the needs and concerns of its predominantly Aboriginal membership, respecting their values and traditions and engaging their participation, while also balancing the demands of government and present and future partners. The final report, based on a literature review, participant observation, and semi-structured individual and group interviews, focuses on these key areas:

- Governance structures, policies, and practices
- Member participation, learning, and cultural revitalization
- Legitimate representation of members in negotiations with government and other outside bodies
- Integration of traditional trapper governance and co-operative governance

The report concludes with recommendations to strengthen internal and external legitimacy; to promote the leadership, vision, and goals as well as multiple bottom lines related to educational, environmental, employment, justice, health, and other benefits to traditional trapping culture; to enhance the NSTA's organizational, financial, and business capacity; to communicate more broadly the community and educational capacity building of NSTA activities; and to strengthen partnerships with community and other organizations.



Graduate student Dwayne Pattison

Community Partner: Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association

Status of Project: Complete

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