Sihtoskâtowin Tribal Administration Review Project

For the
onihcikiskwapowin Saddle Lake Cree Nation

Staff Survey - Summary Report

September 2024

Nichols
APPLIED MANAGEMENT INC.
MANAGEMENT & ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS

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Table of Contents

Introduction

As part of the sihtoskâtowin Tribal Administration Review, staff were invited to participate and contribute their input through a survey.

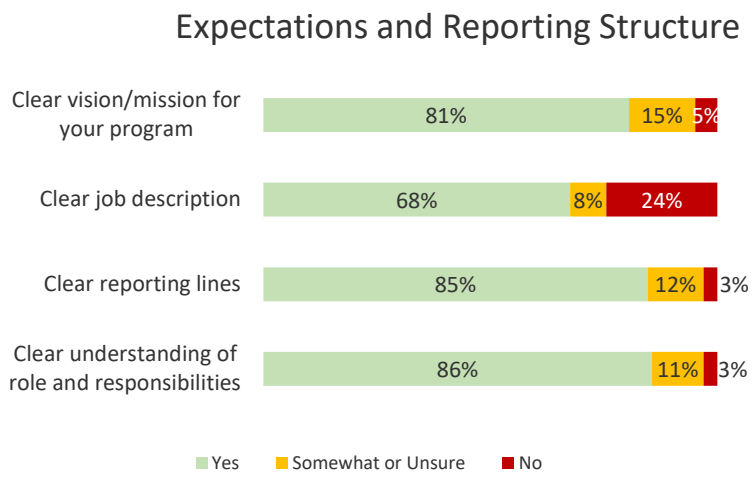
- the staff survey was run from April 11 – May 20
- it was available in an on-line version as well as paper copy
- the consultants administered paper copies for departments with staff not accessing computers on the day of April 17. Staff could submit their survey up until May 20
- the survey had a total of 211 total responses. The estimated response rate is around 43%. Participation in the survey was fairly equal across departments
- a random draw prize ($200 gift card) used as an incentive to encourage participation
- staff were also invited to participate in the Membership Survey

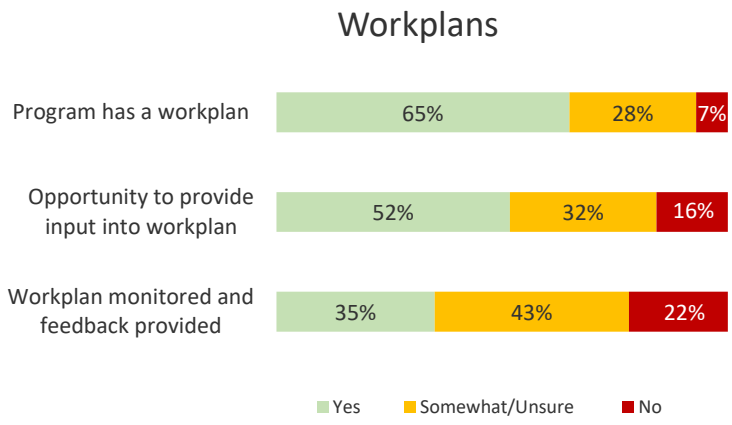
The following report presents findings by various areas of inquiry. Where staff had the opportunity to provide open-ended responses, a sampling of those responses have been summarized and paraphrased to maintain confidentiality and to provide a flavour of the responses being offered for each open-ended question. Those responses are presented in the blue text boxes.

This survey provides a good baseline of staff sentiment that SLCN can use to identify priority areas in terms of human resource and operations management, and can return to these findings to measure progress over time in these areas.

1. Expectations and Reporting Structure

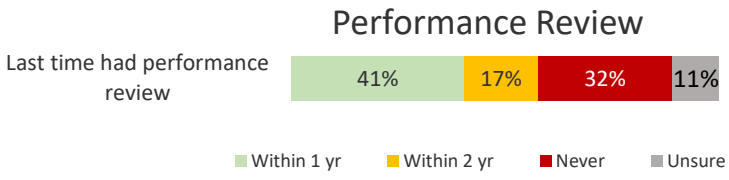
- Staff appear to have a clear understanding of program vision/mission, roles and responsibilities and reporting lines
- Less clarity on job descriptions; 24% of staff do not have one, another 8% are unclear – nearly a third of all staff lack clarity

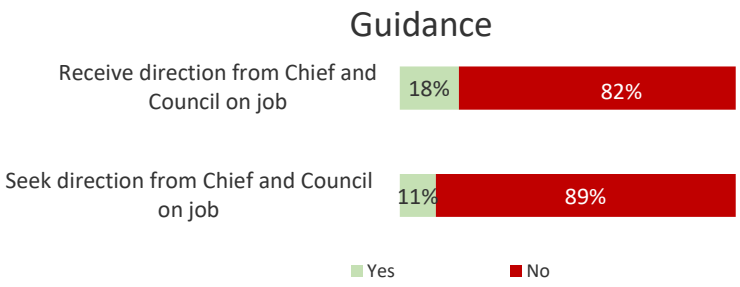




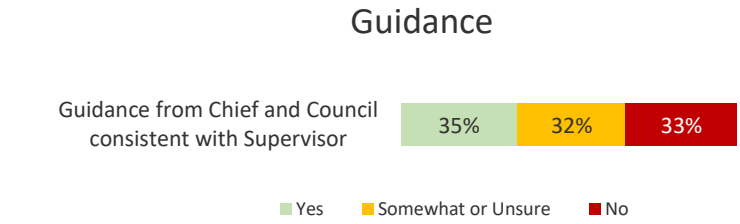
- Two-thirds of staff indicate having a workplan; another quarter are unsure
- Half of staff indicate an opportunity to provide input; one-third are unsure if they do
- Two thirds of staff either do not, or are unsure of having progress monitored or receiving feedback

- Less than half of employees report having a job review in the last year, and 58% have had within two years
- One-third report *never* having a performance review
- 11% of employees indicate being unsure what a performance review is



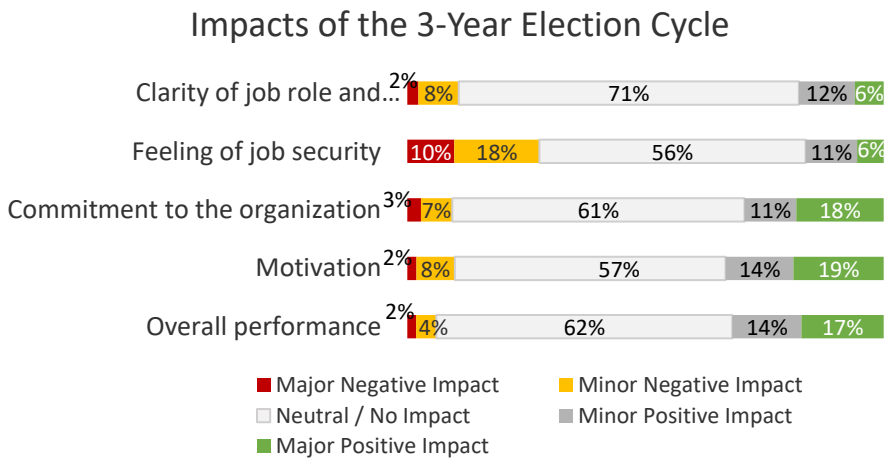


- Only 18% of employees indicate that they receive guidance from Chief and Council
- Only 11% seek guidance from Chief and Council
- *Comment – this response should be interpreted with caution – as the # of respondents to the next question indicate many more receive direction than indicated here*



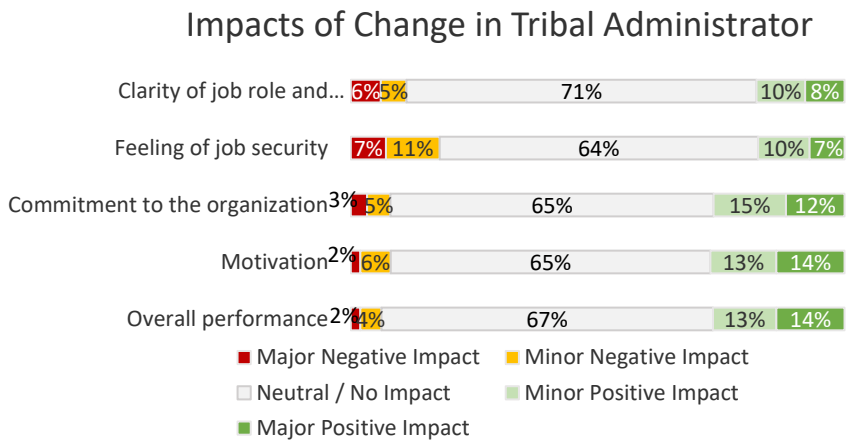
- For those who do receive direction from Chief and Council, only one third report that feedback being consistent with their supervisor

- Majority of employees report the three-year election cycle has no impact on job clarity
- Over one-quarter report the three-year election cycle has a negative effect on feeling of job security
- Over one-quarter report a positive impact from the election cycle on their commitment
- One in three employees indicate that the election cycle has a positive impact on their motivation
- Nearly one in three employees state the election cycle has a positive impact on their overall performance
- For the majority of employees, any impacts from the election cycle tend to be neutral / negligible



Other ways changes in Chief and Council impacts staff's work provide in open-ended responses includes:

Other Ways Changes in Chief and Council Can Impact My Work
• Chief and council try to introduce their own personal agendas within band programming
• Every new term, some leaders are assumed to have an agenda to 'clean house' or that they don't like certain staff or families - this creates an unsafe environment in the work place and makes staff feel uneasy especially in the first few months
• The first year is spent worrying if they are coming after you and the last year you witness campaigning, so you basically feel safe for only 1 out of every 3-year term
• I can be fired from my job if the Chief and Council wants as I am on a year to year contract - no job security
• There is no obvious impact, we just have to update our new portfolio holders so they understand the requirements of our agreements
• There is no obvious impact, we just have to update our new portfolio holders so they understand the requirements of our agreements.
• Added tasks to roles get introduced
• Changes in mandates, organizational structure and chain of command is not consistent
• It normally doesn't impact my job in anyway - the only exception was the last Chief and Council - it felt like all staff were giong to get fired and get new workers
• Disruptions in work if a staff member runs for council - no work gets done and impacts the job. Either put the elections during the summer months or in election years, have staff declare if they will be running so plans can be better made
• Concern when a staff member became a councilor and uses their knowledge of the program to push for certain rules or use personal information unethically
• Micro-managing often occurs during the transition. Some program management should be arms length to be effective
• Impacts to programming if Chief and Council change the rules
• Elected positions may or may not make positive impacts - the need is for more accountability and transparency of those elected
• Electing of co-worker's family or friend can change the lines of authority in the office. Makes life working on the front line nerve wracking
• Changes cause interruption all around, with new leaders learning about programs, new boards. Upper management get effected by communications difficulties and the requests trickle down to the departments
• Chief and Councillors typically have their own agendas - when they work collectively and set their own agendas aside progress can happen



- A similar trend can be observed with a change in the the Tribal Administrator position, with slightly less worry on job security

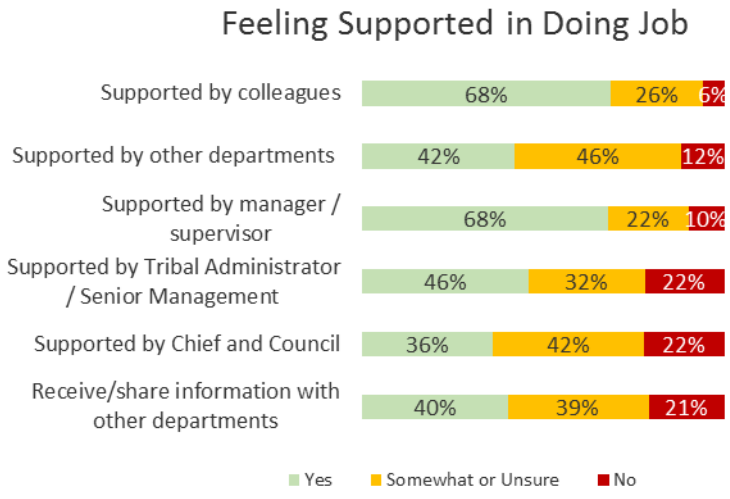
Other ways changes in the Tribal Administrator impacts staff's work provide in open-ended responses includes:

Other Ways Changes in the Tribal Administrator Can Impact My Work

- A positive impact when a new Administrator is hired. At times, updates from the Administrator is needed in terms of Chief and Council's political decisions that affect us as employees and band members
- The change to the band adminsitrator can be very negative - no clear line of communication from Band leadership (Chief and Council) to program directors and managers
- Need to clarify the overall organizational structure needs and where the TA position sits within the hierarchy of roles
- Lack of clarity on future directions and historical impacts due to paperwork gaps

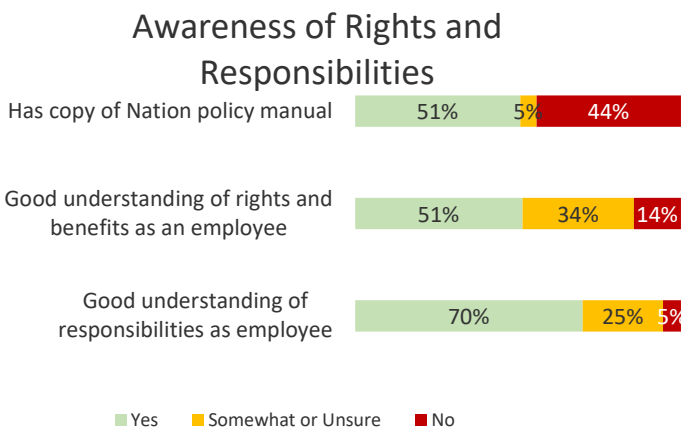
2. Support

- 68% of employees feel supported by their colleagues, while one-quarter feel somewhat supported or are unsure
- Less than half feel only somewhat supported by other departments
- Two thirds of employees indicate feeling supported by management or supervisors
- Less than half of employees feel supported by senior management and/or the Tribal Administrator. One third are unsure, and 22% do not feel supported



- This trend continues with Chief and Council with less staff reporting feeling supported by C&C
- Only 40% of employees indicate they receive and share information well with other departments

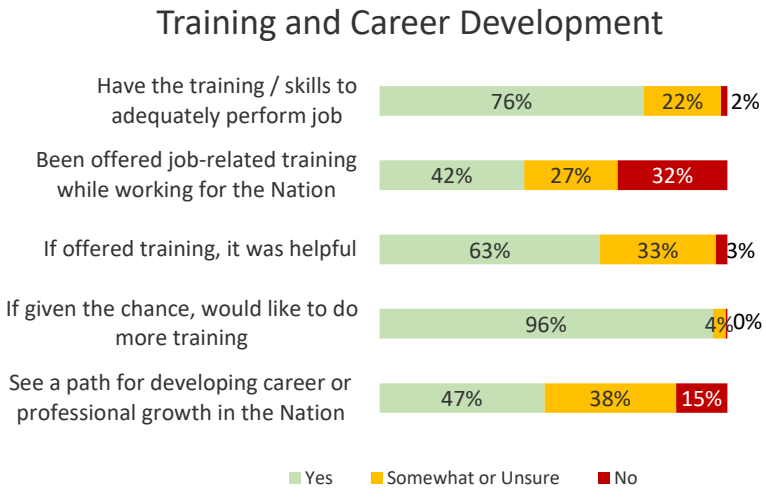
3. Employment Policy



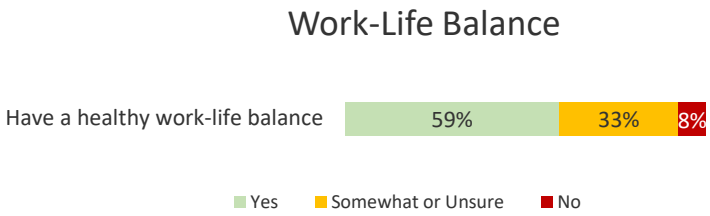
- Nearly half of employees report not having a copy of the Nation's policy manual; 5% are unsure
- Only half of employees indicate understanding their rights and benefits. One-third have some understanding and/or are unsure
- 70% of employees indicate having a good understanding of their responsibilities as an employee

4. Training, Development and Career Progression

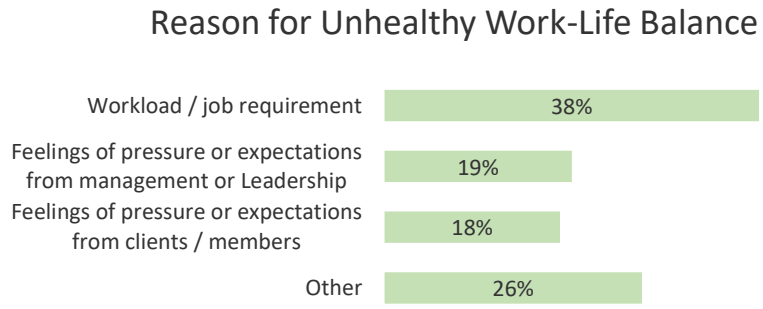
- Three quarters of employees indicate having sufficient training or skills to do their job
- Less than half have been offered job-related training; one-quarter have somewhat been offered training (or are unsure), and one-third have not been offered training
- Of those offered training, two-thirds report it was helpful, with another one-third saying somewhat helpful (or unsure)
- Nearly all employees indicate wanting more training
- Slightly less than half of employees see a path for developing their careers at the Nation. One-third feel somewhat or are unsure.



5. Organizational Culture



- Almost 60% of employees report having a good work life balance, while another third report somewhat (or unsure)

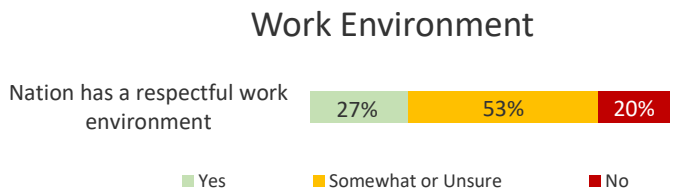


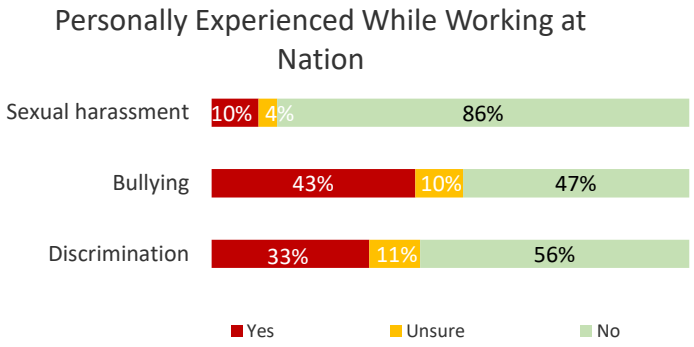
- The most often listed reasons for not having a good worklife balance are workload (38%), feelings of pressure from management / Leadership (19%) or from clients/Members (18%)

Other factors provided by staff for not having a healthy work-life balance includes:

Other Factors for Not Having a Healthy Work-Life Balance
• Micromanaging by supervisors / Chief and Council
• Insufficient pay
• Workers not understanding the chain of command

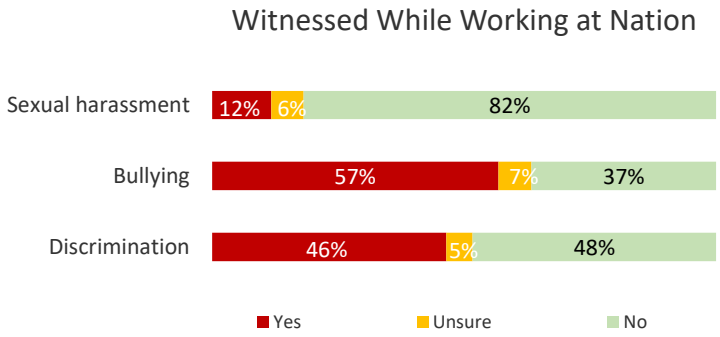
- Only one-quarter of employees indicate the Nation having a respectful work environment
- Over half indicate it is somewhat respectful (or unsure); 20% indicate the work environment is not respectful

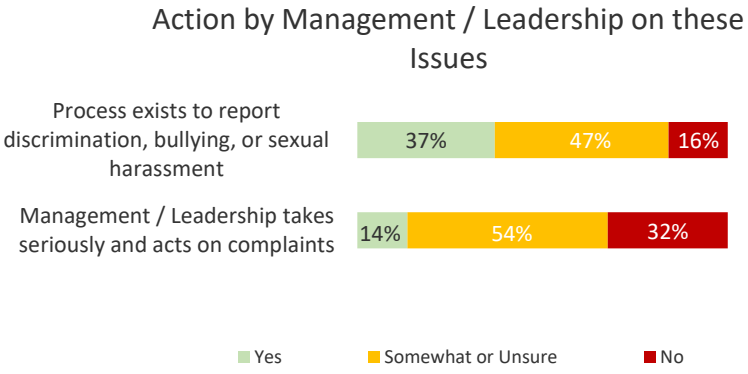




- One in ten workers report having *experienced* sexual harrassment while working for the Nation; an additional 4% report being unsure
- 43% report having been bullied at work; another 10% are unsure
- One third of employees report experiencing discrimination with another 11% unsure

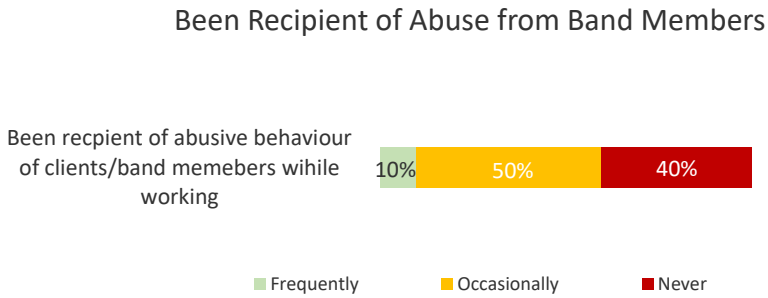
- 12% of employees indicate having *witnessed* sexual harassment at the workplace
- Over half of workers report having witnessed bullying at work
- Nearly half of workers report having witnessed discrimination

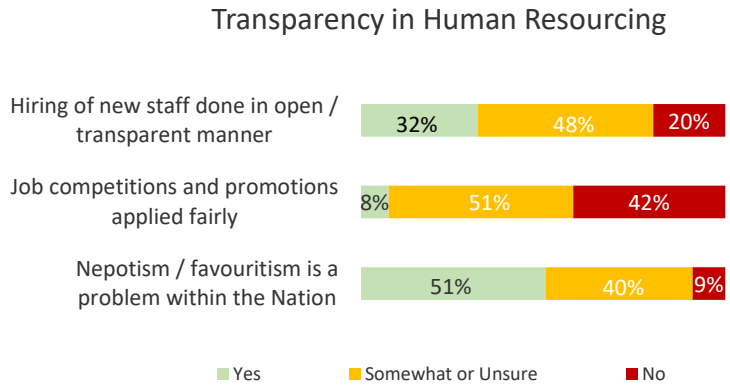




- Nearly half of workers are unsure of processes to report sexual harassment, bullying, or discrimination and another 16% think they not exist
- Only 14% of staff feel that management / Leadereship has taken past instances seriously and acted accordingly. Half of employees felt somewhat (24%) or unsure (30%)
- One-third of employees do not think complaints are taken seriously / acted on

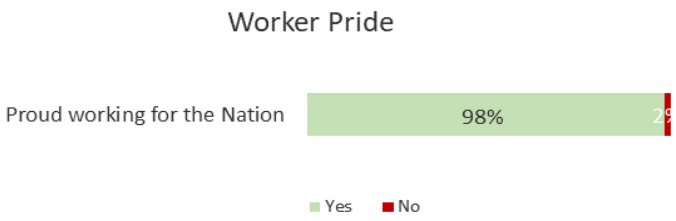
- 60% of employees report experiencing abusive behaviour from Nation members while doing their jobs
- 10% experience it frequently, while another 50% experience it occasionally





- Only one-third of employees feel that hiring is done in a transparent manner; nearly half of employees are unsure
- Staff do not believe that job competitions and promotions are applied fairly – 42% feel they are not, and over half of staff feel somewhat that way, or are unsure
- Half of staff believe nepotism/favouritism is a problem within the Nation – this point was emphasized by staff

- Despite all the commentary above, there is a high level of pride in the staff to be working for the Nation (98%)



6. General

A summary of suggestions provided by staff on how to improve Tribal Operations includes:

Suggestions for Improving Tribal Operations Include:

Human Resource Practices:

- Introduction of a Human Resources Department
- Approve and abide by the ammended SLCN Policy and Procedures manual and make it applicable to everyone
- Professional development and work and act professionally and ethically
- Take the code of ethics seriously
- Hire educated people to run departments, and have mandatory training for staff
- Transition planning
- Manuals for new employees
- Stop influencing hiring of relatives and family members
- Increase pay to equal local off reserve pay for professional, educated staff.
- Stricter policies on major asset use, such as band vehicles, non-band employees using as personal vehicles, etc.
- Be more fair - give others a chance and stop hiring family
- Post all job openings and hire based on ability
- Review all staff positions to ensure they have the required education - if not, send them for education or dismiss
- Don't create jobs for ghost staff, and if staff are not doing their jobs it should be dealt with immediately
- Staff education on bullying behaviour
- Evaluation and dismisal of known bullies in the workplace
- Zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol
- Regular performance evaluations
- Competitive pay/salaries
- We are losing good teachers who move to other schools because of wages and high cost of living
- Have own pay grid that is competitive with comparable off-reserve jobs
- More training
- Support nation members who are young and sober to gain employment
- All Leaders (Chief and Council, program directors, managers) should take comprehensive personal development training

- More training for employees (trauma, work ethics, skill development, team building) and professional growth plans
- Work for school EA's laid off in the summer, so we can continue contributing to the community and not go on EI
- Give confidence to the younger population of our nation who are qualified for positions
- We need to stop life-long director positions, they should be rotated every 5-10 years to allow for new ideas
- More training for employees (trauma, work ethics, skill development, team building) and professional growth plans
- Recognize performance and give credit when due

Communication / Transparency:

- Clearer communication on changes in programming including rationale and reporting to membership
- Return the community newsletter
- Better communication from Chief and Councillors in responding to communications about programs
- Open communication among departments and main office (i.e. website, memos, newsletter)
- Inclusion of front line workers in more meetings
- Transparency in what meetings Leadership attends and time/travel/salaries and other funds received at work. Consistent times available in the office to meet.
- Transparency in how decisions are being made.
- More communication with members. Only 8 band meetings have been held in 22 months.

Strategic / Coordination:

- A clearer picture of why we do what we do to see how it benefits the Nation
- Work together within programs instead of against each other - reduce delays in services due to directors not getting along
- Community safety issues affect all programs - create a holistic vision statement on what and how we can address the issues of drugs & alcohol
- Chief and council tends to overrule the decisions made within my program and tend to micromanage other programs
- More visits by Chief and Council and Tribal Administrator to understand what departments do
- Complaints dealt with timely
- Clear information on programs and services available
- Continue to refer band membership inquiries back to the program in question
- Look at revamping the election process so 3-4 councillors remain for the next term to ensure the continuation and the success of band business.

- Review all programs' organizational structures and policies. Make changes to align with traditional nehiyaw governance. Specifically focus on improving and enriching programs directly working with early childhood (0-7yrs) children and their families. This is crucial to breaking cycles of abuse and trauma
- Look at revamping the election process so 3-4 councillors remain for the next term to ensure the continuation and the success of band business.
- Utilize technology more and train those that need it
- Make sure staff are computer / email savvy

Workplace Environment / Attitudes:

- Punctuality
- Signing in / out with fingerprint scanner, cut down on truancy
- Staff are afraid to speak out regarding negative situations. We need ways to mitigate the fear and communicate safely and honestly to create a more positive work environment
- If employees do not fear retribution for their honesty, work performance would increase
- Mitigating lateral violence and nepotism as much as possible
- Clear roles and responsibilities for Chief and Council, Directors, etc.
- Employee recognition, even simple 'good job' goes a long way
- Employee app to send notifications (lockdowns, emergencies, shutdowns, holidays) would be helpful
- Chief and Council make time to come to the schools, create relationships and share with students/staff
- Honesty, humility and support for each other
- Be good role models with good work ethic
- Get work done in a timely manner
- Utilize technology more and train those that need it
- Keeping personal and work life separate, don't gossip
- Invite Elders and Youth to participate more
- Leadership/staff should have knowledge of governance, language, ceremonies and culture
- Keeping personal and work life separate, don't gossip
- Finalize membership and election codes
- All Leaders (Chief and Council, program directors, managers) should take comprehensive personal development training

Finance:

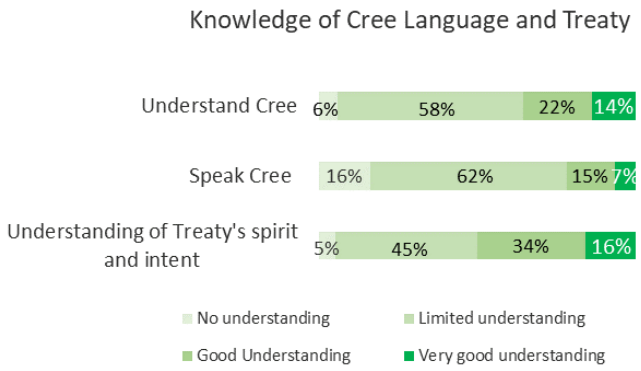
- Budgets, funding and surpluses reported transparently
- Support Finance with time to do bookeeping work and not constantly pressure for producing cheques
- More Accounts Payable personnel and updated system for accurate accounting

- Clear finance practices and policies including what Leadership is allowed to do

General:

- If we all worked as much as we said we did, as a Nation we would be stronger. Instead, we remain divided due to loyalties that control every decision and action made
- I feel good working for the nation, in our department I see capacity building happening. They value their members and are fair
- I'm glad to see this first time ever survey done and hopefully positive can be made from this information given. Just keep striving to becoming more professional within the Saddle Lake work programs.
- Remember we work for the people

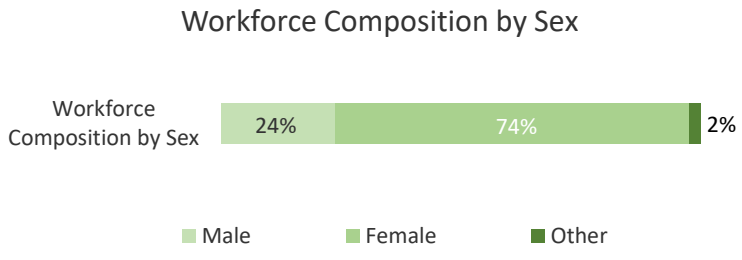
7. Knowledge of Cree Language and Treaty

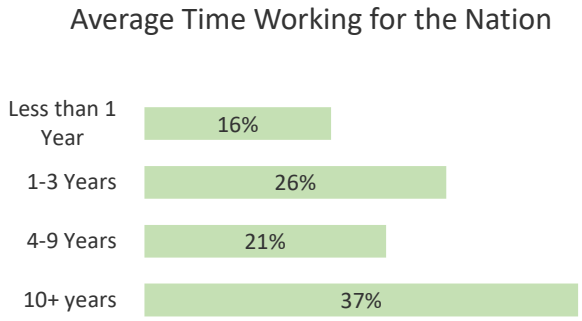


- Over one-third of staff report having a good/very good understanding of Cree; another 58% have limited understanding
- 22% of staff report a good/very good ability to speak Cree, and another 62% report limited ability
- Half of employees report a good/very good understanding of the Treaty's spirit and intent

8. Demographics

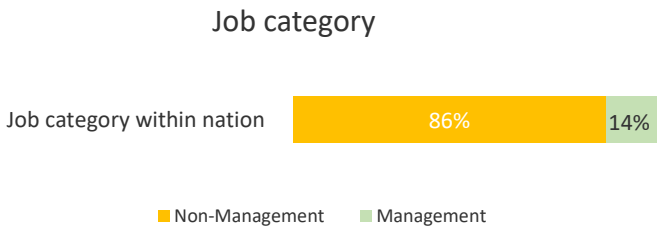
- Three-quarters of the Nation workforce is female
- One-quarter of employees are male and 2% indicate 'other'

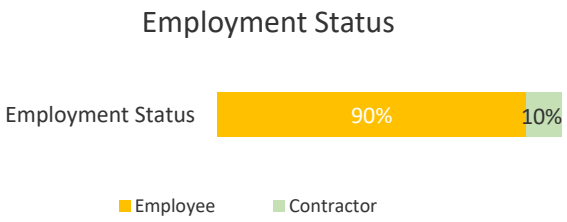




- Over one-third of employees have worked for the Nation for 10 years or more
- Another 21% have worked 4-9 years
- One-quarter have been there for 1-3 years
- 16% of employees are new hires

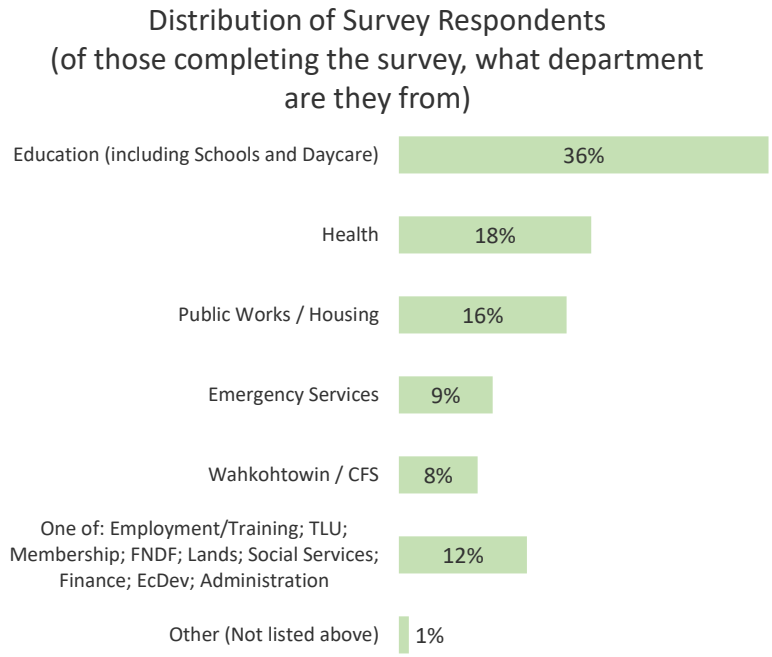
- Majority of respondents where non – management staff





- Majority of respondents where employees
- Note: Many teachers answered employee not contractor

- Employees from Education (including the two schools and Daycare) had the highest participation in the survey (36% of all responses), followed by Health (18%) and Public Works / Housing (16%)
- Response rate by department ranges between ~30-50%
- Overall response rate of all staff estimated at ~43%



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