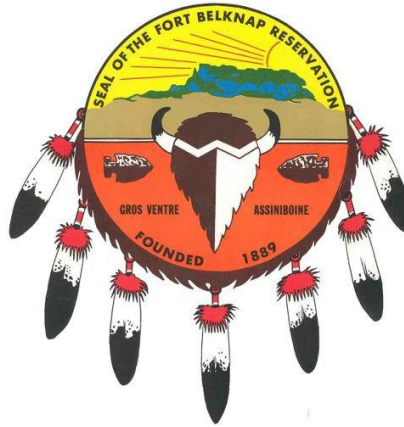




FORT BELKNAP TRIBAL COMMUNITY

STRATEGIC FOCUS 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) embarked on a collaborative strategic focus process to chart a path towards a thriving future. Recognizing the importance of proactive planning for long-term sustainability and sovereign protection, the Tribal Council, administrative staff, and community stakeholders united to identify key priorities and action steps for 2025 and beyond.

This process began with a comprehensive assessment of the FBIC's current landscape, including an in-depth SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to identify existing assets, challenges, and potential areas of growth. Each department provided valuable insights into their current operations and individual action plans, highlighting both successes and areas where they require further support from the Tribal Council.

Through thoughtful discussion and collaborative brainstorming, specific goals were identified, categorized, and prioritized to create a clear roadmap for action. This strategic focus document serves as a simplified planning tool, designed to guide the FBIC's resources and energy towards initiatives with the greatest potential for positive impact.

This collaborative effort underscores the FBIC's commitment to unified action and community-driven progress. The strategic focus is a living document, adaptable to emerging challenges and evolving priorities, reflecting the dynamic nature of tribal governance and development. By working together, the Tribal Council, administrative staff, and community members will ensure the successful implementation of this plan and create a brighter future for the FBIC.

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SWOT STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

SWOT

The activity began with an assessment of the current situation. Specifically, the FBIC's strengths, weakness, threats, opportunities, and needs were identified by the participants. In this regard, a preliminary SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) was developed. This work was intended to provide a framework for the prioritization of needs and respective strategies. The questions in this activity were intended to be broad enough to apply to the community while still being able to focus and coordinate efforts between the FBICC, Tribal Departments, and other relative stakeholders. The following represents the results of that session:

SWOT	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	Strengths: • Committed & United council leaders • New and eager leaders • Successful for-profit (IMDG) • Growing opportunities • Community involvement • Traditional Family Structure • Creating Economic Unity • Traditional culture & language barriers • Recognizing needs of community members • Historical knowledge • Strong & growing land base • Sovereignty • Capable staff • Visionaries • Natural Resources	Weaknesses: • Severe Lateral Violence • Lack of clear communication from staff to Tribal Council • Lack of transparent clear communication from FBIC to the broader community. • Microaggressions & Passive aggressive toxic dysfunctional behavioral tactics • Lack of Preparedness • Territorialism – silo program management • Policy Weaknesses • Old / outdated constitution • No Standard Operating System Procedures for functionality • Lack of community buy in • High turn over rate • Lack of financial literacy • Lack of professionalism • Lack of social services plan • Lack of emergency plan • BIA – Bureaucracy • Substance abuse • Lack of housing • Historical Trauma

		Colonization
External	Opportunities: - Water compact - Cannabis - Wellness Center - More transparent partnership with IMDG - Constitution Reform - Tribal Charter Reform - Renaming of Tribe - Tribal College - International - Water Compact - Social Referral System - Training in lateral violence, cultural awareness, professionalism, effective communication, & customer service - Planning & Planning Management	Threats: - Government FED, STATE, LOCAL, BIA - Tribal Politics - Lack of Tribal Support - Tribal, State, and Federal Elections - Termination of Sovereignty - Social Media - Climate Change - Loss of language & Culture

*The SWOT analysis provides a good framework for reviewing strategy, position and direction of the Fort Belknap Tribal Community. It is important to not only specify your weaknesses and strengths, but also to mitigate and leverage them.

Addressing and Mitigating Challenges:

To address the weaknesses and capitalize on the opportunities, the Fort Belknap Tribal Community can consider the following strategies:

1. Governance and Leadership:

- **Strengthen the communication and decision-making processes** within the tribal government and with the community. This includes improving transparency, accountability, and collaboration.
- **Implement a comprehensive succession plan** to ensure continuity of leadership and institutional knowledge.
- **Promote cultural awareness and sensitivity** throughout the organization to foster a respectful and inclusive work environment.
- **Provide training and professional development** to staff to enhance their skills and knowledge.

2. Community Engagement:

- **Increase community participation** in decision-making and planning processes.

- **Establish regular communication channels** with tribal members to gather feedback and address their concerns.
 - **Build trust and collaboration** with community organizations and stakeholders.
 - **Promote community education and awareness** about tribal programs and services.
3. **Economic Development¹:**
- **Diversify the tribal economy** by exploring new revenue sources and business opportunities.
 - **Support local businesses and entrepreneurship** to create jobs and promote self-sufficiency.
 - **Leverage tribal resources** such as land and natural resources to attract investment and development.
 - **Partner with external organizations** to access funding and technical assistance.
4. **Social Services and Programs:**
- **Expand access to social services** such as housing, healthcare, education, and substance abuse treatment.
 - **Develop culturally appropriate programs** that address the specific needs of tribal members.
 - **Collaborate with community partners** to provide comprehensive services and support.
 - **Advocate for increased federal funding** for tribal programs and services.
5. **Cultural Preservation:**
- **Promote and revitalize traditional language and culture.**
 - **Support cultural education and programming** for all ages.
 - **Document and preserve tribal history and heritage.**
 - **Encourage cultural exchange** with other Indigenous communities.
6. **Environmental Protection:**
- **Protect and conserve natural resources** such as land, water, and wildlife.
 - **Implement sustainable practices** in all aspects of tribal operations.
 - **Advocate for environmental regulations** that protect tribal interests.
 - **Educate the community about environmental issues** and promote environmental stewardship.
7. **Government Relations:**
- **Build strong relationships** with federal, state, and local governments.
 - **Advocate for tribal sovereignty** and self-determination.
 - **Seek partnerships and collaborations** to address shared interests and challenges.

¹ the Fort Belknap Indian Community Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) plan provides a roadmap for the Fort Belknap Indian Community towards reducing unemployment, retaining and growing businesses, and attracting new businesses and industries to the region

- **Stay informed about relevant legislation and policies** that may impact the tribe.
8. **Strategic Planning:**
- **Develop a comprehensive strategic plan** that outlines the tribe's vision, goals, and priorities.
 - **Set measurable objectives** and track progress towards achieving them.
 - **Involve all stakeholders** in the planning process.
 - **Regularly review and update** the strategic plan to adapt to changing conditions.
9. **Capacity Building:**
- **Invest in staff training and development** to enhance skills and competencies.
 - **Build institutional capacity** to effectively manage programs and services.
 - **Promote leadership development** within the tribe.
 - **Partner with educational institutions** to offer training and degree programs in relevant fields.
10. **Data Management and Technology:**
- **Implement robust data management systems** to collect, store, and analyze data.
 - **Ensure data security and privacy** to protect sensitive information.
 - **Use technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness** of operations and services.
 - **Provide training and support** to staff on the use of technology tools.

By addressing these challenges and opportunities, the Fort Belknap Tribal Community can build a stronger, more resilient future for its members and generations to come².

VISION & MISSION STATEMENT

Revised Vision Statement:

"The Fort Belknap Indian Community envisions a future where the A'aninin and Nakoda cultures thrive, our sovereignty is absolute, and our people enjoy a high quality of life. We are committed to sustainable development that honors our ancestors, empowers our current members, and creates opportunities for future generations. This vision includes a vibrant economy, a healthy environment, accessible

² Fort Belknap Indian Community's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, outlines Tribe's CEDS strategies, goals, and projects to promote sustainable economic growth and resiliency for the Fort Belknap Indian Community over the next 5 years

education, strong families, and a community where all members feel valued, respected, and supported."

Revised Mission Statement:

"Guided by our ancestors and traditional values, the Fort Belknap Indian Community is dedicated to:

- **Self-Determination:** Exercising our inherent sovereignty to govern our affairs and control our destiny.
- **Cultural Revitalization:** Revitalizing and perpetuating the A'aninin and Nakoda languages, traditions, and lifeways.
- **Community Well-being:** Providing opportunities for all members to achieve their full potential in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Economic Prosperity:** Developing a sustainable and diversified economy that benefits all community members.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Protecting and preserving our lands, waters, and natural resources for future generations.
- **Social Justice:** Advocating for equity and justice for all our people."

Key Changes and Considerations:

- **Community Focus:** The revised statements shift the focus from the Tribal Council to the entire Fort Belknap community, emphasizing inclusivity and collective responsibility.
- **Action-Oriented:** The mission statement now includes specific actions the community is committed to undertaking, making it more concrete and measurable.
- **Modernized Language:** The language has been updated to reflect contemporary values and aspirations, while still honoring tradition.
- **Sovereignty:** The revised statements explicitly acknowledge and emphasize the importance of tribal sovereignty.
- **Holistic Approach:** The vision and mission statements encompass a broader range of areas, including cultural revitalization, economic development, environmental protection, and social justice.
- **Future Generations:** Both statements highlight the importance of planning for and investing in the future of the community and its youth.

These revised statements aim to provide a more inclusive, progressive, and comprehensive framework for the Fort Belknap Indian Community as it moves forward.

Tribal Council Strategic Focus: Opportunities for Growth and Development

The Fort Belknap Tribal Council can leverage the following opportunities to advance the well-being of the community and achieve its strategic goals: ALL these goals / opportunities need to have a tribal council member leading the task force. A thoughtful detailed strategic action plan needs to be created for each strategic area of focus.

1. Water Compact Implementation

Goal: Effectively manage and implement the \$1.3 billion water compact settlement to maximize its benefits for present and future generations of the FBIC.

Action Steps:

- **Establish a Water Compact Implementation Team:** Create a dedicated team composed of tribal leaders, technical experts, and community representatives to oversee the implementation process.
- **Develop a Comprehensive Spending Plan:** Prioritize projects and initiatives that align with the tribe's long-term vision for water resource management, economic development, and community well-being.
- **Invest in Infrastructure:** Upgrade and expand irrigation systems, water storage facilities, and community water delivery infrastructure to ensure reliable access to clean water.
- **Promote Economic Development:** Explore and invest in water-related economic opportunities, such as agriculture, tourism, recreation, and renewable energy.
- **Protect Water Resources:** Implement sustainable water management practices to conserve water, protect water quality, and ensure the long-term health of the ecosystem.
- **Community Education and Engagement:** Keep the community informed about the implementation process and provide opportunities for input and feedback.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Maintain transparent financial management and reporting practices to ensure accountability and responsible use of settlement funds.

2. Cannabis:

- **Goal:** Develop a well-regulated cannabis industry that generates revenue for the tribe while prioritizing community health and safety.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Conduct thorough research and planning to assess the potential benefits and risks of cannabis legalization.

- Develop a comprehensive regulatory framework that addresses licensing, cultivation, processing, distribution, and sales.
- Prioritize tribal ownership and control of the cannabis industry.
- Implement public education campaigns to promote responsible use and prevent underage access.
- Invest cannabis revenue in community programs and services, such as education, healthcare, and economic development.

3. Wellness Center: A Collaborative Development with IMDG

Goal: Establish a comprehensive wellness center, in partnership with IMDG, that promotes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being for all community members.

Action Steps:

- **Joint Planning and Funding:**
 - Collaborate with IMDG to secure funding for the construction and operation of the wellness center. This may involve grant writing, fundraising, and exploring public-private partnerships.
 - Establish a joint task force with representatives from the Tribal Council, IMDG, and community stakeholders to oversee the planning and development process.
 - Develop a shared vision and strategic plan for the wellness center that aligns with the tribe's cultural values and health priorities.
- **Culturally Informed Design:**
 - Work with IMDG and community members to design a facility that incorporates traditional healing practices, architectural elements, and artistic expressions that reflect the tribe's cultural heritage.
 - Ensure the design promotes accessibility and inclusivity for all community members, including those with disabilities and diverse needs.
- **Comprehensive and Integrated Services:**
 - Collaborate with IMDG and existing healthcare providers to offer a wide range of services, including:
 - Primary healthcare
 - Mental health counseling and support
 - Substance abuse prevention and treatment
 - Traditional healing practices
 - Diabetes Prevention & Dialysis
 - Fitness and recreation programs
 - Nutritional guidance and education
 - Cultural programming and activities
 - Establish a referral system to connect community members with appropriate services and resources.

- **Accessibility and Affordability:**

- Work with IMDG to develop a sustainable financial model that ensures the wellness center is accessible and affordable for all community members.
- Explore options for sliding scale fees, subsidies, and third-party billing to reduce financial barriers to care.
- Promote the wellness center as a community resource and encourage its use through outreach and education initiatives.

By working in partnership with IMDG, the Fort Belknap Tribal Council can leverage its expertise and resources to create a wellness center that truly serves the needs of the community and promotes holistic well-being for all its members.

4. Transparent Partnership with IMDG:

- **Goal:** Foster a strong and transparent partnership with Island Mountain Development Group (IMDG) to promote economic development and self-sufficiency for the tribe.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Establish clear communication channels and regular meetings between the Tribal Council and IMDG leadership.
 - Develop a shared vision and economic development mapping plan to create a long term economic development eco system for the entirety of the Fort Belknap tribal community.
 - Support IMDG in its efforts to create jobs, generate revenue, and invest in the community.

5. Constitution Reform:

- **Goal:** Update the tribal constitution to reflect contemporary values and ensure effective governance.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Establish a constitutional reform committee composed of tribal members, legal experts, and community leaders.
 - Conduct a comprehensive review of the existing constitution and identify areas for improvement.
 - Engage in community consultations and gather input on proposed changes.
 - **Drafting and Revision:** Draft a revised constitution that addresses key issues, including:

- **Staggered Terms:** Implement a system of staggered four-year terms for Tribal Council members to ensure continuity of leadership and reduce the frequency of elections.
- **Tribal Membership:** Clarify and update tribal membership criteria and processes.
- **Elections:** Modernize election procedures to enhance fairness and transparency.
- **Governance Structure:** Review and optimize the structure of tribal government to improve efficiency and accountability. Possible move away from IRA government to traditional governing model.
- **Individual Rights:** Clearly define and protect the individual rights of tribal members.
- **Ratification:** Put the revised constitution to a vote by the tribal membership for ratification.

By incorporating staggered four-year terms into the constitution, the FBIC can foster more stable and productive leadership, allowing for greater continuity in governance and more effective implementation of long-term strategic initiatives.

- Put the revised constitution to a vote by the tribal membership.

6. Tribal Charter Reform:

- **Goal:** Revise the tribal charter to strengthen self-governance and promote accountability.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Review the existing tribal charter and identify areas for improvement.
 - Consult with legal experts and community members to develop proposed changes.
 - Ensure the revised charter aligns with the tribe's vision and values.
 - Submit the revised charter to the appropriate federal agencies for approval.

7. Renaming of Tribe:

- **Goal:** Consider renaming the tribe to reclaim its cultural identity and assert self-determination.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Engage in community discussions and gather input on the potential benefits and challenges of renaming the tribe.
 - Research historical and cultural names for the tribe.

- Develop a process for selecting a new name that reflects the tribe's identity and values.
- If a new name is chosen, implement a plan for transitioning to the new name and updating official documents and records.

8. Strengthening Partnership with Aaniiih Nakoda College

Goal: Deepen the partnership with Aaniiih Nakoda College to develop a pipeline of future tribal leaders and executive employees, fostering professionalism and culturally relevant leadership within the FBIC.

Action Steps:

- **Collaborative Curriculum Development:**
 - Work with the college to develop and enhance curriculum that incorporates tribal governance, administration, economic development, and cultural leadership.
 - Create internship programs and practicums within tribal departments to provide students with hands-on experience and mentorship.
- **Leadership Development Programs:**
 - Partner with the college to design and deliver leadership development programs specifically for tribal council members and aspiring executive employees.
 - Focus on building skills in communication, strategic planning, conflict resolution, financial management, and ethical leadership.
 - Incorporate traditional knowledge and cultural values into leadership training to foster a culturally grounded approach to governance.
- **Succession Planning:**
 - Identify and nurture potential future leaders within the community, encouraging them to pursue higher education and professional development opportunities at Aaniiih Nakoda College.
 - Create a mentorship program that connects experienced tribal leaders and executives with students and young professionals.
 - Develop a clear succession plan for key leadership positions within the tribal government and administration.
- **Scholarship and Financial Aid:**
 - Expand scholarship and financial aid opportunities for tribal members pursuing degrees and certificates relevant to tribal governance and administration.
 - Prioritize funding for students committed to serving the FBIC community after graduation.
- **Community Engagement:**

- Host joint events and workshops with the college to promote community dialogue and engagement on issues related to tribal leadership and governance.
- Encourage community members to participate in leadership development programs and support the college's mission.

By strengthening its partnership with Aaniiih Nakoda College, the FBIC can invest in its future by cultivating a new generation of skilled, dedicated, and culturally grounded leaders. This collaboration will promote professionalism, enhance tribal governance, and ensure the continued success and self-determination of the community.

9. International Partnerships:

- **Goal:** Explore opportunities for international partnerships to promote economic development, cultural exchange, and environmental protection.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Research potential partners and identify areas of shared interest.
 - Develop proposals for collaborative projects that benefit the tribe and its international partners.
 - Participate in international conferences and events to network and build relationships.

10. Social Referral System:

- **Goal:** Implement a social referral system that connects community members with needed resources and services.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Develop a comprehensive database of available resources and services.
 - Train staff to effectively assess needs and make referrals.
 - Establish partnerships with community organizations to provide a coordinated network of support.
 - Promote the social referral system to community members and encourage its use.

11. Training and Capacity Building:

- **Goal:** Invest in training and capacity building to equip tribal members with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce and contribute to the community.
- **Action Steps:**

- Offer training programs in lateral violence prevention, cultural awareness, professionalism, effective communication, financial literacy, healthy leadership, and customer service.
- Provide opportunities for professional development and leadership training.
- Support educational initiatives that promote higher learning and skill development.

12. Planning and Management:

- **Goal:** Strengthen planning and management processes to ensure effective and efficient use of resources.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Utilize your strategic focus in real time to ensure goals are being met and progress is being made on plan. Communicate regularly on the plan.
 - Implement project management methodologies to ensure successful completion of initiatives.
 - Utilize data and technology to track progress and measure outcomes.
 - Utilize evaluation tools of department directors and staff to ensure they are doing the tasks at hand to move the plan forward.
 - Foster a culture of continuous improvement and learning.

By focusing on these opportunities, the Fort Belknap Tribal Council can create a brighter future for the community, where all members have the chance to thrive and succeed.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons Learned

- **Collaboration is Key:** The strategic focus process reinforced the importance of collaboration and communication among the Tribal Council, administrative staff, IMDG and community members. Working together, with a shared vision, is crucial for achieving common goals.

- **Culture as a Foundation:** Incorporating A'aninin and Nakoda cultural values and traditional knowledge into planning and decision-making strengthens the community and ensures that progress aligns with the identity of the FBIC.
- **Adaptability is Essential:** The dynamic nature of tribal governance and development necessitates a flexible and adaptable approach to planning. The strategic focus must be a living document that can evolve with the changing needs and priorities of the community.
- **Healing from Within:** Addressing lateral violence, oppression, and toxic working environments is crucial for the FBIC's well-being. This requires acknowledging past harms, fostering open communication, and promoting healing and reconciliation. Creating a safe and supportive environment where everyone feels respected and valued is essential for progress and unity.

Conclusion

The Fort Belknap Indian Community's strategic focus for 2025 represents a powerful commitment to self-determination, cultural revitalization, and community well-being. By building on its strengths, addressing its challenges, and seizing opportunities, the FBIC is poised to create a brighter future for all its members. This plan is not merely a document; it is a testament to the resilience and vision of the A'aninin and Nakoda people. Through unified action and unwavering dedication, the FBIC will continue to thrive as a sovereign nation, honoring its past while shaping a prosperous future for generations to come.