Self-Governance Simplified Using CloverPoint's Land Registry System, Insight

By Tanya Charles and Bart Konings, PMP

Each and every one of us is affected by government. From the traffic signs we pass as we drive down the road, the water that flows when we turn on the kitchen faucet, to the property taxes many of us face each year, government is embedded in our lives at a fundamental level. Despite this (some might say over) exposure, very few of us actually know how to go about running a government. And while there may have been one or two occasions where I've pontificated on how things would change if I were running things, I confess that I'd be hard pressed to explain just how to go about starting a new government. Yet this was exactly the challenge that the Huu-ay-aht First Nation faced as they made the exciting move to self-governance in April of 2011.

Fig. 1

The path to self-governance is neither a short nor an easy one. There are many requirements that need to be met before a First Nation can be deemed self-governing. One of these is the ability to demonstrate an effective method of managing the lands within its borders. Traditionally, this has been a labour-intensive task. Even Liechtenstein, a country just over 160 square kilometers in area, maintains a multi-staffed land registry office to manage its territory.

The Huu-ay-aht found themselves in a position where rather than being saddled with an evolutionary process, they were able to step back and reflect on what they required from a land registry. Being able to keep the amount of overhead to a minimum was essential in their eyes, while still being able to provide timely access and ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the information stored within the land registry. After a period of evaluation, CloverPoint's geospatially enabled Insight framework was selected as the platform to support the Huu-ay-aht's vision of an online, automated land registry.

Most of us have run smack into evolutionary processes. Telltale signs are paper forms (multiple copies), waiting in offices, and considerable back-and-forth. These systems have resulted from the challenges of accurately recording, referencing, storing and tracking physical records.

In the case of land use applications, this has most often involved an applicant completing and submitting the initial paperwork. That paperwork is then reviewed by an administrator and either moved forward or returned to the applicant for additional information.

While the Insight Land Registry system doesn't automate everything (it still requires an application after all), it does take several steps to reduce the time spent evaluating land use applications, and much of the back and forth that results from incomplete information. The key operational components that facilitate the ease-of-use of the system are:
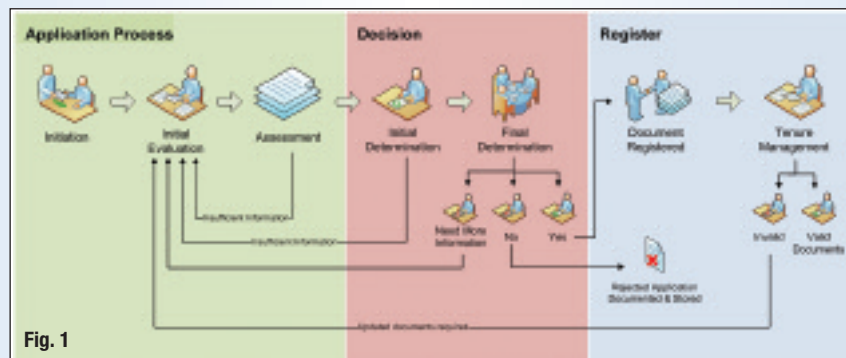
- Integrated Workflow = Less Rework:

  By building checks into the application process, no land use application can proceed until all mandatory steps within a stage have been completed. This greatly reduces the amount of time and rework that results from processing and reprocessing incomplete applications.

- One Database = Faster Approvals:

  By keeping all land use records in a single database, administrators can directly compare land use applications with existing tenancies and assignments. A process that used to take hours (or even days) can now be completed in minutes.

- GIS Integration = The Power of Visualization:

  Not only do administrators have all the advantages that come with a single database, but through the built in mapping functionality of Insight, they have the ability to see these changes on a geographically accurate representation of the area. Boundaries for land use proposals can be quickly added to the map and immediately assessed against existing tenures, further reducing the time required to process applications.

- Secure Scalability = Data Integrity & Business Continuity:

Insight's integrated security ensures that users of the system are only able to see what they have permission to access. A complete audit log is maintained of all transactions, with the ability for administrators to edit entries where required. The Insight Cloud capability provides applicants and administrators with the capability to login anywhere and complete or review applications at any time. Alternatively, the system can be restricted to office use only, or anything in between.

Fig. 2

Introducing a new process often creates a period of anxiety. To ease the transition to this new system, CloverPoint provided a multi-tiered support network to provide guidance to walk users through the system as well as monitoring to guarantee the system performed as expected.

The Land Registry uses an elegant Silverlight interface, Esri ArcGIS Server and Microsoft SQL server. At its core is CloverPoint's Insight™ software which provides a unique and reliable solution for Asset, Land and Environmental based organizations who desire a holistic view of their capital assets in real space and time.

Almost one year after the effective date, the Huu-ay-aht First Nation is successfully managing land titles using the Insight Land Registry. The system is operated by one staff member who updates the registry when changes are needed. The ease of use and amount of centralized information available make it a continuing success. CloverPoint continues to work with the Huu-ay-aht to enhance functionality and ensure updates are applied to the system as necessary.
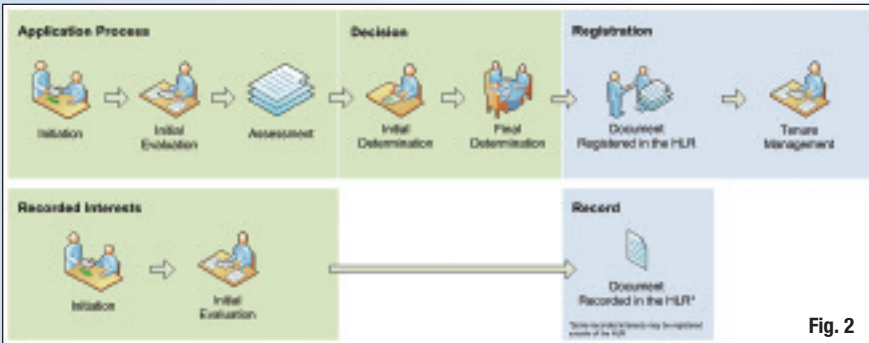
Tanya Charles is CloverPoint's GIS Project Manager and Practice lead. She has been an integral component to the company through its evolution from a GIS analysis and Cartography Shop to a cutting edge software development company that integrates the importance of spatial relevance with slick programming and solid databases. You can reach her by email at **tcharles@cloverpoint.com.**

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