

Communications Strategy

Why and What It Is All About

In this publication, you will find all sorts of tools you can use to put together an effective communications plan. This plan will make your Additions to Reserve (ATR) move a little more smoothly over some of the speed bumps you may encounter as you are about to begin this process. In the following pages, you will find various ways of implementing your objective: effective communications. Not all of the following information will be required and it is not intended or assumed that you will follow this document word for word. As you read through it, you will find an assortment of tools which will make your communications task a little easier. Choose what you need to do the job.

*Design your
communications strategy to meet
the needs of your community*


This document does not imply in any way that the reader knows nothing about communications. In fact, everything in the document is organized so that you, the reader, can select any part and insert it into whatever plans you have in motion. You are the boss. Some readers may have skills in certain areas, perhaps in many; however, there will also be those who are experiencing this whole process for the first time.

The choice of various methodologies and techniques will depend on many factors. You may be in a remote community where the general term “communications” seems broad. There are reserves in rural, urban and even suburban locations. Each community will require its own unique approach. It is hoped that you will find what you need as you examine the contents of this publication.

The Need for a Communications Plan

First and foremost, the reason you need a sound communications plan is that, in many cases, you will be battling an enemy long familiar to many Aboriginal people, and that enemy is ignorance. Not malicious ignorance, although that may apply in some instances, but in the sense that many Canadians do not understand Aboriginal people or their circumstances. Whether they have any concern at all about Aboriginal issues is also in question. Negative perceptions abound, yet the fact that Aboriginal people once inhabited this land by themselves long ago is often forgotten.

This is where communications comes in. The onus is on you to get your message across to other communities and their influential leaders. You must approach law makers, lawyers, and other members of the judiciary, as well as social services, educators and municipal, provincial and federal politicians. The list may go on and your task is to get your message across. What you are doing and why? Where you



are doing it and when? Whom you feel it will most affect? You have to persuade your audience that your mission (in this case, an ATR) is noble.

Creating Allies

It may be tempting to dwell on the past and the less-than-favourable treatment by government, police and others, especially on the question of how the land you are purchasing disappeared in the first place. However, that line of thinking will get you nowhere fast. An explanation of injustices—in a rational, pragmatic way, including positive action that can be taken by both

sides for the betterment of your communities—would be a much more effective way to

approach people who could present major road blocks. With some work, they could become allies who will see your point and perhaps even help your cause in ways you had never imagined.

You should keep in mind that most people you will deal with as you go through your ATR process know little or nothing of Aboriginal history and do not understand the issues facing you today. They may also resent being recognized as people who were responsible for creating the “problem.” You might be surprised by how receptive many people can be when dealt with in a positive way.

Dealing with “Experts”

In closing this introduction, keep in mind that generally speaking—and this applies in most cases to all societies—everyone thinks they are a communications expert, full of advice on how you should do things. They are not always wrong because communications is usually based on common sense. But be clear on your plan. Brainstorm with those who have some communications experience and those you trust. Use this tool kit where and when required. Once you have completed your communications plan, test it out on a few people who are impartial and whose opinion you respect.

When you have decided what and how you will put your plan into action – stick to it! Knowledge, discipline and motivation will be key to its implementation. You have done the work on it and you believe it will work for you. Once you have reached that point, let the experts work on someone else. Belief in what you are doing, along with the determination to follow it through, will be your greatest advantage in seeing your plan come to a successful conclusion.

Good Luck.

Communications is usually based on common sense

In the Beginning

A communications plan is a sincere effort to inform those who directly or indirectly will be affected by your proposed activity. It is the most polite way of saying “Here, folks, we don’t want to blind-side you with an action that you have not been notified about or consulted on. In fact, it’s the opposite: we want you to know as much as possible as our ideas develop into reality.”

Where does a communications strategy or a communications plan begin? Better yet, what is a communications plan? Communications plans are basically the gathering of ideas which will allow you to present your point of view, idea or project in the best possible light to people who will be most affected by your actions or ideas. These ideas are planned in a strategic sequence so as to achieve the most favourable outcome, thereby enabling your aims and objectives to proceed more smoothly. In essence, a strategy will remove possible speed bumps or at least reduce the force of impact!

In your particular case, the ATR, an addition of land to your current reserve or the creation of a new reserve, is your prime objective. Before you begin to move in any substantive way, you should sit down and evaluate the potential impact of your action (financial, environmental, psychological etc.) on the surrounding community,

including your neighbours. These include people you talk to at the local store or supermarket; the people you socialize with at the Legion, restaurant or lounge; the people whose children play with your children; and so on. These are the people who will be most important as your ATR becomes a reality, as you interact with them in everyday life.

You will need a communications plan which will direct you in people-friendly approaches and allow you to anticipate and deal with persons who might otherwise reject your idea or organize enough influence to scuttle your project. The alternative to a well-thought-out communications plan can be confrontation and dissension regarding the proposed ATR, a situation in which nobody wins. The politics of confrontation can be advantageous in certain circumstances, but certainly not when embarking on an ATR.

Your communications plan should anticipate and avoid the politics of confrontation.



**COMPONENTS OF AN
ATR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

- *Communications Goals*
- *Target Audience*
- *Key Messages*
- *Timing and Sequence*
- *Communications Tools and Budget*

This tool kit follows the ATR process through the initial community meetings to formal announcements to media and key stakeholders, and post-ATR media advisories on the ATR's effect on the community.

This document leads you through three distinct phases of an ATR communications plan:

Pre-ATR Phase

formulating your communications plan and consultation within your community;

The ATR Process

public relations, announcements, media relations; and

Post-ATR Phase

the follow-up communications after the process has concluded.

In each of these phases, you should develop a list of what you would like to accomplish (your communication goals). The communications plan is developed around these goals, as each goal will be associated with certain stakeholders (the target audience) and will require information to be communicated (the key messages) in a logical sequence (the timing), using the most appropriate and cost-effective approach (the communications tools and budget).

Pre-ATR Phase

Involve your key senior staff at the beginning of your ATR consultations.

How should the ATR communications process begin in a community? Here is one scenario as an example. You have been informed through the grapevine, or through “For Sale” signs down the road, that several farms or acreages are available, and the thought has arisen that your band could certainly use extra land. This is the time to gather together your key people in the band and discuss, as thoroughly as possible, all aspects of a potential ATR, including the process (see Appendix 1), before talking to the wider community membership. Key components of your pre-ATR communications plan include:

Develop key messages

1 As a first step, questions that you will be asked later which could become a source of embarrassment or difficulty should be discussed. This will help you refine your key messages to the community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Some sample questions include:

- What is this proposal all about?
- Where does this ATR proposal fit with previous land claim negotiations, if any?
- Who will be the appropriate spokespersons to talk to about this ATR?

- What will be the benefits to your First Nation and to the surrounding local community, in terms of services, employment, non-reliance on welfare etc.?
- Who are some of the players involved in the ATR? Who are the buyers and sellers of land? Will local businesses be affected?
- What will be the general reaction from outside your community, including potential support or opposition?
- How do you intend to inform people of the ATR?
- Can people who have supported your consultations in the past be called on to help?

Present unified support for the process

A consensus must be reached as to whether the band really is serious about an expansion of the reserve. This may sound like a ridiculous thought, but attention to basics can prevent negative situations from arising. It could be embarrassing later on, when the ATR process is in motion, to have one of your counsellors informing the media that you have enough land and that he or she never agreed to this acquisition process to begin with.

Consult with key band officers

3 If you already have an infrastructure in place, it is imperative that senior managers of all programs, such as health,

housing, social development and education, be involved in your first meetings. And because people naturally talk, news of your deliberations will leak out. It is important at this point to ensure that the facts, as they exist, are correctly and quickly stated. For example: "The matter is being discussed as

Your information session should answer the questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why.

part of routine band business and no decisions or announcement of decisions are in the works at the present time. However, if and when any concrete decisions are made, the community will be fully informed."

Consult with the band membership



At this point, the community should be consulted in a town hall-style meeting where the band council invites the community to attend a general information session on band business.

There the subject of the ATR can be introduced, as well as discussions on general band matters. The key message for the band members is that no decisions have been made. This will avoid any accusations of a set-up. The discussions the council and band staff have had regarding a possible

ATR are presented in general terms, without getting into technicalities. People at this forum will not be interested in the ins and outs of land titles or other such matters which are better left to the technicians. This meeting should focus on answers to who, what, when, where, and why.

It is a must that you talk with all members of your band and do not make any announcements publicly until you are sure that your band members understand what the council is doing and you are confident you have support from your community. There will always be dissenters, no matter what the issue. That is human nature; however, no one likes to be blind-sided and it would not be the first time a crowded hall of irate band members demanded an accounting of the chief and council activities. Make disclosure of your intentions a number-one priority on your agenda.

Maximize the value of word-of-mouth communication by providing accurate, comprehensive information

Early communication with the band membership is also an ideal method of stopping inaccurate rumours before they begin.

Members of your Communications Team:
Coordinator, Writer,
Researcher, Spokesperson.

You may think that simply because you are involved in the ATR process, most of your band members are already aware of what is happening, but don't go down that road. You should be satisfied in your own mind that the entire community is informed by providing accurate information at the outset. That way, word-of-mouth—which is often ignored or trivialized but is also probably one of your most important communications mechanisms—can be capitalized on to its utmost value. Word-of-mouth should begin at home right in your own community as your first communications tool. This initial step cannot be minimized. No one wants to hear about their community's activities for the first time in the general media. This can, in fact, create a backlash from the very people you feel will benefit most from the ATR.

Formalize the process

Both the preliminary work on the ATR and the preparation of a detailed communications plan can be developed on the foundation established through the consultation process. There are



many issues to consider when instituting a ATR process, such as consulting with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) on proper procedures (*see Appendix 1*); passing of a Band Council Resolution (BCR) to initiate action on an ATR; and determining the asking price for the land—most of these with little direct relevance to the communications plan. At this point, it would also be advisable to contact other First Nations who have been involved in an ATR process for information or advice. You will find a list of these in Appendix 2. Speaking with other First Nations is important not only for the technicians who will negotiate the ATR, but also for your communications team who can learn about problems other bands have encountered and possibly receive advice on how to avoid pitfalls that may lie ahead.

Another important activity involves hiring a lawyer, who in many cases will have an impact on ATR communications, as lawyers often act as spokespersons or represent the band in business meetings throughout the process. If the band does not already have a lawyer, then someone familiar with band business, government and real estate is needed. Take some time and make some inquiries. Lawyers are people, too, and capable of exaggerating their expertise in various areas. This person is likely to be with you through the long haul and will be influential in the success of your ATR. Be sure you have made a decision your band can live with, which is based on trust and reputation.



Put a communications team in place

Now the construction of your communications plan, which will guide you through the ATR and post-ATR process, kicks into high gear. As your business dealings and planning escalate, so should your plan. A good start is to put together a small team who have some experience in the field of communications, and who have both a solid reputation in the community and good interpersonal skills. This team will have a variety of roles, including planning, writing, research and coordination. Every part of the communications plan will be developed by this team, from speech writing to arranging speaking engagements for the ATR spokesperson.

As each member of the communications team's role is defined, there also comes with it a commitment to follow through the entire process. This is not unlike a football team where you have the coaching staff, the blockers and the ball carriers. In many cases, different roles become confused and it may be necessary from time to time to redefine each team member's role. Remember, there is only one ball (the message) that can be carried at one time and one goal line (your communication objective) to aim for.

(a) The Researcher

Research, to many, is a very boring and tedious process, but nevertheless, it is an important function. With the right

individual, it can be exciting and rewarding. In this position, one should have a genuine interest in the community, its workings, its people, its governance and its history. Community history may be difficult to obtain. In some communities, after certain periods of time, such as the residential school era, history just somehow seemed to disappear into thin air. Research, in this case, may have to begin with the basics. The first contact should probably be with the Elders, discussing with them their memories of the past. As this is being done, the researcher should be making notes on events, dates and people involved. Although it may be tempting in the process to write a book (hold the thought!) the researcher should be looking for history (facts) that in one way or another is relevant to the promotion of your ATR. The appendices contained in this publication may be of some help. Use them only as a reference and put any written information across from your own band's perspective.

Other sources which might help verify information which has been accumulated are INAC and the federal and provincial archives. National Archives in Ottawa may surprise you with the amount of information available on your region, and

Your community's history should be highlighted in media information sheets and in presentations on the ATR process.

they are very cooperative. Other sources include retired priests, nuns, school teachers, doctors, nurses, police, MPs and MLAs—any of these people who were involved several generations back in one way or another which affected your community. This research will be invaluable when it comes to writing backgrounders for the media or information sheets for the general public, or as information for the writer who will put together the speaking notes for your spokesperson.

The researcher can have a dual role, serving not only communication needs but also other aspects of the ATR process. For example, the band may require research in its application procedure with INAC to initiate the ATR process.

(b) The Writer

In every community there is a scribe, someone who loves to write. This person is not hard to find and you may have many capable people to choose from. Although it may seem like a glamorous task, particularly if a person is writing for the sheer joy of it, it can be another thing when you have a fixed message and all that you write must be directed to or closely related to that point. Your writer must write “to time and to place.” For instance, an Op-Ed piece, which is the professional term for opinion-editorial page, could run as much as a thousand words, or it could be as short as a


hundred, depending on the availability of space. It is unfortunate that you have to think of your goals and objectives being poured into several different moulds, but to coin an old expression, “That’s showbiz.” In fact, you are setting the stage for the representatives of your band to showcase their message.

A speech should never be more than 15 minutes long, and people will thank you if it is kept to a brief 10-to-12-minute address. Quantity is not what you are looking for; it’s the quality of the message that will have most success. A speech has its own construction formula. If you are lucky, your writer is a natural and can condense history

Effective speeches are brief (10 - 12 minutes), factual and clear. They should not be cluttered with different messages. Emphasize your central theme—your ATR process!

and present-day information with the actual message, throw in a touch of humour, and end up with an interesting, brief package.

For those not quite so gifted, the basic formula includes three parts: talk about what you are going to tell them, tell them what you came to tell them, and lastly, tell them what you told them. Keep in mind that the average audience will remember only three points from the presentation. It is



Simplicity, common sense and sincerity are a few of the main ingredients required to make your message compelling and successful. Speeches do not necessarily require a lot of words—but they most certainly require a lot of meaning!

important that your message be one of them. Neither your writer nor the speech will be up for a writing award! Follow the W-5 approach (who, what, when, where, why) and write and deliver the speech so that the basics of what you are doing (the ATR) can be easily understood.

The communications coordinator is the overseer of everything.

(c) The Communications Coordinator

The coordinator, or leader, of your group should be just that: a leader. This person is not to be confused with the spokesperson who may be a leader of a different kind. This coordinator must be an organizer. In your community, this person is instantly recognizable. You can't be involved in a friendly discussion with this person without finding yourself volunteering for some activity in which you had no intention of participating, or indeed may have known nothing about. This is the person you want to recruit for such a position. He or she is a

person who is not only dedicated, but has the ability to inspire, excite and organize others.

The coordinator has the most important role on the communications team. Without the proper individual in place, your whole communications plan could blow up in your face. The coordinator supervises all facets of the communications plan: "Is the research done? Is the speech okay? Are the mailers out?" Timing is everything, and the coordinator has to conduct everything like an orchestra. One bad note will be heard by all.

The coordinator must:

Work with each person on the team.

This is not micro-managing— incidentally, an activity that will result in a lonely coordinator very quickly—but rather it is knowing the progress involved in detail as the plan unfolds and ensuring its readiness. Whatever is not ready will require everyone to pitch in to pull in the slower link. After all, this is a team effort.

Be the decision maker.

This does not mean becoming the spokesperson, although these two individuals may work together on various matters. One person, however, will have to make key decisions: “Is this good or is this better? Is that speech saying what it should or does it need revision? Is the press release short, punchy and to the point? Does the spokesperson have all the bullets (talking points) he or she needs? Is the room set up correctly for the press conference?” This will go on until every last klieg light is turned off at your last press conference.

Have all the answers and all the questions.

It is no wonder that in some media situations the coordinator is often referred to as the wagon master, making sure that everything is happening the way it is supposed to and that the people most concerned are informed of each day’s activities.

Although this role is very time consuming and often provides an adrenaline rush, it really can be done quite efficiently, if the person is flexible and has contingency, or back-up, plans for all situations. It can also be a lot of fun, and has its own special reward —the self-satisfaction of having done a good job. Above all, the efforts of the entire communications team should not go unnoticed. You would be nowhere without them.

Key Duties of the Communications Coordinator

1. Make sure each person on the team is fully aware of the objectives of your project.
2. Assist each member of your team where possible and encourage good ideas and hard work.
3. Personally bring someone on board who can communicate with the public on the telephone. The coordinator may take this up, but preferably there should be a back-up simply because of the repetition involved in giving out the same message to a large list of people. Even the most enthusiastic person will require a time-out to avoid becoming monotonous and boring.
4. Well in advance, arrange all details necessary to set up a press conference. Do not leave anything to chance. Double check each detail.
5. Provide support and assistance to the spokesperson. For example, the coordinator should be very familiar with the presentation or speech, and should rehearse it with this person. The coordinator and the spokesperson should know each other and the material well enough so even in the case that the coordinator was not present at a

function, he or she would know what was said and how the questions were answered.

As well, the coordinator should accompany the spokesperson any time they are making an official public appearance on behalf of the band. This should not be misunderstood as supervising or keeping an eye on them, but more as encouragement, direction and mentor. Each spokesperson needs someone to lean on at times or be advised on some last-minute development. Ask any public person what it feels like to walk into a presentation alone, with no personal support or encouraging words before. It can be devastating.

For more technicalities of which the coordinator will be responsible, see the section on Communications Tools (press releases, backgrounders etc.)

(d) The Spokesperson

This person should have the basic talents of an orator. He or she may be the chief of the band, or possibly the band manager, or one of your Elders. You have to decide who has more of a public image and the desirable talent required to convey your message to the public in a way that combines the ingredients of knowledge, dedication and class.

The first impression of your spokesperson will be one of the biggest influences in determining how well your message reaches its audience.

Keep in mind that as shallow as this sounds, first sight and first impression often carry the day. The spokesperson should understand that when speaking for the community, those interests are most important. A self-check for this person is: "Is this the way the band membership would like this message put across?" Stick to the script. The writer on the team has worked hard to prepare it and any problems with it should be sorted out before delivery. If necessary, ask the coordinator to call in the entire communications team and thrash out any concerns. Often this involves a readjustment to the speech, such as when there has been an immediate development just before the presentation.

The communications team should go through a mock presentation before the speech is first used, and anticipate the questions to be asked. It is often easy for a spokesperson to go off on a tangent, particularly if a sensitive question or a side issue is raised. Don't fall into that trap of being led by the questioner.

If the spokesperson is asked a question for which they have no available answer, or they feel that the only response may be highly inaccurate, then say so, but with a promise to check into the matter and provide an answer as soon as possible. For example: "I don't know the answer, but I'll look into it and get right back to you."

Don't bother the spokesperson with large amounts of technical detail and data in the presentation. Instead, have the appropriate band resource people in attendance to

whom technical inquiries which come up in the following question period can be directed. Specialized resource people or technicians should be available at any significant event as back-up, should these types of questions arise.

Summary of the Pre-ATR Phase

- 1. Meeting of band council. Discuss ATR from the council's perspective.***
- 2. Briefing of band officers of community infrastructure, asking them for their views.***
- 3. Meeting of the community for distribution of information and preliminary endorsement.***
- 4. Band council resolution regarding the ATR process.***
- 5. Consultations with INAC regarding the appropriate steps and procedures.***
- 6. Formation of communications team.***
- 7. Development or revision of communications plan.***
- 8. If you have not already retained a lawyer, now is the time.***
- 9. Consultation with other First Nations bands for their first-hand experience with the ATR process, either positive or negative (see Appendix 2).***

ATR Process Phase

The ATR process phase, as the ATR progresses and becomes a reality, will be the largest, most complex part of your communications plan. It covers the following steps:

1. Initial inquiries to INAC and the property owners regarding the potential to purchase the property;
2. Private face-to-face meetings with non-Aboriginal stakeholders, who are influential in the municipality, such as the mayor, reeves, or counsellors, MPs, MPPs or MLAs, and key community residents such as clergy, school principals, service club presidents, business owners and would-be politicians;
3. INAC and property owners' agreement to negotiate the purchase of property(ies);
4. Media relations: a formal announcement to the media using press release, press conference and interviews as appropriate. Follow up with updates at significant points in the negotiation process;
5. General public relations including town-hall meetings or other public venues such as service clubs or special interest groups; and
6. Announcement of ATR's successful conclusion (signature day) to community, politicians and media.

The following provides an introduction to basic media relations, covering press releases, press conferences, backgrounders, fact sheets, media advisories, editorial boards, interviews and other communications tools. This section concludes with a discussion of approaches to general public relations.

Introduction to Basic Media Relations

1. The Media

Communications, in the general use of the word, should mean just what it implies—get the word out to those people you want to make aware of your message.

COMMUNICATE! There are many ways to communicate with the public at large, but the most common method, and one which most people believe is the only way, is through media exposure. In other words, use media to spread your message. This is not the only method, as communications is comprised of a multitude of approaches, but because it is the most popular—and in many cases a priority—let's begin with the media.

Let's assume that your group is totally familiar with the objectives of your ATR and you have already made contact with your primary stakeholders. You will need to know how to deal with the media. What is the media? There are, of course, different types of media to consider: radio, television, daily newspapers, all generally regarded as the *big three*.

(a) Newspapers

There are many publications in circulation other than daily newspapers. These include:

- the weekly or bi-weekly paper, most often seen in urban areas;
- bi-monthly papers in more rural or remote areas;
- periodicals – monthly magazines geared to the farming, logging or mining communities.

These may be known as trade journals, but in some cases, such as the Alberta Report, they deal with news, personalities, local industry and politics; and

- the local and national Aboriginal publications which you receive in your area.

There are many other public media communicators, including even your local high school newspaper. Remember, young people talk to their parents and others about issues which interest them, and many of these come from the school newspaper.

(b) Radio

Radio is another powerful medium. In urban and suburban Canada, the first thing people turn on in the household is the radio and every automobile has one. For the most part, the aim is to find out what is going on in the world. Talk shows are everywhere. Particularly in the larger cities, it is hard to find a radio station that does not feature at least one talk show in its morning, afternoon or evening “drive.” In remote areas, there are usually only a few

stations that can be picked up. Radio is so important to some of the population that, in some cases, the community relies on the daily message service from the station to hear news from relatives, friends or others when the only phone

available is several miles down a logging road. In short, a captive audience exists for this medium! So, don’t forget to include your own community radio station if you are fortunate enough to have one.

(c) Television

Television is considered the be-all-and-end-all of media communications. In fact, statistics prove this to be true. Most Canadians tune into the early or late-evening news automatically to catch up visually on the country’s news. With the odd exception, all Canadians have some sort of television reception even if it is brought in on their own satellite dish where cable TV services are not offered.

(d) Editorial Boards

(optional – dependant on accessibility)

Getting in to speak to the editorial board of a major newspaper is usually quite challenging, unless you can convince the managing editor in charge of these things that the board will benefit from your visit as well as the knowledge that you provide. The editorial board generally consists of the editor of the newspaper, the news director,

Never underestimate the vastness of the radio audience.

the managing editor and, sometimes, the publisher. Who attends these meetings varies with the availability of the personnel, but typically they will include the reporter most often involved in covering Aboriginal issues.

Usually, it is best to arrange an editorial board meeting immediately after your press conference. The danger in holding it earlier is that this particular newspaper may—and probably will—scoop the other media in your area and minimize the effect of your press conference. Try to book time immediately after or within a 24-hour period of your big event. The sooner after your official announcement in the media, the better.

The timing for an editorial board meeting is very important.

If you have been able to arrange an editorial board meeting, this is a good thing. There is no special formula in accomplishing this. All it takes is a call to the editor's office and an introduction of yourself, the First Nation you represent, and the issue at hand – the ATR.

The Meeting


Intimidation can be a big factor in the actual meeting. These people are the ones who decide—next to the owner, who is usually interested in bigger fish—what the

editorial policy of the paper will be on various issues. The meetings can be quite informal or they may take the rigid form of a boardroom setting, with them on one side and you on the other. Don't be misled by an informal setting, as it is no less important than the more structured meetings.

Editorial boards can vary from a friendly coffee party to an inquisition.

Be prepared for some very direct questioning. For this reason, you may want to have your spokesperson accompanied by your full communications team and some technical expertise. Editorial boards are not above ganging up on certain delicate issues and you may need all the help you can get. You will have no way of knowing what the reception will be until you arrive there.

Your agenda should include introductions of each of your guests, where you are from, whom you represent and the issue you wish to place before them. They may ask for your opinion on other various issues as they affect Aboriginal people, but other than offering generalities on specific issues, stick to your script. If you feel that the board is hostile, or a particular member appears to be consistently negative in their questioning, just be patient. Two negatives will not make a positive. Keeping your head during a critical questioning period can only reflect favourably for your community in the long run.



When the meeting is over, don't expect an editorial piece in favour of your project in the next edition, although this has been known to happen. Look at it this way: the news may not proclaim your ATR as a triumph for the community, but at least what is written is more likely to be based on facts as you have put them across. The results will likely be favourable in the long run.

2. Stakeholders

Before you move on any media exposure, you need to inform and consult with those persons – your stakeholders – who are most likely to be involved or have some effect on your ATR. In most cases, the media will be looking for reaction from these people; they would not be doing their job if they did not.

Make it a priority to inform your local politicians about your ATR.

You may feel that your dealings with INAC on the process of making your ATR a reality covers the job of informing your stakeholders, but this is not the case. It is very important that you personally speak with your local politicians, even if they may be members of the opposition in whatever constituency they represent. Politicians always want to be briefed on any activity of consequence which may have an effect on

their constituency. No serious politicians have ever acted negatively to an action that will benefit their voters, and in fact they could end up carrying a banner of support for you. Politicians include federal Members of Parliament, provincial members of the legislature, and city/town or municipal councillors. The president of the local Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade may also be on this list depending on your area. You will know the influential persons in your community you should contact. Formal ministerial correspondence can best be left to the Communications Department at INAC, which has staff who are very experienced in ATR protocols and processes.

3. Initial Media Contact

When you arrive at the point in your ATR where it is fairly certain that implementation of the agreement is the next obvious step, you will want to inform the media. This is easier said than done. A simple press release will not necessarily result in media exposure.

There is a way to ensure that you will have coverage of your activity, and there are certain things that should be done. You probably know some of your local media, but if not, maybe it is time you did. In a rural or remote community, this may involve finding out who the News Editors are.

You want to arrange a visit to familiarize these people with your community, including its size, background, population

and some history of progress. If the editor works for a media organization in a large area, it may not always be possible to organize a meeting, but you should try to identify the reporter who deals with the issues. If you are a regular reader of the newspaper, you likely will have seen the bylines of those who write most of the stories about Aboriginal issues. You will become aware of how connected you are throughout your community, and this can have a “ripple effect.”

It is very important that you develop some sort of relationship with at least one person in each of your local media, beginning with the medium that has the largest coverage.

Editorial boards are one way of speaking personally with the editor, publisher and reporters.

Once you have had a face-to-face meeting, you will find it much easier to deal with this person in the future. For instance, if you can ask to speak personally to that reporter, you are likely to get a direct answer. Most switchboards are good at screening calls and unless they detect some familiarity, you are likely to receive the customary “There’s no one at that desk at the moment. Can I have your name and number and have someone call you back?” Even worse, you could be asked the reason for your call and be connected to another reporter unfamiliar with the issues.

4. Handling Communications in Your Area

In this section, you will find information and suggested approaches for handling communications in urban, rural and remote areas.

When your ATR is well on its way, after you have briefed your membership and notified politicians as well as others on your list, you are ready to announce your intentions, plans and objectives.

You will need the following:

- (a) **Press Release:** Press releases are explained in the Communications Tools section of this tool kit;
- (b) **Backgrounder:** A brief backgrounder accompanies the press release. Whether you are preparing the backgrounder yourself or having others do it, give it one last check for brevity. Look for Backgrounders in the Communications Tools section;
- (c) **Media List:** Once you are satisfied as to the content of the press release and backgrounder, the next step is the preparation of a media list. You will have to do a bit of work for this. Going through the yellow pages will not be of much help. You should compile a list of media that will provide their names, the organization they represent, what they cover for this organization, their phone number—their direct line, if possible—fax number and e-mail address. Gathering this

information will require some calling and much diplomacy. In urban areas, this list can be quite large, depending on the population. As you will no doubt be sending a large number of releases, you can save time by entering the fax numbers into the memory of your fax machine, if your machine has this capability.

Here is a tried-and-true method of getting your message across. First, phone your key media contacts and mention in brief what you will be sending them. Next, fax or e-mail the press release and backgrounder. Once this has been done, wait an appropriate amount of time—15 minutes or so—then call back to see if they have, in fact, received the material. Be prepared to answer any questions. You want only knowledgeable people working the phones who know the issues and have some

authority to speak for the band.

If you are announcing a press conference in your release, be

careful to not give away too much information as some media may feel they

Generate some interest in your topic when making your initial call—be prepared to “sell” your message.

have enough and decide not to show up at your event. They will try to extract this information. You can avoid this by telling them that you are not the official

Even if you are the person authorized to speak on behalf of the band, it is advisable to have someone with you that can help with questions where the answers are not on the tip of your tongue.

spokesperson and are not at liberty to provide further information until the press conference. At that time, they will have everything they need to know. For further information on press conferences, see the Communications Tools section of this tool kit.

In the event that you are not holding a press conference, then after you have faxed or e-mailed your release and are making your confirmation call, be prepared to answer questions by having someone apart from you who is knowledgeable and can speak for the band on this issue. If the reporter has already done a quick read and

Your media list will become an essential tool in your communications strategy.

is interested in pursuing further information, generally the story will receive

To prepare for the interview, assemble a few people together in a room to ask you some expected questions.

coverage. Use the speaker phone if you have one so that your hands can be free to search documents as needed, and be sure to include your assistant in the conversation. Always let the reporter know of any other person you have in the office, and more importantly, do not crowd that office. The reporter will find background chatter both intimidating and annoying.

Throughout this conversation, keep your answers brief and to the point. No one has time to hold on for half an hour while you bring up the history of the reserve through the ages—and besides, that should have been covered already in your backgrounder.

When the call is complete, ask the reporter if he or she requires any additional material or information, and encourage them to call again if they have any other questions.

If the medium is radio or television, you may be invited for an interview either in studio or by a reporter assigned to your

story. Be sure you have rehearsed your answers, as you will not have the opportunity to erase the tape or change your mind.


Do not be annoyed by some questions that the reporter may ask. Remember for the most part, the reporter probably has little or no knowledge of your subject

and is trying to be as straight-forward as possible. There are both good reporters and bad-news bears out there, no matter what the story, but you should not second-guess the reporter. They are usually trying to do as accurate a job as possible, in many cases with very little information.

In smaller or rural areas, your approach will need to be a little different. If there are only a few media outlets in the area, you might make an appointment with the News Editor. Explain that you have a press release on Additions To Reserve, that you would like to deliver it personally and, if possible, you would like to discuss it with them.

This could turn into an interview immediately after you arrive, so be prepared. You might wind up on television or radio or in the newspaper if a

Treat each interview as if it were the first.



photographer is called to the interview. Therefore, dress yourself as you would when representing your community. Business dress is not necessary unless this is what you normally wear. Neat, casual attire is safe, and avoid stripes.

In remote areas, you may have to travel to the community in which large media organizations are located. If this requires an overnight trip, be sure to start your media procedure with a phone call to make an appointment with the News Editor. Tell them you are prepared to travel to their location to speak with them. Do not try to explain it over the phone. Normally, if you offer to come and see them, they will generally give you the time. Try to make all your appointments for the same day. This not only cuts travel costs, it also makes the process easier on you. You may find that by the third interview, the questions will be much the same and easier to answer, but be careful. It is very easy to relax after you have become comfortable with the process. By doing so, you might miss a few important points because you have already repeated them several times.

*Effective press releases
are brief and to the point.*

5. Communications Tools

(a) The Press Release

In these changing times, the question often arises as to whether the term Press Release is still an accurate name for what should probably be called a General Media Release. The so-called Press Release will be around for quite a while, and is often referred to as a News Release, especially by the electronic media.

In any event, it is a notice to the general media announcing something that is expected to be newsworthy. In your case, it would be the announcement of your intent to purchase land to expand the size of your community or create a new reserve. Or it could be the announcement that you have already done so.

When writing the press release, apply the W-5 approach: who, what, when, where, why. Three paragraphs, double-spaced with four to five lines per paragraph is probably the ideal format with a headline—or header—at the top in bold case.

The release can be printed on your band stationary, with the names of the contact person or persons at the bottom, along with contact phone and fax numbers and e-mail address.

The box on the next page provides an example of a release where the land purchase is in its final stage.

Example of a Press Release - Announcing Land Acquisition

| | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------|
| <i>Logo</i> | <i>Letterhead</i> | <i>Address</i> |
| For Immediate Release | | <i>Date</i> |
| _____ First Nation to Announce Land Acquisition | | |
| The _____ First Nation will hold a press conference on _____ at _____ to announce the acquisition of land which will be added to the present reserve located at _____ . | | |
| The _____ First Nation has been in the process of negotiations for the past _____ and all parties have reached an agreement in principle in which the band property will be expanded by _____ . | | |
| Chief _____ will be on hand to deliver a brief address and answer any questions you may have. The newly acquired land is expected to be used for _____ . | | |
| – 30 – | | |
| For further information, please contact: <i>name, phone, e mail</i> | | |

(b) Media Advisory

A Media Advisory does not announce a major news item; instead, it can act as an update to an event which has already occurred, or provide more detail on the newly acquired property. Its construction is basically the same as that used for a press release, with the exception of the header which might read: “ _____ First Nation –Media Advisory.” It should end with the usual contact names and numbers.

(c) Backgrounder

A Backgrounder is a record written in chronological order which walks the reporter through a brief history of your community – basic facts of where your people came from (*pre-Indian Act*); when your reserve was established; how your community was named; its population,

present land-base size, economy, and almost anything else you feel might be relevant or helpful to the reporter producing the stories.

In a backgrounder, you should stick to the facts. Private and personal opinions have no place in this document. The backgrounder is simply background information for the use of anyone interested in what you are doing and who wants to know more.

While it will be tempting at times to write a short essay, try to keep it to a page or two. Anything beyond that is a waste of time.

A backgrounder provides information which sets the background and context of your ATR.

Some general background information is provided in Appendices 1, 3, 4, and 5, and 6 on the topics of: (1) the ATR; (3) the *Indian Act*; (4) First Nations reserves; (5) taxation; and (6) environment. Take only what you need from these examples. Otherwise, you will find yourself bogged down in paper. Besides, your purpose is communicating your message, not teaching Aboriginal History 101.

(d) The Press Conference

If you are reasonably assured of a modest turnout and have decided to hold a Press Conference, there are several items to consider.

Be sure you have enough copies of press releases, backgrounders and every other kind of information available at the door. If funds permit, you may wish to purchase attractive folders, otherwise known as Press Kits. They would preferably bear your logo and band name on the front, and enclose all of your information documents inside.

Apart from these kits, you should leave individual information items out separately on your distribution

table, as some of your audience may be interested in only specific items.

Even though you may feel that a press kit is not required—since you have faxed this

information to the media already—keep in mind that people can forget things at the office or misplace them, and there is always a chance that others will attend whom you did not invite. These may be people whom you have overlooked, or who are so new that their particular news organization is not known. They could even be members of the public. Check those in attendance against the list of invited media. This visual reminder will let you know which media were interested enough to attend. These are the people with whom you must do a follow-up as your ATR becomes a reality.

Other persons on the list may be a student writing a thesis on Aboriginal people, or a government employee who has been sent to the conference to take notes. Their interest should certainly always be encouraged, though you may want to inform them that this is a press conference which is geared to media only, and they will not be allowed to ask questions without media credentials. Most will not ask questions unless there is a personal axe to grind. A sergeant-at-arms at the door can prevent trouble, should someone need to be removed. The possibility is remote, and such individuals generally identify themselves immediately before too much time passes.

Location and Set Up

You should choose a room which will have enough space for people to move about. Avoid hotel guest rooms because they are a TV camera-operator's nightmare. A hotel

Personally greet all persons who attend your press conference.

business or committee meeting room is more appropriate. Even a small banquet room in a downtown restaurant will do. It should be large enough to accommodate a head (speaker) table for your spokespersons, as well as a secretary to take notes.

If you have any charts or diagrams, these should be placed to the side of the speaker table.

The band logo, coat-of-arms, or symbol should be hung behind the speakers and low enough on the wall so that the camera operators can include it in their shots. If your budget permits, arrange for beverages (coffee, tea, juice, water) and maybe some snack foods (muffins).

Media and Sound Requirements

Make sure there is a sufficient number of electrical outlets for media to plug in cameras, lighting and sound equipment. If possible, try to rent what is known as a "multi-feed box." This unit is connected directly to microphones at the head table and stand-up microphones in the aisle. It will be convenient for media to plug their taping equipment directly into this box and thereby record the entire session. This unit should be placed at the side of the room on

a table where tape recorders and TV cables are out of the way. Important reminder: Plug your own tape recorder into the multi-feed box for use later when the secretary puts together a transcript or summary of the press conference.

Multi-feed boxes can be rented from a local technical sound and audio company in your area. In some cases, the hotel will provide this service for a fee if you are using their facilities for the press conference. If they do, you should also make sure that they connect and sound-test each microphone

before your event. Avoid walking into your event 30 minutes before show time, and finding a box with cables on the table without any immediate technical assistance.

Use as many microphones on the head table as you have speakers. A podium is excellent for formal speeches, but useless if more than two speakers have to share it.

Media Liaison

A media liaison is a person who has been assigned by your organization to deal with the media. This can be the communications coordinator, or maybe a person

The media liaison should be very personable with the social skills of a Master of Ceremonies.

appointed by the coordinator. Their duties range from making original contact with the media to extending a welcoming hand shake at the press conference. This person should be able to identify any of the media after first contact. Other duties include

In a typical one-hour press conference, ensure that 30 to 40 minutes are reserved for questions.

introducing the speakers, opening the press conference, making brief welcoming remarks, and directing traffic when reporters stand at the microphone waiting for recognition. The media liaison may have to keep media and speakers focussed on the subject. This person must also stay behind to thank the media and others for attending, and offer any additional assistance that reporters require to complete their stories. This can involve arranging personal one-on-one interviews with your spokesperson. Always have a business card ready!

Press Conference Length

The length of your press conference is also important to consider. As much as you may feel that your message deserves all the time you can squeeze out of it, time can also work against you. Just remember that most of the people attending have other places to go and they have probably allotted your event about one hour. An hour, by media standards, is a long time.

Once everyone is seated, the media liaison should begin with a brief welcoming note and introductions, not more than five minutes in length. The main spokesperson for the group should deliver the entire message, and take no longer than 10 to 15 minutes. That is plenty of time to get your message out. After all, the media are there because they want to ask questions. It is likely that they already know from other sources what your spokesperson is telling them.

Get to the questions as soon as possible. Once the questions slow down, or become weak in their content, call a close to the press conference. It is better to have a few reporters hanging around afterwards for additional questions than to see them drift away, one by one. Your time is important, too. The entire process should be wrapped up within an hour. Any more than that and you begin to work against yourself.

(e) Press Briefing

Much as a media advisory is secondary to a press release, a Press Briefing is a variation of a press conference.

A briefing is a meeting with the media to inform them of your progress which is near completion, or perhaps it is to explain how the newly acquired land transaction is progressing and what plans exist for that

A press briefing could be called a press conference, but it isn't!

acquisition. Even though this event is primarily a media update on your activities, often the media who attend will produce some coverage based on briefing information. All information is on the record, and follow-up interviews are welcome. Briefings work best in an urban setting where there is a significant number of media in the area, and only if there is sufficient interest which is determined by the media coverage you have already received.

You should feel assured that you will have a reasonable opportunity to say what you want in order to get your message across to the radio audience.

(f) The Interview **Radio Talk Shows**

When accepting an invitation for an interview, your biggest concern will be intimidation. You might have heard certain talk-show hosts who work to keep their ratings up and subsequently become highly paid personalities. For the most part, they may try to get information from you that you have not shared with anyone else. Specific tactics may throw you, such as “Some of your band members don’t agree with what you are doing, so why are you moving ahead – don’t they count?”

Unless your spokesperson is entirely confident of the facts and figures of your ATR and can handle a demanding radio personality, you can choose to pass on this medium. You should find out beforehand whether the talk-show host is Aboriginal-friendly. Try to avoid hotline hosts who simply like to stir up controversy.

If possible, arrange a meeting with the host prior to the show itself and explain in as much detail as possible what you want to discuss. Bring all of your material with you and have it available in case you should require it.

You may end up meeting with a researcher instead of the interviewer. It doesn’t hurt to tell this person that, although you understand the host has to make the show as exciting as possible, you will only be speaking on your topic and its background.

Radio Reporters

If you are being interviewed by a radio news reporter, this interview will likely be short. At the most, 20 seconds or so of what you say will actually make it to air, and the balance will be an introduction by the announcer. In any event, the same preparation applies. Know your material and have it at your fingertips in case you need it quickly. If you are asked a question to which you do not have an answer, be honest and straightforward. Simply state

that you do not know the answer or cannot reply to the question at the moment. Promise to answer fully later. Don't be led to say something embarrassing which will need further explaining.

Television

Interviews in Your Community

If a television station requests an interview, welcome them. These sorts of requests can be difficult to fathom, however, as you really have to examine why they're sending a crew out on remote to cover a story they had presumably picked up at your press conference. There could be several reasons for this. One reason might be that they would like a more in-depth feature for their evening news or news magazine, with the interview featuring your spokesperson and the community as a backdrop.

Ask beforehand in a straight-forward manner if the ATR is the main interest of the TV reporter's visit—you will have to trust them on their word.

If there is an ulterior motive behind a TV shoot, you will find this out quickly when the interview shifts from the ATR to a subject unrelated to what you were promised would be discussed.

An example of this kind of interview might feature an Aboriginal person being asked

about his background in foster homes and his difficulty with the school system, then later be portrayed as a First Nations advocate.

Define your parameters first, and get to know your media contacts (see the Introduction to Basic Media Relations.) Some knowledge of the integrity of the TV station itself also helps. Generally, reporters are quite ethical, but there will always be some who will work the negative angle for ratings.

As for the mechanics of the remote, the TV crew may wish to shoot around the community to provide a glimpse of what the community looks like. Don't feel shy about accentuating the positive—a health centre, a school, new housing, a community hall. Co-operate as much as you can without invading the privacy of community residents, and leave the door open for them to return should they require more information.

At the TV Studio

If your spokesperson is invited to the studio for an interview, accompany them. They should be well versed on the subject of the ATR so that they will be ready when the camera rolls. Proper dress should be comfortable and present the kind of

community image you want to leave with viewers—clean and confident.

A confident image will be as important as your spokesperson's words in getting your message across to the viewers.

Although it is easier said than done, the spokesperson should not be intimidated by all the studio lights, cables and cameras. These are just tools of the trade. With the exception of writers and editors, studio staff are not very interested in what you have to say. They want to accommodate you, make sure your microphone is working, and put your best face forward.

Things to remember: the spokespersons' clothes should be straight and their hair combed. If they are sharing a stage with the host, they should look directly at the host. If they are participating in a double-ender, look directly into the camera. If they are blind-sided by a question that is totally off the subject, they can tell the interviewer that this should be discussed at another time.

The Scrum

A scrum usually occurs after a formal speaking engagement, where the spokesperson has just addressed the audience. Once


they have left the podium, they can face questions from different media who are all competing for their attention.

A media scrum can panic even the most seasoned speaker, but it can also work to your advantage. The spokesperson must choose which questions to answer and from whom. The spokesperson should not be intimidated into answering questions for which they are not prepared or which they find irrelevant. Once the spokesperson has answered the majority of questions about your ATR, he or she should call an end to the scrum, or else risk being held up. Generally, an announcement that the scrum is over, by the communications coordinator or media liaison, will do.

In any event, a scrum occurs only if your ATR becomes controversial and is receiving a lot of media coverage. If you have

When in a scrum, stick to the script – your message!

The word "scrum" comes from the English game of rugby, when players on both teams pile on, all trying to move the ball.



reached the scrum stage, you certainly are a news item! Stay in control.

Newspaper Reporters

Newspaper reporters require a brief interview and are often accompanied by a photographer. Stick to your message so as to minimize any chance of distortion or misrepresentation when the article is published.

“Off the Record”

There is no such thing as “off the record.” Many a career has been destroyed or put in jeopardy because of comments made off the record. The reporter may be very personable and appear sympathetic to your message, but remember that they are still media. Don’t take strangers into your confidence.

Even as you get to know reporters over time and develop relationships, a valuable rule to follow is “Don’t say anything you would not want to read on the front page of the newspapers.”

In all conversations with media, treat every comment as being on the record.

General Public Relations

Your target audience is the general public, and any issue relating to lands and Indians will always be the subject of intense public scrutiny. When Aboriginal groups express a need or desire for a larger land base, the public pays attention. It is up to you to reach the public early with accurate messages before rumours distort the issue.

Once the media segment of your communications plan has been implemented, you can move on to general public relations. There are many ways to get the word out to the public.

1. Town Hall or Community Meeting

A town hall meeting should be a well-publicized event for the public. In a rural area, you might rent the local parish church hall or school gymnasium. The public will be invited to hear from your community to find out what your ATR is, how it came about, and what benefits it may provide to both First Nations and non-First Nations communities. Here you may also find it helpful to include a brief history of your reserve.

A strong moderator is important to maintain control of the meeting, to keep the questions focused, and to limit individual questions to a reasonable length of time. Occasionally, people will attend your forum to raise points of their own, so you must maintain control of the agenda.

2. Local School Assemblies

Another effective forum may be the local schools in your district. Schools often begin the week with an assembly and the national anthem, followed by principal's remarks and announcements. At times, they can include a guest speaker, and you might be welcomed to address one of these assemblies. These 10-to-15-minute periods provide an opportunity for you to address a large segment of the school's young population. Students should be encouraged to bring the message home to their parents. You could also be asked to address a few history or social studies classes.

4. Special Interest Groups

Churches should be considered as another possible forum. You could be asked to address a general meeting of parishioners. Pastors and priests have been known to invite guest speakers to address the Sunday service. All forums should be welcomed. Parent-teacher meetings; city, town or municipal council meetings — whenever there is a formal gathering of any kind, you should try to put yourself on the agenda.

Your communication objective will be to inform, to the best of your ability, as much of the public as possible as to what you are doing and why.

3. Service Clubs

There are usually many service clubs in any area, such as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and Chamber of Commerce. These groups meet at least once a month, usually over lunch, and they are always looking for speakers. These groups are important because they are comprised of a good cross-section of the local community that you might have otherwise missed. A speaking engagement would typically involve lunch followed by a 10-to-12-minute address and brief question period.

Post ATR Process Phase

After the ATR has been finalized and announced, you will need to bring the media up to date. A phone call and thanks to reporters for attending or reporting the event is important. You will want to send an update on what the band intends to do with this new acquisition, specifically outline plans for the division of land for farming, or plans for the new school.

Friends, allies and supporters are hard to come by and should not be set aside when your ATR is completed.

The same closing work applies to your list of stakeholders whom you must now thank in person or by telephone or e-mail. You might even want to invite them to a future event in your community. This is a chance to cultivate good interpersonal relationships, and you should keep all doors open; you may need their support again in the future. Your band may want to express its appreciation in other ways, such as a feast celebrating the event with invitations

to special guests who helped make it all possible.

When all the follow-up is more or less completed

for the moment,

there is the clean-up work in your own office. All correspondence must be listed

and filed for future reference as well as research, planning documents, lists of volunteers and a chronology of events as they occurred dating back to your first meeting. This is your band's corporate history. Down the road, the same people may not be around for various reasons (i.e., moves, elections etc.) So, as tedious as it sounds, document, document, document!

When it is all done, a filing box with "ATR Communications" marked on it should be safely stored until it is needed again.

The last important component of your Post-ATR

Phase before you close the door on this particular chapter is praise for your staff.

Thank everyone, including volunteers, other staff, and members of your band who participated in any way to assist you in realizing positive results. A gathering over dinner or lunch might give you an opportunity to revisit the whole process. Emphasize the benefits of your successful ATR to your co-workers and leave them feeling proud of a job well done.

Congratulations. Onward and upward!

Recognize all individuals who have contributed to the ATR communications process.

Appendix 1

Additions to Reserve (ATR)

Under the federal government's ATR policy, an ATR is a proposal for the granting of reserve status under one of these policy categories:

- 1) to rectify a legal obligation, such as a land claims settlement;
- 2) for community growth where the land is either adjacent to an existing reserve community or is in the proximity to an existing reserve within which existing on-reserve programs and community services can be delivered, infrastructure extended and installations shared, at little or no incremental cost; or
- 3) for creation of a new reserve.

Urban reserves play an important role in offering First Nations economic, educational and social opportunities that are generally unavailable in rural areas. Benefits flow to First Nations people living on and off the reserve.

By working to improve the standard of living and purchasing power of their urban members, First Nations are contributing in a very direct way to the economic and social fabric of urban municipalities.

The procedures for addition to reserve or reserve creation vary according to whether or not the land to be acquired is federal land under Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's control, is federal land under the control of another department, is provincial Crown land or land that is privately owned.

Procedures

Obtain a copy of the federal government's ATR policy. Copies are available from INAC regional offices. In order to seek an addition to reserve, the First Nation council must begin the process by formally submitting a Band Council Resolution (BCR) to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Upon receipt of the formal request, the departmental office discusses all requirements to move the proposal forward with the First Nation and together they designate roles and responsibilities for carrying out the following steps: local communications and consultation with local communities and municipal governments, environmental audits and surveys.

All regions have Regional ATR Committees, which include representatives from Lands and Trusts Services (LTS), Corporate Services, Finance/Capital and other programs, as required. This committee analyzes the proposal to ensure requirements of the ATR policy are satisfied.

The ATR committee forwards its report to the Regional Director General (RDG) either recommending that the proposal for approval in principle (AIP) be approved or rejected.

If a proposal is rejected, the committee is required to provide written records of the proposal's review and the assessment used in making recommendations. Proposals, outside RDG-delegated AIP authority must be reviewed by the Deputy Minister (DM). The RDG prepares a report and recommendation to the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of Lands and Trusts Services.

Upon review of the ATR proposal, the RDG or DM will either grant or refuse the Approval in Principle (AIP). "Approval in Principle" is the department's agreement to recommend a proposal to the Minister for consideration of reserve status through the Governor in Council. An AIP can be granted with or without conditions, since surveys, land purchases and other steps may be subsequently completed. Where conditions are attached to the AIP, they must be satisfied before an addition to reserve is forwarded to the Privy Council Office to be approved by Governor in Council by means of an Order in Council (OIC).

INAC Region officially drafts the OIC submission to set the land aside as a reserve and requests Department of Justice (DOJ) approval of the draft OIC as to form and content. The Lands Officer follows current departmental procedures with respect to OICs, ensuring:

- 1) The First Nation and other relevant parties are provided with a copy of the OIC;
- 2) The OIC is registered in the Indian Lands Registry. Regional lands officials should arrange for registration of all related title documents in the Indian Land Registry as appurtenant documentation to registration of the Order in Council granting reserve status; and
- 3) The First Nation and other relevant parties are notified of the transaction and are provided with the registration particulars of the OIC.

Appendix 2

ATR Contact List

Contained in this section are names and contacts for a number of First Nations bands in different provinces which have completed an ATR transaction for their community. Relevant key information is also included. Direct contact between your First Nation and any others listed here would be of much greater benefit because you will be able to access all the information you need—other than confidential or in-house material—directly from First Nations themselves. They can assist you in your quest for a successful ATR. As well, you can be forewarned of possible pitfalls along the way.

It is suggested that you follow the W5 approach (who, what, when, where, why) when determining your information needs. You may choose to ask the First Nation(s) you have contacted if your group could visit and directly see what they have accomplished.

It should be noted that in some of the First Nations listed here, the ATR involved the creation of a new reserve.

Alberta

Alexander First Nation

Contact: Chief Victoria Arcand
Phone: (780) 939-5887

Key Information

Canada agreed to negotiate with Alexander First Nation regarding the Alexander claim that an undertaking remained on the part of Canada to provide lands to establish reserves for the use and benefit of Alexander in the Reserve Land Provision. Provisions were outlined in Treaty 6 that provided for one square mile for each party of five. The negotiations took place under the Specific Claims Policy.

An agreement was reached in March 1998. The negotiated settlement provided for a cash compensation of \$10,935,000 and for up to 15,140 acres of additional land that may be set apart as a Reserve for Alexander.

For more information, see INAC's web site at: www.inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/s-d1998/1-9897.html

Alexis First Nation

Contact: Chief Francis Alexis
Phone: (780) 967-2225

Key Information

Alexis First Nation claimed a land entitlement shortfall based on the Treaty 6 provision for one square mile for each family of five. Canada agreed to negotiate with Alexis under the Specific Claims Policy.

An agreement was reached in March 1995. The negotiated settlement provided for a cash compensation of \$10.9 million and no fewer than 20,824 acres of additional land. In addition, the agreement provided for Canada to set apart the Settlement Lands as reserve within the meaning of the *Indian Act* for the use and benefit of Alexis, such lands having satisfied the criteria of the ATR policy.

Saskatchewan

Muskeg Lake Cree Nation

Contact: Lester Lafond, Lafond Financial,
Saskatoon
Phone: (306) 343-3545

Key Information

Muskeg Lake is an urban reserve on the east side of Saskatoon. Muskeg Lake Cree Nation is located 93 kilometers north of Saskatoon.

Stemming from a specific claim settlement, Muskeg Lake is a \$3 million commercial centre that houses Peace Hills Trust, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Kocsis Transport and dozens of small businesses.

For more information, see INAC's web site at www.inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/j-a1998/1-9821.html

Okanese First Nation

Contact: Chief Daywalker Pelletier
Phone: (306) 334-2532

Key Information

A Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement was reached in December 1999 allowing the Okanese First Nation to acquire its shortfall acreage.

Approximately 2,879 hectares (7,114 acres) of land have been set aside as reserve for the use and benefit of the Okanese First Nation.

The land is part of a total package worth more than \$4 million. Under the agreement, the Okanese First Nation is required to buy 2,794 hectares (6,905 acres) to complete its shortfall acres and may purchase up to 5,802 hectares (14,337 acres).

Sakimay First Nation

Contact: Claims Coordinator
Phone: (306) 697-2831

Key Information

The Sakimay Specific Claim Settlement Agreement was executed on March 11, 1992. It resulted in the First Nation acquiring and setting apart 3,545 acres, mostly adjacent to the main community.

The settlement land includes 0.88 acres of land as

an urban reserve property in the city of Yorkton where the First Nation operates the Painted Hand Casino. The First Nation and the City negotiated a municipal servicing agreement in August 1994.

Manitoba

Split Lake Cree Nation

Contact: Victor Spence
Phone: (204) 342-2600

Key Information

On December 16, 1977, the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) was executed by Canada, Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro and the Northern Flood Committee. The Northern Flood Committee represents the five First Nations who were affected by flooding of reserve land through the Lake Winnipeg Regulation and Churchill/Nelson River diversion project in the late 1960s.

On June 23, 1999 approximately 14,301 hectares (35,752 acres) of land at Assean Lake and Waskaiowaka Lake in Northern Manitoba were set aside as reserve for the use and benefit of the Split Lake Cree Nation, thus fulfilling the land exchange provisions of the NFA.

St. Theresa Point First Nation

Contact: Chief Reggie Mason
Phone: (204) 462-2106

Key Information

On July 27, 2000, 12,655 hectares (31,411 acres) of the St. Theresa Point First Nation Treaty Entitlement Lands were set apart as reserve.

This land transfer fulfills the long-standing reserve land provisions of Treaty #5 for St. Theresa Point First Nation and fulfils the provisions of the St. Theresa Point Treaty Land Entitlement Settlement Agreement dated March 14, 1994.

Appendix 3

First Nations Reserves

As specified in the *Indian Act*, a reserve is a "tract of land, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty, that has been set apart by Her Majesty for the use and benefit of a band." The Act gives the Minister of Indian Affairs the right to "determine whether any purpose for which lands in a reserve are used is for the use and benefit of the band." Individual band members may gain possession and use of a portion of land defined by the band council and be given a certificate of possession or certificate of occupation by the Minister. Transfers of possession can be to the band or to another member of the band only, again with permission from the Minister.

Reserve lands are not subject to seizure under legal process. In addition, the personal property of an Indian or band situated on reserve is not subject to charge, pledge, mortgage, attachment, levy, seizure distress or execution in favour or at the instance of any person other than an Indian or a band. The effect of these *Indian Act* provisions has been significantly to reduce access to financing for economic development. A province, municipality, local authority or corporation may expropriate reserve lands for public purposes, provided they have been given authority to do so by federal or provincial legislation.

In all, there are over 600 occupied reserves in Canada and each has a defined land base. The amount of land tends to be quite small on average.

In many cases, reserves are not well located from the point of view of access to markets or services or availability of natural resources. A few reserves do have a valuable resource base, and receive substantive resource rents (e.g. Alberta reserves with oil and gas deposits.) Based on specific *Indian Act* provisions, the Minister of Indian Affairs holds these kinds of revenues in trust. Release of these funds must be approved in advance by the Minister.

Reserve lands are exempt from all forms of taxation except local taxation and this applies to personal property of a First Nation individual or a band situated on the reserve. Taxation can give an economic advantage to individuals and businesses located on the reserves, but it does not apply to corporations owned wholly or partially by First Nations people.

Access to Crown lands may be extended to outside the boundaries of the community for the purposes of hunting, fishing or trapping or, in some cases, to cut logs or other economic ventures.

In most cases, reserves are self-governed. The nature of the governments and their powers are defined outside of the communities, while the *Indian Act* defines the guidelines behind elections and self-government.

Appendix 4

Taxation

Canadian federal legislation, first passed in 1876, sets out certain federal government obligations and regulates management of Indian reserve lands. The act has been amended several times, most recently in 1985. Among its provisions, the act requires the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to manage certain moneys belonging to First Nations and Indian lands, and to approve or disallow First Nations taxation by-laws.

- Aboriginal people are required to pay taxes, except where the personal property of an Indian or a band are situated on a reserve.
- Aboriginal people are the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians, Métis people and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs
- Tax exemption has existed since before Confederation. The courts have held that the exemption is to preserve the entitlements of Indian people to their reserve lands and to ensure that the use of their property on their reserve lands is not eroded by taxation.
- The *Indian Act* prevents non-Aboriginal governments from taxing the property of Status Indians on a reserve. However, section 83 of the *Indian Act* gives First Nations the power to impose property taxes on interests in land in the reserve, including the interest of Status Indians.
- Property tax by-laws must be reviewed by the Indian Taxation Advisory Board and approved by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.
- The Minister of National Revenue answers specific tax questions and carries out tax laws.
- The Minister of Finance gives general direction for tax law.
- The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development defines the words "Indian," "reserve" and "band" for all governments to use in tax questions.
- Under Canada's Constitution, lands reserved for Indians are within the federal government's jurisdiction.
- Federal lands are not part of the tax base from which provinces or municipalities may draw property taxes.
- Municipalities may face a net loss of property tax revenue when a reserve is created or expanded.
- Additions to Reserve (ATR) policy requires that a First Nation negotiate directly with the municipality on reasonable compensation.
- ATR policy does not require a First Nation to compensate the municipality for an unlimited time for the net loss of property taxes.

Appendix 5

Environment

- When a First Nation purchases land, that land is initially subject to provincial environmental legislation and regulation control.
- When a First Nation proposes that the federal government grant reserve status to land either as a new reserve or as an addition to reserve, policy requires an environmental audit.
- Environmental Audit is an environmental site assessment, specifically a review of any existing environmental issues and liabilities related to the condition of the land caused by its current/previous land use. This review is conducted according to the departmental procedures before land is either granted reserve status or acquired for the purpose of adding it to a reserve.
- A written assessment summarizing the environmental condition of the lands must be received within one to two months following the site visits.
- Environmental Assessment is an assessment of the environmental effects of a project conducted in accordance with the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and its regulations.
- The assessment is summarized in a written report outlining:
 - the field observations;
 - the laboratory analysis and results of any soil or water sampling; and
 - recommended courses of action.
- Based on the environmental audit, a plan is developed and implemented to require any needed remediation before reserve status may be given.
- Remediation could mean that the land be restored to a state of non-contamination.
- Any lands that become reserve lands are subject to the full breadth of federal environmental legislative and regulatory control. The regulatory framework includes the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, and regulations such as the *Indian Reserve Waste Disposal Regulations*.
- Once land becomes a reserve, First Nations take on environmental responsibilities.