

NATIVE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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Communications Operations Directorate

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NATIVE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

1. COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

In December 1985, members of the Executive Management Group agreed that the following objectives should guide departmental communications activities during the 1986/87 fiscal year:

- Promote public awareness of government policies and processes;
- Support the Minister's native policies and priorities;
- Advise and support program managers on the most effective communications strategies for implementing the above.

2. PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT

Greater analysis of departmental target publics and better understanding of their attitudes and interests are crucial to the development of a communications plan. This involves not only identifying special characteristics which might help in tailoring specific messages, but also examining public information needs and the perceptions target audiences hold about the Department and its initiatives. While a more detailed description of the public environment is provided in the Native Overview and Update, it is important to focus here on primary target groups.

Federal Government

Within the federal government, despite the department's overall responsibility for status Indians, a number of other departments (Justice, Health and Welfare, CEIC) provide services to aboriginal people. In addition, native issues must compete for attention with other national concerns. Consequently, there should be an open exchange of information with other federal departments, especially those the department deals with on a regular basis. Inter-departmental communications activities such as joint

communiqués and special events, can promote this exchange of information and provide vehicles for the dissemination of accurate and consistent messages. As key departmental communicators, the Deputy Minister, Associate and Assistant Deputy Ministers have a responsibility to encourage and support inter-departmental communications initiatives. Exchange of information can also be augmented through increased activity in federal organizations such as the Federal Association of Communicators of Saskatchewan: similar organizations exist in most provinces.

Provincial/Territorial Governments

The FMC process illustrated wide differences between provincial/territorial governments in their approach to native issues. Despite this diversity, however, the federal government requires their support and cooperation, particularly if it wishes to advance native self-government and economic growth. Therefore, provincial/territorial governments must have access to detailed information and must also be encouraged to share with their federal counterparts information about their own policies and programs. All levels of government should be seen by the public as willing to resolve mutual concerns, for the benefit of their native constituents.

Media

Media interest in native issues persists and there are signs of a growing awareness of native concerns, as confirmed by media coverage on major initiatives such as self-government. *IF THIS INTEREST IS TO BE SUSTAINED* This interest must be sustained: the department has an important educational role to play and must be more proactive than in the past; all efforts should be made to provide all available information and promptly respond to enquiries. Native media also shape and influence public opinion, although their coverage is focussed primarily at the regional level. Their tendency to report issues at a greater level of detail make them useful for explaining departmental policies and programs but require thorough and timely dissemination of information by the department. In order to facilitate this exchange of information, it might be appropriate to think about buying space in native publications to promote departmental initiatives.

Native People

Regional, social and economic disparities make it extremely difficult to demonstrate a consistent set of messages to native people that show them the government's sincerity to implement change. Their mistrust of the federal government's intentions is further augmented by reports such as those stemming from the Nielsen Task Force. It must be recognized that native people are assuming a great deal of political power and acumen. The federal government should renew efforts to show native people its commitment to ensuring that they consistently receive, as quickly as possible, accurate and timely information relevant to their needs and demands.

Private Sector

Has been working with MB for years

Traditionally, the private sector has not demonstrated a great sensitivity to native issues. It is only recently that any real effort has been made to inform business and financial institutions about both the requirements and potential of native entrepreneurs. However, some organizations such as the Canadian Council for Native Business and CESO, have been set up to offer advice and assistance to native business people, hoping to draw them into society's business mainstream. This level of interest and involvement can and must be increased by raising the awareness of the private sector generally to native issues and opportunities. Organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce can be used as platforms to increase awareness of native issues and opportunities. The department must continue to foster an atmosphere of dialogue in an effort to educate the private sector and hopefully secure more economic and employment opportunities for native people.

General Public (Southern and Northern)

Since the mid-seventies, public interest in native issues has grown significantly: native concerns have developed a high profile, despite enormous competition from other newsworthy events. There appears to be a widespread desire to know and examine native issues and evaluate reaction to initiatives affecting native people. The level of public awareness and knowledge of native issues should therefore be monitored on a regular basis to help determine ongoing

information requirements. Since interest in native issues appears to be well-established in the North, departmental communications activities should aim to increase awareness among Canadians south of 60°.

3. TARGET PUBLICS

To effectively meet our objectives it is necessary to define target publics and tailor communications messages to reach these publics. More attention must be paid to analyzing and understanding the needs and perceptions of a wide range of differing target publics.

1. Federal Government

Federal Ministers/Departments;
Members of Parliament - general;
Senators;
Members of Standing Committee on Indian and Inuit Affairs/Sub-Committee on Aboriginal Affairs;
Departmental Employees at Headquarters and in the Regions (including other departments such as CEIC, DRIE, DOE, DFO).

2. Provincial/Territorial Governments

3. Media: Print and Broadcast

Provincial/Territorial;
National;
Native;
Specialty (culture, business, social issues).

Print: Newspapers (daily, weekly, periodical)
Magazines (news, business, trade,
financial, specialty)
Journals (technical, professional)

Broadcast: Radio (news, public affairs, features)
Television (news, public affairs, features)

4. Native People

National Native Organizations;
Native Associations (provincial, regional,
community/tribal councils);
Band Chiefs and Councils;
Native Schools, Colleges and Training Institutes;
Claimant Groups;
Native Development Corporations.

5. Private Sector

Chambers of Commerce;
Industry and Trade Associations;
Tourism Associations;
Companies/Corporations.

6. General Public (North and South)

(Including educational institutions; libraries;
churches; etc.)

4. THEMES AND MESSAGES

Communications activities for 1986/87 should demonstrate a close relationship to Ministerial priorities. Communications vehicles should incorporate, as appropriate, all or some of the following themes which reflect Ministerial priorities and current native concerns. They should also include references, whenever possible and appropriate, to the consultation process: the Minister has frequently stated that native policy must evolve through discussions and consultations with native people.

Self-Government

The Minister and government are strongly committed to responding to the wishes of native people to move to new structures and a legal base that will help them manage their own affairs and regain their independence. There is no one model: self-government will be defined through a variety of approaches such as legislation, bylaw changes and administrative arrangements. These approaches will be defined by the communities themselves to fit their needs - i.e. a "tailored approach".

- Self-government is the most significant factor influencing the future of Canada's native people.
- The future progress of self-government is to be determined through consultation with native people according to their priorities.
- The department must foster and support the desire of Canada's native people to assume greater responsibility for their future.
- Settlement of land claims is closely tied to future economic stability and will help build a sound basis for self-government.

Economic Development

Enhanced native economic development is expected to underpin and make effective the responsibilities of self-government, by removing barriers to jobs and investment, and enabling growth.

- Economic development initiatives should enhance the opportunities and well-being of native people.
- The establishment of a proper economic base is essential for native people to truly achieve self-government.
- Bands are eager to take part in business ventures and employment-generating activities: the department will continue to be actively involved in helping them secure economic and employment opportunities.
- The department will work to facilitate better access for native people to existing government programs and services in the private sector.

Quality Of Community Life

Native people want to restore, at the community level, the authority to make their own decisions about matters that affect their daily lives - matters such as the quality of services and facilities in housing, education, health and social services, community development and economic enterprises.

- Native people are striving for a better quality of life and are seeking recognition as a distinct people within Canada.
- Self-government is expected to help break the dependency cycle by recognizing that native communities are self-governing, with responsibilities and accountability to their constituents for the provision of services and the well-being of the community.
- In keeping with the principles of self-government, access to opportunity, responsibility and joint participation within Canadian society, the department has a responsibility to assist and support native people in achieving their educational, cultural, social, and community development needs and aspirations.
- Increased community involvement will greatly influence the evolution of the consultation process and the future of native policy decision-making.

Productive Management

- Professional and efficient management of Indian lands, assets and resources is a fundamental requirement as bands assume increased responsibility for their lives.
- The department must continue to offer its advisory role in helping bands manage their assets and resources.

Internal Messages

- The Department's primary role is to foster and support self-government for native people.
- Close cooperation is necessary between Headquarters and the Regions, with other federal departments, provincial and territorial governments, business and industry, native organizations and other special interest groups.

5. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

External

- The department should deliver a consistent set of messages which support government objectives. It should also make available information about its policies and programs in an effort to promote public awareness and encourage support.
- The Minister deals with major policy areas as interrelated issues and this should be reflected in communications activities: efforts should be made to consider the inter-relatedness of policies when reporting departmental initiatives. Announcements on federal funding for economic development programs for example, should link to the establishment of a sound economic base for self-government.
- A communications approach associating tangible initiatives with broader policy areas would facilitate a better understanding of the issues and of their application to real concerns. For example, a December, 1985 announcement on the extension of Child Welfare Agreements in Manitoba highlighted the significance of bands assuming responsibility for social programs in the context of self-government. Future announcements should follow this approach whenever appropriate.
- References to the consultation process should be incorporated into departmental messages, whenever appropriate. Announcements such as the appointment of Roberta Jamieson as Indian Commissioner of Ontario, have highlighted the Minister's ongoing commitment to consultation: this practice should be continued.
- Communications support to major policy initiatives should be as comprehensive as resources allow, and be based on a solid foundation of communications research and needs identification. For example, Communications Branch is currently developing a broad-based and comprehensive communications proposal in support of the Indian self-government initiative and the FMC process. This proposal will be based on a thorough identification of needs resulting from communications research and analysis (conducted through the client services group at Supply and Services Canada). Wherever possible, similar strategy and plan development should be done, utilizing statistically valid and verifiable communications research as the basis for communications projects.

- Joint public affairs activities, such as special events and news releases should be encouraged, to underline commitment to the consultation process. Other parties might include: bands, native organizations, the private sector, municipal/provincial/territorial governments and other federal departments.
- An appropriate mix of communications vehicles, suited to specific messages and target groups, should be used to disseminate information. Traditional reliance on the print medium and on the written communiqué in particular, does not always suit the objective and other vehicles should be considered. Whenever appropriate, efforts should be made this year to stage more special events, as vehicles for public announcements by the Minister or senior officials.
- When it is determined that the written communiqué is the most suitable vehicle to make an announcement, Communications Officers should be given all pertinent information at the earliest possible stage, to ensure accurate and effective delivery of announcements. Written messages should be succinct, simple and suited to target publics: the requirement for additional information can always be met through increased use of backgrounders, issues fact sheets and other relevant print material.
- There is an on-going need to provide general background information in response to public enquiries. Communications Branch has undertaken to develop Issue Fact Sheets to meet this need, focusing on those issues which are consistently a source of general public interest. This material will be useful in the preparation of speeches, communiqués and briefing material.
- Greater use of the audio and visual media should be explored, to strengthen the impact of departmental messages and increase the Minister's exposure to his constituents. The Department should aim to produce several video or radio news releases this year to announce significant programs/initiatives, rather than rely solely on the written communiqué (such an initiative would obviously require an analysis of intended use and target publics). As well, it must be remembered that it has long been a cultural tradition

among native people to look to their elders for guidance. To reach these "opinion leaders", audio/visual media in native languages should be used to a greater extent than is now the case, since significant numbers are turning to native television for information.

- Communications activities should also aim to attract more public/media attention, where appropriate. Suggestions include more visible activities, such as: broadcast media interviews with the Minister and senior officials; greater promotion of ministerial speaking engagements and consultation visits; greater use of the audio and visual media to deliver some key ministerial speeches/messages to remote areas. (All or some of these activities could be integrated into thematic communications "events", the intention being to focus public attention on one particular issue at a given time. For example, the Minister might consider undertaking a round of consultation visits with bands actively involved in economic development initiatives, delivering speeches and giving interviews on the subject of economic development along the way).
- Departmental communications activities should highlight success stories to alleviate some of the negative images that members of the general public have vis-à-vis native people: economic development initiatives would easily lend themselves to this strategy.
- Greater use should be made of Ministerial speeches. Communications Branch has designed a special booklet format, suitable for reprinting major speeches, which could then be used for secondary mailings to academics; libraries; band chiefs and councils.
- To underline the importance of the community, messages should be tailored, whenever appropriate, to regional/community concerns, with obvious reference to, but not emphasis on, the national picture. Announcements on Bill C-31 developments or economic development activities would greatly benefit from this approach.

- Increased use of the audio and visual media could also be applied to the dissemination of information on departmental policies and programs where normally the print medium, in the form of booklets or brochures, is now used. A bilingual video and slide presentation on School Space Accommodation Standards received positive reaction from departmental officials and clients. Ongoing departmental activities, as well as special events, would benefit from this approach: an audio/visual production on the June 1986 Native Business Summit Conference and Trade Show would provide an excellent opportunity for the department to showcase its commitment to the enhancement of native business in Canada.
- Greater use of the portable "Reflex" display units should be considered. These units are designed to be flexible and accommodate material with a special focus on short notice. A list of possible events where such displays could be useful should be drawn up and exhibit material tailored to the event should be produced well in advance. The department is currently developing a "Changing and Building for the Future" exhibit, to be displayed at Headquarters and in the Regions during special events. Increased use of exhibits is recommended to promote departmental initiatives and convey key messages.
- Feature articles presenting current issues and promoting departmental initiatives should be produced and sent to national and regional press editors and specialty publications. This proactive approach, even if the articles were not always used, would keep native issues in front of opinion-makers.
- Consideration should be given to arranging a series of Ministerial meetings with appropriate Editorial Boards. These would provide an excellent forum for the Minister to share his views on native issues.
- Production of brochures and booklets should be based on identified needs, using such sources as records of public enquiries to determine information requirements. Special events such as the Native Business Summit Conference and Trade Show might also dictate the need for new print material: a series of brochures on Native Businesses, for example, would help promote the Summit and demonstrate departmental support for this initiative.

- More special editions of Intercom could be produced this year, to highlight significant accomplishments, major policy areas, current issues. As an example, the department might want to consider issuing a Bill C-31 first year anniversary edition to review the developments of the past year. This publication could include: interviews with the Reinstatement Director and other staff members, updated reinstatement facts and statistics, successes and failures of the past year and the lessons to be learned from them.
- It will be important to ensure the public clearly understands the distinction between comprehensive and specific claims. They have their bases in different rationales, are dealt with by separate administrative entities, with benefits managed differently. Because of these differences, their impact on other programs, client groups, the public and concerned third parties are different. They will, therefore, require different treatment in terms of communications.
- Because the claims negotiations process is complex and lengthy, there should be more joint communications activities at the various stages in the process. It is "politically" unwise for any party to the negotiations to become boxed into certain public positions from which it is difficult to move later on. These joint messages should be clear, straightforward and educational and should reassure concerned third parties that their interests are being taken into account. Such messages will also be useful in enlisting public support for equitable settlement of outstanding obligations.
- Specific claims are now being submitted and settled at an increasing rate and this should be known by the public. While delay in producing new materials on comprehensive claims may be occasioned by the policy review in that area, any fundamental change in specific claims policy is not expected before Fall 1986 and should not be reason for holding up new or revised information, especially fact sheets or similar material.
- Audio visual productions on specific and comprehensive claims should be considered once new policies are in place, in addition to new publications and articles which highlight these changes. Posters, publications in native languages (whenever possible) and radio spots (using a question and answer format which is popular with native community radio stations) should also be considered.

- The data base on native claims should also be updated in order to provide current information on the status of individual claims, claims policy and processes, in response to enquiries. Steps are currently being taken by the department to improve data base and the results could be worked into communications initiatives this year.
- Increased emphasis will be given to more effective media relations in the coming year. Senior departmental spokespersons will be encouraged to develop and nurture relationships with journalists interested in their portfolios, rather than simply deal with the media at the time of a public announcement or during "crisis" situations. Communications Branch is currently developing a listing of key media contacts and their subject areas for use by Executive Committee members. In addition, the Branch will continue to provide media training seminars (See Internal Strategy).
- A list of departmental speakers should be maintained by Communications Executives, for their respective Programs, to facilitate response to requests for officials to address various forums. A large number of these requests originate from elementary and high schools: the department should therefore consider putting together a basic information kit for distribution to native and non-native schools, also to be made available through the Kiosk and regional resource centres. Native high school and university students should also be encouraged to address their peers and juniors: in doing so, they would provide valuable role models.

Internal

- Communications Branch should be represented permanently on Headquarters and Regional Management Committees, to ensure ongoing and timely provision of support and advice to program managers.
- Further to the decision taken by the Prime Minister in March, 1986 to require Cabinet Committee approval of communications plans before consideration of Cabinet submissions, Communications Branch will be seeking involvement at the early stages of the development of Cabinet documents. Such involvement will ensure that

proposed communications strategies accurately reflect themes and objectives identified in the policy development process. Program managers will be requested to advise Communications Branch that a request for a Cabinet submission has been received and a mutually-agreeable timetable for development of the communications plan and synopsis will be drawn up.

- Increased departmental cooperation will be required for development of announcements and speeches this year; managers should be encouraged to provide updated briefing material and make themselves available for additional information requests.
- The department has recently revised its mandate and amended its organizational structure. While employees at Headquarters and in the Regions have been briefed on the departmental reorganization, many are still unfamiliar with changes implemented within the respective Programs. It is therefore recommended that "promotional packages" be quickly developed by the Programs with Communications assistance, containing print material such as description of mandate and objectives, organization charts, lists of staff members and their responsibilities. Another appropriate format might be an audio/visual presentation in both official languages, either slides or video, supported by pertinent print material, to be shown/made available to Headquarters and regional staff.
- A "Communications Awareness Day" both at Headquarters and in the Regions, should be scheduled this year, to give departmental employees and the Minister's office an opportunity to learn about the role of Communications Branch and the range of services it provides. Activities could include: audio/visual introduction to the Branch, other audio/visual presentations covering various issues, produced by the Branch, display of publications/posters produced by the Branch, special edition of Intercom, as well as an "open-house" to give departmental employees and ministerial staff an opportunity to meet Communications staff.

- Three additional Media Training Seminars will be scheduled in 1986/87, for those departmental managers unable to attend the 1985 sessions. While this type of training is beneficial to departmental spokespersons, other employees who are often designated by their supervisors to handle media enquiries should have an opportunity to attend. Consideration should also be given to the scheduling of regional Media Training Seminars.
- Additional training tools to facilitate interaction with the media might include: in-house video on "do's and don't's" of media relations, half-day in-house workshops tailored to specific Programs, etc.
- Other suggested training for Headquarters and regional program managers and communications officers includes: "Issues Management" courses, to help both groups in their analysis and handling of issues and "crisis" situations; and others.

6. FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR 1986/87 FISCAL YEAR

(Service to Economic Development, Indian Services,
Self-Government, Lands, Revenues and Trusts Programs)

Headquarters Communications:

\$345,000 (figure includes \$93,000 for Bill C-31 activities)

Regional Communications:

\$515,000

Publications: (as identified in 1986-87 Publications Plan)

\$185,000

Audio/Visual Productions: (as identified in 1986-87
Audio/Visual Plan)

\$121,000

TOTAL: \$1,165,000

7. HUMAN RESOURCES FOR 1986/87 FISCAL YEAR

(Service to Economic Development, Indian Services,
Self-Government, Lands, Revenues and Trusts Programs)

Headquarters Communications:

Nine (9) person-years

Regional Communications:

Sixteen (16) person-years

TOTAL: Twenty-five (25) person-years

8. EVALUATION METHODS:

The achievement of communications objectives will be
evaluated using the following tools:

- Overview process;
- Media content analysis; media summaries;
- Canadian Trend Report;
- Native response/reaction;
- Government public opinion polls;
- Review of legislative/administrative progress.

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