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MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Dennis White Bird



Greetings, it is my pleasure to present the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba's first Annual Report for the 2005-2006 year.

In its first year as an office, the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (TRCM) has experienced a very busy and successful launch. As the establishment of the office continues, so has the work to increase awareness of historic and contemporary Treaty issues. We look forward to the coming year and to the many opportunities that lie ahead for education on Treaties and the enhancement of the Treaty relationship with the cooperation of the parties.

Already, I am pleased to report that relationship building and commitments have been developing. Communication between the TRCM, First Nations communities, governments and Manitobans has begun with positive response. It is a great first step for the TRCM and we look forward to building upon our partnerships.

As the TRCM fulfills its mandate, we look forward to on-going initiatives such as Treaty research, education and communications outreach with the community. We will continue to promote understanding and respect for the Treaties and maintain the oral tradition that was incorporated into the historic Treaties signed in Manitoba.

As supported by this report, the Treaty Relations Commission is an opportunity for all of us who share this land to learn more about Treaties and First Nations people. I look forward to our success for 'as long as the *sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow*'.

Kakina ~ For Us All

Commissioner Dennis White Bird



INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report of the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (TRCM) describes the establishment and activities of the Commission from April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006. It focuses on the Commission's principles, operations, achievements and its contributions to the enhancement of the Treaty relationship in Manitoba.

The report is sectioned to give a clear outline of the Commission's development which includes a synopsis of the 2005-2006 Workplan. Highlights of the TRCM's year are included in this section. Following the workplan, is a glimpse of what is to come in the new year.



BACKGROUND

On November 19, 2003, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and the Government of Canada signed a historic Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that recognized the need for the establishment of a Treaty Relations Commission in Manitoba (TRCM) to address Treaty issues. In June 2005, the Government of Canada created the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba through an Order in Council. As well, on June 1, 2005 Dennis White Bird was appointed by Order in Council as Treaty Commissioner for Manitoba.

The TRCM is a neutral body, created through a partnership between the AMC and Canada, with a mandate to strengthen, rebuild and enhance the Treaty relationship and mutual respect between First Nations and Manitobans. The Commission will work to enhance and maintain positive intergovernmental relations and cooperation, conduct independent research that advances discussion on Treaty related issues, and facilitate public understanding of the importance and role of Treaty making in building a stronger and healthier nation.



Formal signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to establish a Treaty Relations Commission.

(Left) November 19, 2003
Former Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Dennis White Bird and the former Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Robert D. Nault

"It is important for the Canadian people to understand the fundamental role of treaties and the contribution of First Nations people in the development of Canada."

– Commissioner Dennis White Bird
Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba

PRINCIPLES

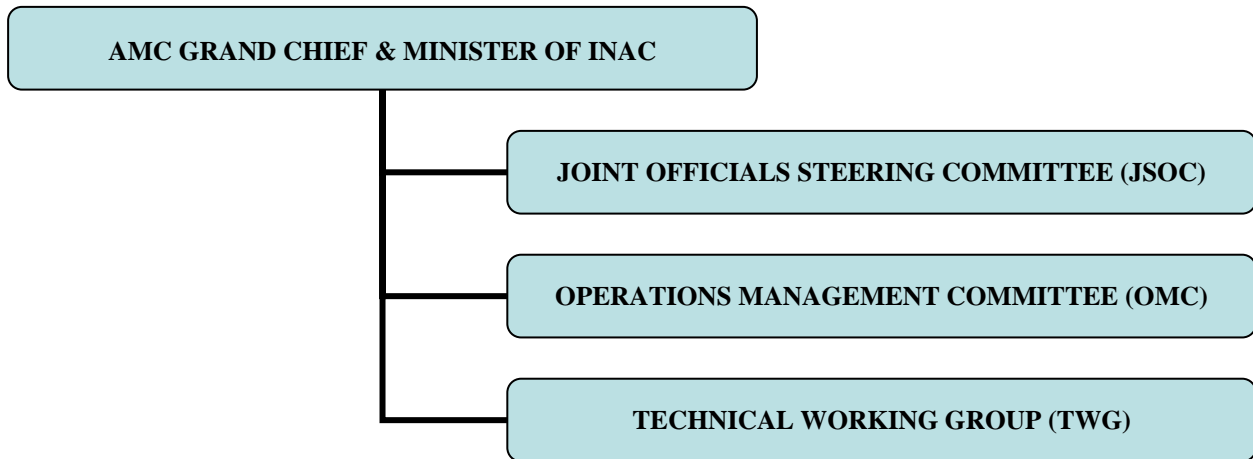
The Commission, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Government of Canada (“the parties”) are guided by the following principles:

- Treaties are a fundamental part of the relationship between First Nations Treaty Signatories and the Crown.
- The involvement of First Nations elders is fundamental to the understanding of Treaty relationships.
- Respect for treaty and inherent rights are important factors when maintaining the honour of the Crown in its relations with First Nations.
- Recognition that the Treaty relationship is dynamic and will evolve over time.
- That the Treaty relationship shall be based on mutual respect, operating at arms length from the parties as a neutral body.
- Recognition that advancing the Treaty relationship requires all parties to share information and participate fully in the process.



ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

The following organizational chart reflects how the TRCM is currently mandated to operate:



The Grand Chief of the AMC and the Minister of INAC will have overall responsibility for the work of the Treaty Commissioner.

The TRCM is also accountable to:

- A Joint Official Steering Committee (JSOC) comprised of two (2) senior executives from INAC and two (2) senior executives from AMC.
- An Operational Management Committee (OMC) comprised of representatives from the parties senior staff who will serve to advise the Commissioner on overall operational requirements. This committee will provide policy direction, approve annual work plans and maintain links with senior leadership.
- A Technical Working Group (TWG) comprised of members from each party will provide support work to the JSOC.

It should be noted that over the past several months, policy discussions have occurred surrounding issues relative to the current mandate, independence and neutrality of the TRCM. Discussions are ongoing and the issues surrounding these matters will be explored further in the new fiscal year.

WORKPLAN 2005-2006

Fulfillment of the TRCM mandate is facilitated through annual work plans, as agreed to by the parties and the TRCM.

To date the Technical Working Group (TWG), comprised of representatives from the AMC, Canada and the TRCM have held several discussions regarding work plans, communications development, budgets, accountability/reporting mechanisms and mandate.

As agreed to in the 2005/2006 Comprehensive Funding Arrangement, the work plan for the period June 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006 included the following:

1. Establishment of TRCM office locale/operation for the period from June 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006.
2. Prepare a communications package to promote awareness of the role and mandate of the TRCM.
3. Activities to introduce Commissioner and Treaty Relations Commission to Manitoba First Nations, Exploratory Treaty Tables, Federal Officials, Manitoba Regional Offices, provincial government, Manitoba Universities and other agencies.
4. Professional development.
5. Development of Elders Advisory Council for the Commission.
6. Staffing.

2005/2006 HIGH LIGHTS

Establish TRCM administrative set-up:

- Established office facilities - leasehold secured September 1, 2005 @ 400-175 Hargrave St. Winnipeg Manitoba.
- Operational systems purchased and installed (furniture, phones, computers, fax, copier, etc.)

2005/2006 HIGH LIGHTS

Staffing/operations:

- Financial consultant hired July, 2005.
- Executive Director hired October, 2005.
- Receptionist hired January, 2006
- Policy Manuals developed.
- Administrative accounts established (supplies, vendors, etc).
- Operational systems developed and implemented.

Development of public education and information package:

- Draft communication package developed – This is an ongoing project that will be used to inform the public about the TRCM which will include information on Treaties in Manitoba.
- Informational brochure developed – This will be updated and distributed as a tool to inform the public and those interested in learning more about Treaties and the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba
- Website development – www.trcm.ca – The TRCM website was launched to enable internet users to learn more about the TRCM, Treaties and Treaty related issues. This will be a most valuable tool for First Nations people living in remote First Nations, students in educational environments and those conducting their own Treaty research looking for Treaty information resources.



2005/2006 HIGH LIGHTS

Schedule orientation meetings:

Several introductory meetings have been held with various First Nations communities, Tribal Councils, private sector organizations, federal and provincial departments and educational institutions to present the TRCM role and mandate.

The TRCM took advantage of many opportunities to engage in discussion of Treaties as well as presentation of the TRCM role and mandate. Knowledge of Treaties and Treaty related issues were addressed in all of the Treaty areas. In addition to several individual meetings with Elders, leaders and youth here are some of the gatherings the TRCM attended:

General Assemblies	Chiefs' Summit
Elders' Summit	Youth conferences
Pow Wows	Conferences

TRCM introductory meetings were also held with a number of First Nations and First Nation organizations with presentations on TRCM's role and mandate, some of them are as follows:

O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi	Rolling River	Ebb & Flow
Sandy Bay	Swan Lake	Birdtail Sioux
Long Plain	Lake St. Martin	Nekaneet (Sask.)

Manitoba Kewatinook Ininew Okimowin (MKO)

Southern Chiefs Organization incorporated (SCO)

Interlake Reserves Tribal Council (IRTC)

Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council (DOTC)

First Nation Education Resource Centre (MFNERC)

Treaty Land Entitlement Committee (TLEC)



2005/2006 HIGH LIGHTS

Schedule orientation meetings:

TRCM International Exposure and Participation:

World Indigenous Peoples Conference
(New Zealand)

Meeting of Canada's Commissions:

During this meeting, the TRCM established working relationships, shared knowledge and best practices with:

The Indian Claims Commission
The Office of the Saskatchewan Treaty Commission
The BC Treaty Commission

Research and History

Introductions and tours have taken place with the following research facilities that TRCM looks forward to developing lasting and resourceful partnerships with:

Hudson's Bay Company Archives
The Government of Manitoba Provincial Library
The Treaty Aboriginal Rights and Research Centre

2005/2006 HIGH LIGHTS

Schedule orientation meetings:

There has been continuous correspondence with The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and the Government of Canada through out the year. The TRCM has also met with various government representatives and departments:

Federal-	Indian & Northern Affairs Canada, Parks Canada
Provincial-	Aboriginal and Northern Affairs
	Minister for Higher Learning and Training
	Minister for Education
	Minister of Natural Resources

Educational Institutions

Presentations, Treaty research and education discussions have been held with leading Educational institutions in Manitoba:

University of Manitoba (U of M)
University of Winnipeg (U of W)
Red River College (RRC)

Also, several provincial schools throughout Manitoba have been visited with presentations on the TRCM.

TRCM has met with and been introduced as a neutral body regarding Treaties and the Treaty relationship to the private sector. Meeting with and development of new unique relationships has proved to be a positive step forward for the TRCM and the private sector:

Manitoba Hydro	Tribal Council Investment Group (TCIG)
Manitoba Chamber of Commerce	Manitoba Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce
Manitoba Telecommunication Systems (MTS)	

The TRCM looks forward to relationship building in all sectors to increase awareness and respect for Treaties and the Treaty relationship.

2005/2006 HIGH LIGHTS

Grand Opening ceremony:

- Grand Opening initially scheduled for March 2006 however agreement by the parties to reschedule to May 17, 2006.
- Grand Opening to be held at Lower Fort Garry (Treaty One territory) on June 17, 2006 with a reception/open house to follow at the TRCM office in the afternoon.

Professional development and training:

- Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand – the Treaty Commissioner had the opportunity to attend the *World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education* in New Zealand in December 2005. The conference was an excellent forum for networking and also afforded the Commissioner the opportunity to observe official tribunal hearings.

Elders Forum:

- With the support of the TRCM, the AMC held an Elders Forum on March 14 & 15, 2006 which focused on the “*Spirit and Intent of Treaties*”. Several Elders were invited from all Manitoba Treaty areas and linguistic groups. Discussion groups were held relative to the meaning of ‘Spirit and Intent’ of treaties, community perspectives, oral history, etc. The forum was well attended and was very insightful in terms of the work to be conducted by the TRCM.
- The Commission gratefully acknowledges all the Elders/helpers and facilitators who attended the forum. It was an incredible opportunity to share stories, knowledge and wisdom as they relate to the meaning of the ‘spirit and intent’ of the Treaties.

2005/2006 HIGH LIGHTS



Elders at the First Nations Elders' Forum
"Spirit and Intent of the Treaties"
In Winnipeg, MB March 14 & 15, 2006



Elders Council:

- Discussion with the AMC regarding the Elders Council remains ongoing. Finalization of the Terms of Reference for the Elders Council is expected in the near future. In the meantime, the Commissioner has been meeting with individual elders on an as needed basis. In addition to that, the TRCM had the honour of hosting two AMC Elders meetings at our office. The meetings were insightful and facilitated the relationship building process.

A LOOK INTO 2006-2007

The draft workplan for 2006/2007 was presented at the first Joint Official Steering Committee (JSOC) meeting held on March 14, 2006 at the office of the TRCM.

At this meeting, the TRCM proposed a continuation of the work plan that commenced in 2005/2006. Transitioning from 2005-2006, information from initiatives such as the Elders' Forum and community visits will continue to be used to utilize the valuable knowledge provided to its fullest potential.

Just a few of the initiatives to look forward to in the 2006-2007 workplan:

Curriculum Development

As part of our mandate to engage in public education activities to improve understanding of the Treaty relationship and Treaty related issues, the TRCM will be creating Treaty related curriculum with balance and up-to-date information for First Nations, Manitobans and all Canadians to learn from.

Speakers Bureau

In 2006-2007, the TRCM will be developing and introducing the Speakers Bureau to the public. Treaty experts, Elders, and others who can provide valuable insight on Treaties and Treaty related issues will become a resource the public can access from the TRCM.

Oral History Research

Oral history is an important and fundamental part of First Nations culture. To fulfill its mandate, the TRCM will take a role in conducting oral history research. We look forward to using both traditional and contemporary methods of research to build upon as an information resource.

CONCLUSION

This past year has certainly been a challenging and exciting venture in developing and establishing the physical presence of the TRCM in Winnipeg. In applying for very basic criteria in terms of accessibility and centrality for the comfort of our elders, leaders and the general public we are very proud and pleased with our final locale. Beyond basic infrastructure issues, the TRCM has also been very busy fulfilling accountability measures and developing policy relative to finance and personnel matters. The past 10 months has also involved numerous introductory meetings with several political organizations, Tribal councils, the Federal Council, Provincial Governments, Educational institutions, national Treaty Commissions and First Nation communities.

While much has been achieved, much work remains. It is critical to note that progress in meeting all targeted work plan deliverables have been slower than anticipated. Some work plan items required deferral as they could not be accommodated in the 2005/2006 budget/timeframe. Such items will require attention in the new fiscal year.

Despite this fact, however, the last few months have demonstrated a positive shift in terms of the Treaty discussion. The seed to a broader understanding of Treaties and Treaty issues has been planted. As we move into a new year the TRCM, Canada and AMC remain highly committed to engage in joint discussions concerning Treaty issues and we look forward to a successful year.

We at the Commission, would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved for their hard work, patience and commitment in hopes of achieving common ground on this most important issue.



*"For as long
as the sun shines,
the grass grows
and the rivers flow"*



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