

Métis Settlements Appeals Tribunal

Three Year Business Plan

2007-2010

INTRODUCTION

The Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal (MSAT) was established in 1990 under the *Métis Settlements Act* (the Act). MSAT's role under the Act is to provide practical mediation services and to make fair and binding decisions concerning membership, land and oil and gas disputes. MSAT also resolves other matters—such as conflicts of interest, policy reviews, and appeals of General Council elections—set out in Métis Settlements General Council Policies and local Settlement by-laws.

CORE BUSINESS

MSAT's core business is to:

- Receive appeals and run fair investigations
- Conduct mediations and hearings
- Facilitate agreements between parties and issue decisions
- Educate Settlement members and other stakeholders about MSAT's role

VISION

MSAT contributes to Métis Culture and identity under the *Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord*¹ by providing timely, fair, and effective dispute resolution services for Settlement members and other stakeholders.

MISSION

To resolve disputes through mediation, adjudication, and public education in order to promote good self-governance, certainty, respect, and responsibility as envisioned in the *Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord*.

¹ *The Accord*: Signed in 1989, the *Alberta-Metis Settlements Accord* ushered in a new era. The Accord called for joint action by Alberta and the Metis Settlements General Council to protect Settlement lands and to build viable and vibrant Metis communities with good local and collective governance systems. The Accord provided tools for developing a full body of Metis Settlement law through General Council Policies, local by-laws, and judicial (MSAT) decisions.

VALUES

MSAT operates in a manner that reflects the following values:

- Honesty
- Doing the right thing
- Making a difference
- Preserving Métis Culture and identity

SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITES AND CHALLENGES

- Clarifying roles and strengthening relationships while maintaining independence
- Building capacities while streamlining investigation, mediation, and hearing processes

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Preserving and enhancing Métis Culture within our quasi-judicial² system by emphasizing:
 - Simple, speedy and cost efficient processes
 - Culturally appropriate alternate dispute resolution processes
 - Natural justice with minimal legal formalities
2. Becoming more accessible to our clients by:
 - Moving the MSAT offices to a user-friendly location
 - Attending community functions whenever appropriate
 - Providing workshops and informational material on MSAT's functions

GOALS

1. *Improving independence*: MSAT must be—and seen to be—above external influence.

Strategies

- a) MSAT's relationship to the Government of Alberta and General Council will be characterized by respect, honesty, transparency and the shared goal of promoting good governance under the *Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord*.

² *Quasi-judicial* means that MSAT's duty to mediate and adjudicate resolutions is limited to the areas set out in provincial legislation, General Council by-laws and Settlement by-laws.

2. *Increasing efficiency:* MSAT will act in a timely and fair manner.

Strategies

- a) MSAT will build a positive, professional, work environment where staff and Board members understand and carry-out shared goals and approaches.
 - b) MSAT's policies and procedures for investigations and hearings will be updated to promote efficient, consistent, and effective operations.
 - c) MSAT will improve its capacity by filling its staff compliment, updating job descriptions, revising its base budget to meet strategic needs, and providing training to all Board and staff members on decision making processes.
3. *Maintaining Cultural integrity:* MSAT will consider and respect Settlement history and Métis values in fulfilling its mandate.

Strategies

- a) MSAT's Code of Ethics and Rules of Procedure will be updated. The Code and Rules will promote Métis values and culture, including our commitment to the principles of impartiality, honesty, and integrity.
- b) Reports and decisions will be written in plain language. Oral Cree translations will be available when required.

Outcomes/Performance Measures

1. MSAT will maintain and strengthen its standing as Canada's only legislated and independent Métis-specific dispute resolution entity.
2. MSAT will meet at least once a year with the provincial Minister responsible for Metis relations and the Métis Settlements General Council to enhance their understanding about MSAT's evolving quasi-judicial role respecting Métis self-governance under the *Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord*.
3. Over the next three years, MSAT will improve its administrative efficiency by 100% by cutting process times from 14 months per appeal to 7 months per appeal. In addition, MSAT will work to make its services more accessible to Settlement members and other stakeholders by moving its offices to a location that is user-friendly and by continually reviewing its forms and decision templates to ensure they are easy to use and understand.
4. MSAT will commit time and resources—including conducting community tours and providing information updates in the Métis Messenger and on MSAT's website—to improve understanding and confidence amongst Settlement members and other stakeholders with regard to MSAT's role and current practices.