

Research in the South Slave of the NWT

Prepared by: Chris Heron
Environment Manager
Northwest Territory Métis Nation

INTRODUCTION

The Northwest Territory Métis Nation (NWTMN) has a long history in the South Slave area of the NWT. The NWTMN currently consists of the following three member communities: Fort Resolution Métis Council, Hay River Métis Government Council, and the Fort Smith Métis Council. These three community councils are represented at a regional level by the NWTMN, which allows the NWTMN to enter into land and resource discussions with the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories, on their behalf. As a result of these discussions, there were several agreements that were implemented to allow the NWTMN to participate in discussions on lands and resources that were identified as the Traditional Land Use Area for the NWTMN.

INTERIM MEASURES AGREEMENT

The agreement which governs our activities with regards to research is the NWTMN Interim Measures Agreement (IMA). This agreement was negotiated to allow for the NWTMN to be fully involved in the land, water and research permitting activities. The NWTMN uses a centralized review process through the Environment Office to an IMA Committee, which is the best method for the NWTMN and its community offices. Terms and conditions of the IMA allow for a consultative process whereby the NWTMN can make its opinions known to research applicants and to regulatory agencies in the NWT, including the Aurora Research Institute (ARI). The IMA allows for a review period of 60 days for the NWTMN to provide feedback in the form of comments, suggestions or opinions. The community metis offices are expecting to receive material relating to research from the Environment office as the primary contact. Research requests are submitted to the NWTMN Environment Office for comments, and the IMA Committee is tasked with reviewing applications and passing recommendations to the respective Métis Councils and to the Executive of the NWTMN for approval. Through this agreement the NWTMN has determined the following to be the best process to consider research applications and provide comments in a timely manner.

IMA RESEARCH PROCESS OVERVIEW

At an early or design stage of your research project idea, the NWTMN encourages researchers to approach the NWTMN and commence discussions immediately. This is done through the following process:

- The NWTMN acknowledges prospective researcher's expertise in their area of study.
- The NWTMN looks to researchers to share information through discussion of a research idea or later along the process in a research application. It is through this communication the NWTMN gets to understand the research topic.
- Once a researcher has provided the NWTMN the information it needs to consider any proposed activities, we are in a better position to provide detailed input. This also allows for the communication of advice to the researcher on how to proceed in working with the NWTMN and its member communities. At this point, the NWTMN can discuss costs, benefits, and the role it is expected to play in the overall process and the NWTMN can share the mitigation it would like to see as a result of a research project. These discussions also contribute to the understanding of the Métis culture. Both parties can gain an education on each others processes, leading to an understanding that facilitates the concerns brought forward by the researcher and the NWTMN.
- After initial discussions have taken place, there is no guarantee that a research proposal will be free of opposition by the NWTMN, in the review process. If there is a development of a good working relationship with the NWTMN, opposition by the NWTMN may not exist, as any problems will be worked out in advance of an application being submitted.
- Communication between the researcher and the NWTMN is encouraged so that we work together to address issues that may arise in a timely manner. At this stage an application should be formally submitted to the appropriate licensing or regulatory body.
- The benefits of doing front end effort will be realized in the application stage; most of the issues should have been resolved, and little to no opposition should be expected. By using this process, a considerable amount of time and effort can be saved by both the researcher and the NWTMN.

CONCLUSIONS

Researchers should make contact with the appropriate organizations to start discussion at the idea stage, in advance of submitting an application to a licensing or regulatory body. This process will aid in streamlining the application process, time and funds can be saved. Once the organization is fully informed and involved, the chance of any opposition to an application is greatly reduced. Using this approach makes for a better study as it allows important communication to take place, and as stated above the benefit to the researcher is immediate support by the organization in the application phase. Using the centralized communication approach through the Environment Office is an effective means of communications for the NWTMN; this is one area that we have focused on, to ensure we are effective in our communication efforts both internally and externally for the benefit of research in the South Slave area of the NWT.

Contact information:

Environment Manager
Northwest Territory Métis Nation
Box 720
Fort Smith, NT X0E 0P0
Phone: 867-872-2770
Fax: 867-872-3586
E-mail: rcc.nwtmn@northwestel.net