



A Conversation to Set Goals for Land Use Planning

**CHISASIBI COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON WHAT THEY VALUE,
THE ISSUES THEY FACE AND THEIR VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Compiled by the **Eeyou Planning Commission**

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LAND USE PLANNING

In ancient times as in the present, **Crees have always planned their use of Eeyou Istchee**, their homeland. As the years went by and the presence of non-Crees increased, Crees saw the challenges and impacts involved in developing the territory, but they also saw **opportunities to live from and care for the land in new ways, to draw from Cree tradition and creativity to meet the needs of a changing world.**

In the 2012 Cree-Quebec Governance Agreement, Crees acquired responsibilities with respect to **land use planning – the right and responsibility to compile and share a Cree vision for Eeyou Istchee, shaped by the Elders’ teachings that have always informed and guided Cree land use.** There are many more activities to consider now than there used to be, and many more people and partners to work with. But the value Crees place upon balance, that is, upon **developing and caring for Eeyou Istchee in a way that ensures that future generations will have as many opportunities to hunt and trap, and work and learn, as possible –** that hasn't changed.

THE EEYOU PLANNING COMMISSION

The 2012 Cree-Quebec Governance Agreement led to the creation of the Eeyou Planning Commission (EPC), formed of Commissioners from each of the Cree communities and chaired by Cree Nation Government. The mandate of the EPC is to **work towards building a collective Cree vision and the capacity to engage on land use planning related activities throughout all of Eeyou Istchee**. Chisasibi's representatives to the EPC are:

- **L. George Pachanos**, Commissioner
- **Matthew Chiskamish**, Alternate

Land use planning in Chisasibi starts with understanding what matters to Chisasibi Crees: what is important to them about their lands, what issues they are facing, and what is their vision of their future. For this, we needed to have a conversation with the people of Chisasibi: representatives of local government, Youth, Elders, Women, and last but certainly not least, tallymen and land users. **This conversation will help define the goals for land use planning** in Chisasibi, and for Eeyou Istchee, and is described in this report.

The Eeyou Planning Commission and Cree Nation Government will continue this conversation with Chisasibi through several activities in the community in the coming months and years, before a plan is tabled for consideration and approval by the community.

WHAT DO CHISASIBI CREES VALUE MOST IN THEIR LANDS?

Being Together...

“Just getting the Elders and youth and families together is very important, most important thing besides hunting fishing trapping. **When we’re in town that doesn’t happen, that family togetherness. But once we’re out in the bush everyone has a responsibility, everyone is included.** In town youth and Elders are separate, everyone is separate.”

...On the Land

“**We were born here, we were raised out on the land,** mostly spring and fall, and sometimes in the summertimes, parents took us fishing, that’s what they mostly did. In spring trapping muskrat and otter. Other furbearing animals goes until March. Goose hunting during months of May. Continued through end of May. **Going out on the land was like coming home to us.**”

The River

“**Chisasibi Eeyouch: it means great river,** not the big river. We are the people of this place, the people of the river.”

Old Camps and Cultural Sites

“When you see an old trail, burial site, camp site, those are important, **we have a connection to these places.**”

Respect for Land Users/Knowledge Holders

“We try to respect the people who are responsible for that area (tallymen), that’s one of the thing that needs to be encouraged...

Whenever we have on the land project, we make sure we involve people who are the land users, and we encourage the young people, Elders, etc. to respect the area and to clean up when they leave because you’d want to do the same thing if you had people coming into your hunting grounds.”

Cultural Heritage

“Those are the kind of things we don’t think about but that still connects everyone to that land, the songs and the stories Especially the stories that you hear about stories of young men, preteens that walk for miles to get food, bravery, that’s something you don’t hear about enough. There are a lot of stories about us being lazy, but **these stories about what we did on the land, those are important, people need to hear those stories.** Even our own people, they need to hear those stories of survival and hardship. People in the world need to hear this. There’s too much stereotype, but that’s not the way they are, our ancestors were hardworking people.”

Respect for the Animals

“Because **the families back then, when they killed an animal, they used every part of the animal. Even the bones** were used for us. I guess the Elders had so much respect especially for the bear, you hung the bones on a tree so that they don’t get disrespected by the other animals.”

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES THAT CHISAIBI CREES ARE FACING ON THEIR LANDS?

Hydro Impacts – Our Own Smokey Hill Lost

“A big difference is the change that came with the La Grande complex, people, some of them are stuck here. **There’s a guy from here, an Elder, his trapline was flooded, he’s only got 1/8 of his trapline. He loves to go hunting but he can’t go there** all the time, people invite him to their traplines to trap marten or beaver. This poor guy was always in the bush in the 70’s. When we kill ptarmigan or beaver, I give it to this guy sometimes because he doesn’t have anything on his trapline. That’s the big difference we’re facing here.”

Loss of Waterfowl

“What gets taken into account when you’re goose hunting, the tide, its direction, etc if it’s a calm day you let them be, that’s what the Elders taught us. **I learned to read the waves. The youth have no reason to go out and learn that because there are no geese.**”

Move from Fort George Island to Chisasibi

“Because when we moved here we were separated. **When we were there we made our own decisions, where we were going to live, when we moved here we were separated that caused a lot of confusion.** When the young people go out on the land and come back, they create a bond with the people they went out with, they recognize them and find out how they are related to them. That’s why it’s important that all these connections have to be there.”

Damage to Water

“The developments that will be coming, e.g. mining, we’ve heard so much of what mining can do, contaminants and all that, we won’t be able to stop every project that will come up, **especially the water we need to take care of because we all depend on water.** 80% of our body is water, animals too.”

Culture and Language Declining

“That’s the consequences of not being able to practice the culture, a loss of the language, **certain terms that you use specifically for certain activities out on the land, when you’re just in the community they don’t have the chance to collect that vocabulary,** traditional vocabulary and knowledge, teachings, medicines that go with it, that are out on the land. That’s what we’re losing out on just by sitting inside our houses.”



Occupation Declining

“One of the consequences is that **when the young people don't go out as much, there's the loss the language, of geography (understanding the land), weather conditions** they can't really tell what the weather's going to be like. Elders could tell what the spring was going to be like just by looking at the birds and the animals, they could know what was coming.”

Non-Cree Hunters

“For **non-natives it's a sport**, for us it's more like hunting, **like our ancestors.**”

Overharvesting/Poor Harvesting

“Even nowadays I still teach my daughters and granddaughters to respect the animals that have been killed. Because nowadays it's like they're overkilling, **for some people they sell what they kill but the way I was taught is you're supposed to share what you kill**, not sell it. Some people do it for profit.”

Trapline System

“There was no concept of ownership of anything, my father didn't talk about my land, my trees, my food, my fur. Wherever you went, you shared everything. **Now that's changing, I hear people saying this is my trapline, mine mine.**”





WHAT IS THE VISION THAT CHISASIBI CREES HAVE FOR THE FUTURE OF THEIR LANDS?

Conservation of the Land

"We'd like to keep what's left of it **as pristine as possible**, keep our water clean, less pollution, not to over exploit it."

Conservation of Cultural Sites

"It's like that in every trapline, you have gravesites. It's one thing to mark the area where the **grave sites, they need to be protected.**"

Cree-Led Development

"But **I believe that we can hold onto traditions and still have economic development.** I love the story of my father, when he was trapping they told me he was a good trapper, but when he died my uncles said he was a very good trapper, and even though the fur was at a high value he didn't keep it for himself, he shared it with the whole family, **he didn't see the monetary value as being as important as seeing that the whole family was taken care of.**"

Limit Damage from Hydro

"**Not put more turbines in the hydro dams,** I think they were planning it, I don't know where that's at. I don't like them doing that without the Cree Nation's consent."

Transmission of Cultural Knowledge

"We need to teach our grandkids our knowledge, we need to pass it on to them. **We have a lot of knowledge, and the Elders too, that we have to leave it with them** when we leave."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE EYOU PLANNING
COMMISSION OR LAND USE PLANNING,

PLEASE CONTACT

YOUR LOCAL EPC COMMISSIONER OR
THE EPC SECRETARIAT AT **514-861-5837**

