

A Conversation to Set Goals for Land Use Planning

**EASTMAIN 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 EYYOU 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**. Eastmain's representatives to the EPC are:

- **Raymond Shanoush**, Commissioner

Land use planning in Eastmain starts with understanding what matters to Eastmain 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 Eastmain: 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 Eastmain, and for Eeyou Istchee, and is described in this report.

The Eeyou Planning Commission and Cree Nation Government will continue this conversation with Eastmain 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 EASTMAIN CREES VALUE MOST IN THEIR LANDS?

Water Sources

“The natural freshwater spring that used to be at the site of the community was destroyed when the community expanded. We don’t want that to happen again. **Water is a key source of life, it is important to protect it,** we need regulation and policy for that.”

Lakes and Rivers

“Lakes should be respected because **many of our teachings come from there.**”

Respect for the Animals

“Tallymen still have communication with animals, they respect animals. They talk to animals. **Spiritual communications still exist between tallymen and animals.** They know how to respect them.”



Sensitive Areas

“Within each tallyman’s land it is important to maintain the animal species. **At one point, we will need land to survive in the future.** The key is to not destroy the habitats.”

Passing on Cree Knowledge

“**Traditions should be passed on** for how to protect the land, animals, regulate harvest and habitat protection/regulation.”

Cultural Gatherings

“What’s important is **being together on the land, hunting together during the summer** – family and friends gathering, meat sharing following hunting.”



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

Impacts from Hydroelectric Developments

“There is not as much fish now **because the diversion has impacted them. Fish are sick** because of water contamination.”

Concerns about Impact of Mineral Exploration and Exploitation

“Mine projects are coming up. **Water should be tested now before the mines come,** to be able to identify which contaminant comes from the mines.”

Constraints on Land Use Due to Activities from Southerners

“**Game wardens no longer protect the area** after a hydro project. Without the wardens, there are many cabins belonging to external people.”

Lack of Forest

“**There is not a lot of forest.** 80% was wiped out. Future activities need to protect that area.”



Littering and Pollution

“Waste management is an issue at goose camps. Tide takes the garbage out in the water. **This is not the kind of respect for the land that we preach or strive toward as a First Nation people.** A program to address this existed in the past. Or taking out the trash with Ski-Doos during the winter time is possible.”

Over-Harvesting and Breakdown of the Tallyman System

“**The current system is kind of a free-for-all.** There is no respect for the tallymen and wildlife with the way exploitation goes forward now. Tallymen’s agreement for giving access are not respected and over-harvesting goes on.”

Breakdown of the Trapline System

“Some people do not have traplines but want to spend time in the bush **and are unable to do so.**”

Access to Hunting Areas

“Now people who go on the land have full time jobs. **Before, land was our backyard,** it allowed for sustenance and someone could make money selling fur.”

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

Governance

“We need to set up **better laws to protect the Cree way of life and the animals**, to preserve them for generations to come. And we need inputs from Elders and land users in crafting these laws.”

Environmental Monitoring and Management

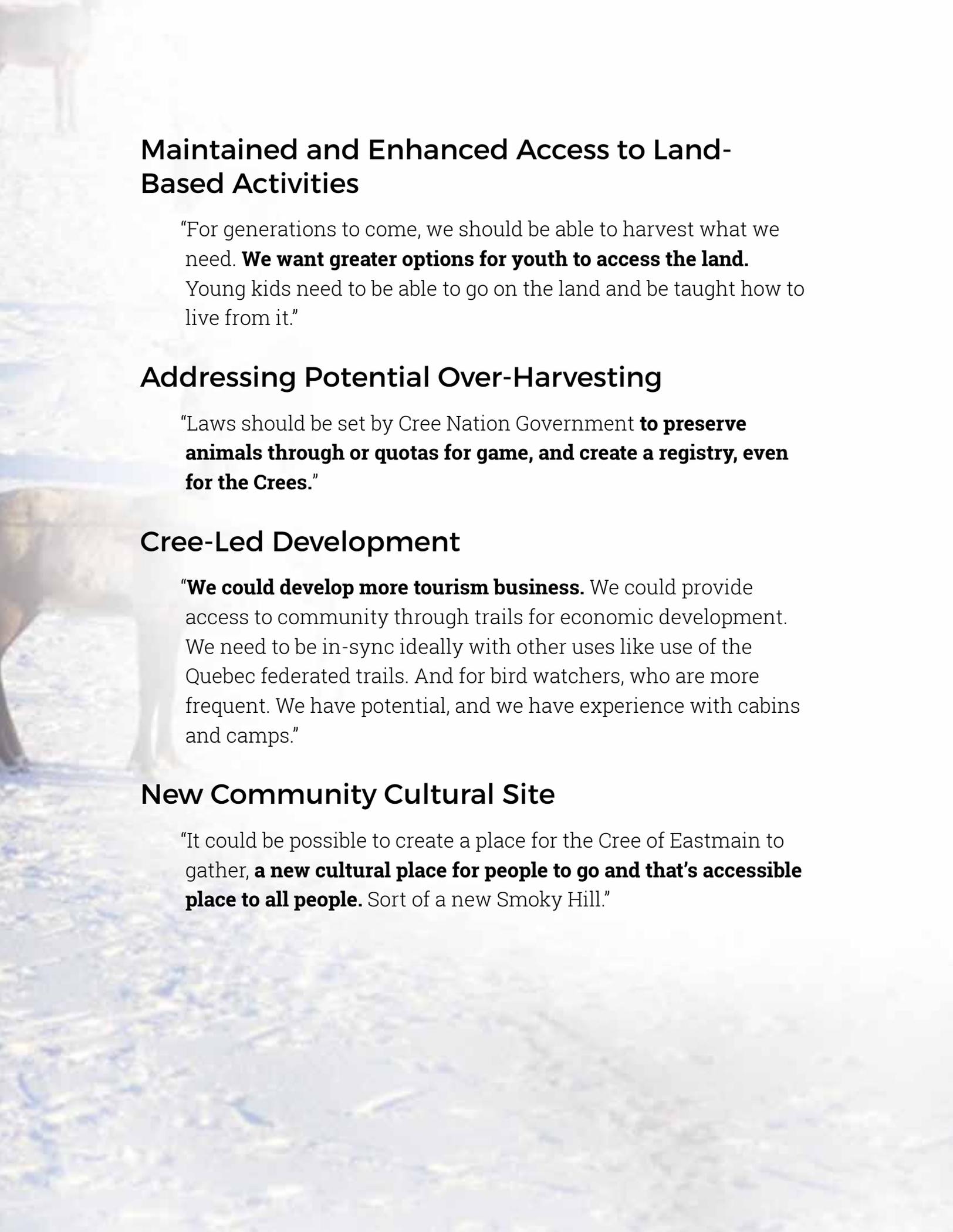
“We need a **progressive way of monitoring the land** to properly maintain the land and its natural state before a project goes ahead.”

Environmental Protection

“We should have a **Cree law or regulation that protects the animals.**”







Maintained and Enhanced Access to Land-Based Activities

“For generations to come, we should be able to harvest what we need. **We want greater options for youth to access the land.**

Young kids need to be able to go on the land and be taught how to live from it.”

Addressing Potential Over-Harvesting

“Laws should be set by Cree Nation Government **to preserve animals through or quotas for game, and create a registry, even for the Crees.**”

Cree-Led Development

“**We could develop more tourism business.** We could provide access to community through trails for economic development. We need to be in-sync ideally with other uses like use of the Quebec federated trails. And for bird watchers, who are more frequent. We have potential, and we have experience with cabins and camps.”

New Community Cultural Site

“It could be possible to create a place for the Cree of Eastmain to gather, **a new cultural place for people to go and that’s accessible place to all people.** Sort of a new Smoky Hill.”

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**

