



A Conversation to Set Goals for Land Use Planning

**MISTISSINI 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**. Mistissini's representatives to the EPC are:

- **Hubert Petawabano**, Commissioner
- **Gerald Longchap**, Alternate

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

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

The Land

“When my father-in-law or my father talked about the land **they talked about it like it was a member of the family.** You know when you talk to your brother or sister and you expect something from them you never take from them more than you what you are in need, so too is the land you don’t take more than you need and they always take what they need not more.”

Opportunities to Practice Cree Way of Life

“It’s so easy for us to take our children out on a boat to travel to an area to teach your children our ways, even the simple stuff on how to make a fire and cook for yourself. In the more remote areas **we are very blessed to see everything intact.**”

Mistissini Lake

“**I can’t help but think about the big lake,** many of us have been there numerous times, the **beauty of lake and surrounding lands.** How good the fish is still, still not spoiled. Lots of good use for that lake, traditional camping, fishing.”

Strong Culture and Language

“My **cultural values are more important** than any money.”

Cultural Sites

“All the territory is full of memories as well. My son had a hard time to go out into the trapline when he travelled into the area where him and his father travelled, he becomes emotional. That's why I said it's full of memories and stories as well. **Everyone that spends time out on the land has those memories and stories.**”

Respectful Harvesting

“The one important thing what was taught was how to take care of your kill and not to waste anything, because **the one that watches over us will see us in how we use and waste what we were given.** When someone harvested a lot of meat they had ways to preserve the meat, this goes to fish as well they would make a structure to hang and dry them and later they would smoke them, so that nothing went to waste.”



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

Forestry

“They [forestry companies] also don’t respect the laws that are in place, they’ll sign the agreements but **when the work gets done it’s never done according to code**, they get creeks full of oil, cut into the buffer area. They’ll always go beyond the boundary where they’re supposed to cut if no one’s looking.”

Declining Cree Occupation

“What I have noticed too is we don’t have elderly people who are of really old age. **We don’t see many people who truly live off the land and harvest what they need to survive.** Like drying meat. When fall came around and we were waiting for freeze up to be able to walk on the ice, that’s what people survived off was the dried fish, dried meat and all of the summer harvest foods and that’s how people were surviving and fed their children.”

Declining Transmission of Cree Culture

“That is what I noticed today youth and **young people are not looking at how their parents are cleaning and cooking wild game** and what they do around the camp area. That is how we learned in the past by watching and doing.”



Lack of Control Over Development and its Impacts

“What I see is very suddenly land and development is talked about and it feels like it’s being discussed in such a rush or hurry. **It sort of feels like everything is already in place and ready to go and these discussions are just a formality to get out of the way like they don’t matter.** Maybe that’s why you don’t have many people to talk to because that’s how people are starting to feel.”

Access

“One issue that we face is the cost to go out on the land is getting expensive and when your grandchildren want to spend time with you out on the land, **they don’t have money to pay for the flight to go out on the land.** It’s even harder if your family trapline is much farther.”

Non-Cree Occupation

“For Crees it’s traplines, for non-natives it’s public land. We went to Toronto, someone asked is it true there’s snowmobile trail that goes through the territory, and we can use it without permits it’s free land? I told him it’s not a public road it’s designed for land users to get access to their traplines.”



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

Conservation

“The park is for me the key. During the exercise we did in 2010 on protected areas, **families began to see the benefit of having land protected.** A lot were turned down because of mining claims, but how old are they? Those stupid little squares mean nothing to me. It would be good to have a limit on those claims.”

Integrate Land Users into Decision-Making

“**Before any development or preparation of a project takes place, that’s where these true land users need to be considered.** They should be interviewed and asked what their views are on the way development is done out on the land and where they think is a good potential to develop without leaving much of a footprint in the territory.”

More Support for Transmission of Cree Knowledge

“That’s what I want to see in the ISP program, youth or a young couple that love to spend time out on the land to be able to live with other experienced land users to learn from them. **People my age we would love to live with youth out on the land to teach what we have been taught by our parents.**”





Palm 91.4

A person is walking away from the camera on a snow-covered path. The path is flanked by bare trees, and the background shows a misty or snowy landscape. The overall scene is quiet and wintry.

Recognition of Cree Governance

“We need **government to formally recognize the trapline system** and tallymen and their inherent rights to traditional territories. For us, where our camp is, we have 70 km prime hunting area, for us the whole trapline is good.”

Preparing the Next Generation for Cree Governance

“A few years ago I was at a round table on capacity building...there a high school student said ‘I go to history class to hear about Jacques Cartier, etc., but at this round table we hear about JBNQA, what is that? It is time we have a Cree history class. **Politicians always say the youth are our future, our future leaders, how can they expect us to lead in the future when we don’t know our own history?** If we don’t know JBNQA how can we protect it in the future? We need to learn our own history from the days of the famine, before and after JBNQA, we need to know our history for us to lead in the future.”

Access

“We need open access trails, portages, safe access for Elders who want to use the land. The wildlife use those trails too. **We need to revive those portages,** for Crees and non-Cree people too.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE EYOU PLANNING
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PLEASE CONTACT

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

