

**Cree Nation Land Use Planning
Values, Issues and Vision**

**Report on community input
on land use planning goals**

NEMASKA

**Compiled by the
Eeyou Planning Commission**

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1. Introduction

After millennia of caring for the land, but being largely excluded from government planning for their homeland, the Crees finally had their right and responsibility to plan for the future of Eeyou Istchee recognized in the 2012 Cree-Quebec Governance Agreement. Shortly afterward the Eeyou Planning Commission was formed, with a representative from each of the 10 Cree communities, to work on land use plans in Eeyou Istchee, ensuring they stay as true as possible to Eeyou Eetuun.

Land use planning for Eeyou Istchee starts with understanding what vision Crees have for their communities, and what issues stand between them and realizing that vision. To this end, in 2017 the Eeyou Planning Commission working with the Cree Nation Government conducted open houses and focus groups in the 10 Cree communities. The goal of this exercise was both to better understand the values, issues and vision that need to be at the core of a Cree land use plan, and to share information about the new land use planning processes in place. This report describes some of how the Crees of Nemaska see their community, the challenges they face, and their vision for the future of their lands.

1.1 History of Cree Land Use Planning

In ancient times as in the present, Crees have always planned their use of the land. Understanding that the well-being of Eeyou Istchee is a pre-condition to the well-being of Crees, and that everything on the land is deserving of respect, Crees considered and planned out their hunting, fishing, trapping, harvesting and travels across the land with the greatest of care.

As the years went by and the presence and activities of non-Crees increased – including not just fur-trading but mining, forestry, hydroelectricity, tourism and more – Crees continued to plan their lives on the land with the same care they always had. But things had changed. Ecosystems transformed by forestry or hydroelectric development did not respond the same way they once did. Mining or even whole new communities displaced traditional hunting spots. The animals behaved differently, responding not just to Crees but to non-Crees whose own occupation of the territory made itself increasingly felt. At the same time, communities became more sedentary and the need for jobs increased. Crees saw opportunities in these new activities and industries occurring on the territory, and in partnerships with the non-Crees with whom they now shared Eeyou Istchee – opportunities to live from and care for the land in new ways, to draw from Cree tradition and ingenuity to meet the needs of a changing world.

In the 2012 Cree-Quebec Agreement on Governance, Crees obtained formal mandates 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. Basically, land use planning offers Crees the opportunity to do as they have always done, which is to create and implement a plan for how they want to use the land. 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.

1.2 What is the Eeyou Planning Commission about?

As mentioned above, the Eeyou Planning Commission was created as a result of the 2012 Cree-Quebec Governance Agreement. It is composed of a Commissioner from each of the ten Cree communities including Washaw Sibi, as well as a Chair from the Cree Nation Government – currently the Deputy Grand Chief. The Nemaska representative to the Eeyou Planning Commission is:

- Matthew Tanoush, Commissioner
- Rose Wapachee, Alternate

The mandate of the Eeyou Planning Commission 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. The EPC will work collaboratively with regional planning partners in order to harmonize the various land use plans so that they work as best as possible with the collective vision, interests and aspirations of the Crees. This mandate includes:

- The drafting of a land use plan (Regional Land and Resource Use Plan) for Category II lands
- Collaborating with the EIJBRG in harmonizing Category II and III land use plans, and providing Cree content and information for Category III plans
- Collaborating with the Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission in harmonizing terrestrial and offshore land use planning and implementation
- Any other responsibilities the Cree Nation Government assigns to it.

1.3 How does land use planning work?



There are seven main stages for land use planning in Eeyou Istchee.

The first is determining what the main goals of a Cree land use plan need to be (1. Pre-planning, goal setting). The Values, Issues and Vision we hear about in Nemaska and other Cree communities will help us understand and describe those goals. Each community will have its own unique goals, and still others will be common across many or all Cree communities.

Once these goals are established, the Eeyou Planning Commission and the Cree Nation Government will collect the background information related to these goals (2. Research, data collection).

Next, the Eeyou Planning Commission and the Cree Nation Government return to communities to ensure that the information they collected is accurate (3. Analysis, validation).

Using the information collected, the Eeyou Planning Commission and the Cree Nation Government will work with communities, planning partners and others on developing land use plans that move Crees closer to the goals they have named (4. Writing the plans).

These plans then need to be approved in public hearings held in the Cree communities (5. Public hearings, plan approval).

After this they are put into action (6. Implementation) and finally, once in action, they are assessed to check whether they are successfully helping to reach the goals established by Crees (7. Evaluation, monitoring).

Here is an example of what the land use planning process looks like using the goal of protecting culturally sensitive sites

Stage of Planning	Work Involved
1. Pre-planning, goal setting	Protect culturally sensitive sites
2. Research, data collection	Collect information from Elders and land users on where culturally sensitive sites are. Determine which, if any, are already protected.
3. Analysis, validation	Validate information on culturally sensitive sites with the communities, to make sure we know where many or all of them are.
4. Writing the plans	Develop plan for land use that gives a special status to valued culturally sensitive sites.
5. Public hearings, plan approval	Present plan to communities for approval, ensure it meets the goal they envisioned
6. Implementation	Put plan into action
7. Evaluation, monitoring.	Check to see if the culturally sensitive sites are being protected as envisioned by the community

1.4 On the Values Issue Vision Exercise

In order to understand more about Nemaska, and what issues and objectives matter most to Nemaska Crees, the Nemaska Commissioner for the Eeyou Planning Commission (EPC) worked with the EPC Secretariat to hold focus groups with community members. The objective of these focus groups was to gain a better understanding of what is valued by community members, what issues they see in relation to land use planning, and what is their vision for the future of their community. Different groups were targeted for input, including local government employees whose mandates touch land use planning (e.g. those who work in Environment, Economic Development, Cultural Development, etc.), as well as representatives of different demographic groups: women, Elders, youth, and land users. Members of these groups were invited to participate in focus groups, and the composition of these groups was mixed and determined mainly by the availability of participants. Several focus groups were held over three days in Nemaska.

In addition to the focus groups, the Commissioners and the Cree Nation Government held an Open House in Nemaska on August 16th 2017. At the Open House, community members had the opportunity to hear a presentation on land use planning, pick up pamphlets and information, and ask questions of the Commissioner and Cree Nation Government representatives. They also had the opportunity to give their own feedback on the values, issues and vision that matter most to them in relation to land use planning.

Comments and perspectives from participants were grouped into a table and then sorted by theme pertaining to values, issues and vision, these themes being described below. Participants are described as Nemaska Crees or Nemaska community members in the text, but as only a limited number of community members participated in the exercise, it should be understood that the views they describe and the themes discussed here are indicative of broader public opinion in Nemaska but not a definitive take on it. This document and the land use planning goals that emerge from it will continue to evolve along with the development of and dialogue within the community.

2. Values

When asked about what makes Nemaska and community lands unique and special, Nemaska community members speak of the location of the community in the middle of the Cree Nation territory, its relatively natural settings, deep historical roots, and vibrant Cree culture.

2.1 Beauty and character of community

The natural setting of the community, by the lake, with tree stands clusters, are valued by community members. In a sense, Nemaska feels less physically disconnected from its natural surrounding than some of the other communities.

“We are in the bush. We have trees in the community, it protects us from winter storms. In the winter, you open the door, there is a ptarmigan, even a caribou, blueberries. We have the boardwalk for walks outside the community.”

“It is clean, we have the annual clean-up, thanks to our members. Also, Nemaska is a beautiful community, we have a lots of compliments from visitors, like the preservation of trees. We have a well one hundred feet deep. We have clean quality of water. Still to this day we don’t put chlorine in the water. We have the system in case if there is an emergency.”

A related characteristic valued by the Nemaska Crees has to do with, as some put it, “being part of a small community, we are more tight knit”.

2.2 Old Nemaska

Nemaska Crees are proud of their community’s historical roots. Their connection to the past is in part embodied in the Old Nemaska site, the settlement on Nemaska Lake where they lived until the early 1970s.

“There is something about Nemaska that has a very rich history. We get a chance to go anytime we want, we get to see our Old Nemaska village, you can go in summertime or in the winter. It’s a privilege for us to be able to go see our second home, our old village. To go by vehicle and by boat. Old Nemaska, we are starting to look into planning, what we need there. A community hall, what kind of housing, sanitation.”

“The Old Nemaska, that is like going home to where our ancestors came from, going back to the steps of where they were, I don’t want anybody touching that, write that down.”

2.3 Hunting and living off the land

Nemaska Crees value their ability to maintain hunting and living off the land as a sustainable way of life. This entails access to healthy environments and the ability to “invest” in their future by ensuring that animals can multiply and grow.

“The way we take care of the land is like savings accounts and checking accounts. A long time ago, we would check out our trapline doing beaver surveys, and say: we are going to save these lodges for the winter. That’s how our people updated their bank account and decided how much to save for the winter and that’s how I helped people too, and told them where help was needed to hunt. They saved lodges at time not trapping for two or three years and the beaver would multiply so fast now, and that’s what you call a pension plan. That’s how Cree banking is done out on the land!”

Despite the challenges of life on the land, hunting is seen as something that can and reliably does sustain people, and, as some puts it, “lasts forever”.

“Back in the day then we were off to the land and with 50 lbs of flour and a little oil and sugar. I didn’t mind making the long travel and living off the land because this is the land that provided the majority of my life, I wasn’t worried about that I would run out of food because my way of living was strong. We had done this so many times and that’s how we survived we living off the land. We cannot submit our land

to the non natives we have to keep it and pass it down to the next generation to the next.”

Moreover, spending time on the land fosters health and strong relationships.

“Out on the land everyone hears what the nature lets them hear and we always have something to do out on the land, even spending true time with our children. Even children that’s how they first learn about what their parents do.”

2.4 Cree culture

“Nemaska is unique and special. I’m so glad that we still have our own culture, our own language too, and still to this day we still maintain and promote our Cree way of life. That’s one unique thing about it.”

Cree culture and language are central features of Nemaska life. It is essential that their teachings and posterity is taken in consideration when making decisions about the land and life on it.

“Follow in the culture, when it comes to making decision about the land, we need the land to teach the culture. There is so much you can do in the community itself, the culture and the land work hand in hand, you have to go outside. Hunting moose for instance.”

It is often emphasized that Cree culture is an occupation, something that is transmitted and realized through doing, as opposed to transmitted via abstract thought process.

“I have children I have taught about the land and grandchildren as well and whatever I have taught them it will be evident in their lives. Their friends will see it and will be curious about what they know. That’s how at times other youth have an interest about learning more about our way of life. When a child goes bird hunting that’s how they first learn and practice our way of living.”

Cultural programs in the community are designed to help expose youth to this cultural wealth and to provide them the skills to do maintain them.

“Beaver trapping, moose trapping, sturgeon smoking program, usually extend them for a couple of weeks, about 40 people, 13 and up,. We focus on the whole age category. The youth council organizes the canoe brigade and the journey. This past winter we worked together, from 13 and up. They have language there, it is all in Cree, there are words that you only hear out in the land, and there is no French there. Like me I still learn when I go there.”

2.5 A healthy environment

Given the importance, for Cree culture and community health, of respecting the animals and being out on the land, Nemaska Crees value the protection of their environment to ensure it stays healthy in the future.

“One important thing when making decisions is to keep in mind the environment, so that it stays the way it is.”

“My kids at times, when we are going out of town to buy groceries– they say the store is the bush! If people start hunting more and eating more traditional food, that’s how you save money as well. You see these restaurants they open long hours on week-ends, because it takes care of them when you look at that business it is run by the family, and when the owners retire the children will take over. It’s the same with land tallymanship, it is passed down to the families.”

3 Issues

Several issues in Nemaska centered on the design and location of the community, and the public safety risks that this could represent. That said, the majority of the feedback from Nemaska Crees expressed significant concern about the presence of non-Crees and proponents on the territory, and the impacts of their activities on the animals, the land, and the activities of the Crees. Underlying these concerns is a sense of lack of control, and a desire to reassert control over these activities to ensure they unfold in a way that minimizes impacts on the land and abides by Cree knowledge about the land.

3.1 Size and design of community

While Nemaska’s small size is appreciated, many feel that its location imposes constraints on its building development. As in all Cree communities, population growth is calling for additional construction of housing, as well as public and commercial amenities.

“I think also the problem with our community we are overcrowded in our houses, it becomes a social problem. We need to have more housing in our community.”

Because the community is surrounded by water bodies and semi-inundated lowlands--muskeg--such expansion is constrained.

“One of the constraints I see in the community, when you look at the landscape itself, you look at the dry areas, there is not many of them. There is more muskeg within

our peninsula. And our groundwater is high too, it comes up. The biggest constraint that we have is whenever we build a house, a basement, we have to take out the surface of the ground.”

The idea that the amount of available land for peoples activities ‘is shrinking’; that available space is diminishing over time has been mentioned about the greater area surrounding the community (due to industrial developments and profusion of non-Cree hunters). This metaphor is also used to talk about the spatial configuration of the community itself.

“Even in the community, we are shrinking, there are not many sites we can build our house...These organizations, CNG, the school board, they make their buildings, and us as a community it makes it difficult to find places to build our homes.”

Some have suggested that moving to, or more realistically, expanding toward, higher grounds to the northeast might help resolve this. The filling in of the wetland areas at the southeast end of the community with gravel or similar materials is also suggested.

3.2 Vulnerability to environmental hazards such as forest fires

Forest fire hazards are seen as increasing in frequency and intensity across the region. Fires have affected Nemaska, most recently in 2013, and most dramatically in 2001 when a state of emergency was declared and there was community evacuated; this has led some in Nemaska to call for greater preparedness in the face of such disasters.

“I guess, we are so vulnerable to forest fires, when you see out there all the trees, we are vulnerable. I don’t know how many evacuations we did since 1980. I don’t know if it’s worth it to build a buffer, or a wall. The forest fires, I think we need a centralized air base so we don’t have to necessarily evacuate our community. There was a forest fire this summer close to Waskaganish, by kilometer 24, right away they called the water bombers, and right away they came and it was put out rapidly

A related issue with design of the community has to do with its only one entrance for vehicle access, and the concerns this brings with regards to evacuation in case of emergency or disaster.

“I remember, when I was working for Nemaska development corporation, we were thinking about relocating the gas bar, concerned that it’s located near our entrance. If something were to happen, our entrance would be blocked. At the time an entrepreneur wanted to open another gas bar, it made us think, we should have thought of where we put it.”

Some have expressed reservation about the lack, or inadequacy, of emergency plans in case of disaster.

“I know Chisasibi has, if the dam should break, they have a place to evacuate. I think we are in the same situation, we are given I don’t know how many minutes we have to evacuate, and our evacuation site is on the mountain, we don’t have a plan in place on how to make that happen.”

3.3 Municipal infrastructure

In addition to challenges associated with the location and design of the community, some in Nemaska have pointed to elements of municipal infrastructure that could be re-thought or improved. These include paving the streets, issues with the sewer system.

“Another big issue is not just the community, but on the road, the dust is a health hazard. When it’s a really dry season, you can’t even go out and take you child on a walk, it’s pretty dangerous, especially with truck drivers, especially near the mine, it’s really bad...They have to put this stuff on the road, calcium, but it’s really expensive.”

“Does planning includes piping? We are having problems with the piping, the sewer. The alarm that goes on at the pump house, after that I see they open the fire hydrants, there is too much pressure, our toilet makes a sound. When I was in Council the issue was brought up, there is no inspector on site, the companies come in when it breaks or it floods, but there is no regular inspection.”

The location of the wastewater treatment pond, at the entrance of the community, has been mentioned as not ideal, and something that could have been avoided with more careful planning.

“Even the lagoon, it’s right at the entrance, it’s the first thing people see, people can smell, it’s not a pleasant smell. Whose idea was that?”

3.4 Living on the land: Access, knowledge and skills

The continuation of Cree occupation of hunting, fishing and trapping is one of the most valued things in Nemaska. One of the issue affecting this is that the passing of knowledge and skills to younger generations is less thorough than some would like.

“One thing I don’t like seeing in our Cree territory in teaching is the guides who were supposed to be teaching, they don’t really teach youth how to clean and prepare their kill. Yes, our people are taught to hunt but not how to clean or prepare their kill. When I was young I was taught, I saw my dad kill a moose many times and when I shot my first moose I was told you do everything and he just watched me. And after I was finished with everything also making fire and tea and cooking over the fire

that's when I was told when I completed everything that I graduated and can now hunt on my own."

3.5 Problems with non-Cree hunters

Related to the point above, access to the land is also restricted by the growing numbers of non-Cree hunters who travel to the area and do not respect Cree occupation and use of the land and do not respect the animals.

The most frequently mentioned issue on this topic is the safety concern caused by the activities of these non-Cree hunters who may not be experienced or careful, do as these please, and may be shooting at location where the Crees are.

"When I drive to old hunting road, I see all these non-natives, moose hunting. There is a lot of Cree people from Nemaska that go moose hunting in that area. Hunting where non-natives are hunting can be dangerous for us at time."

The second main problem arising from influx of non-Cree hunters in the area is that their practices are often incompatible with Cree commitment to respecting the animals and the land. This includes leaving litter and parts of the carcasses behind and not eating all parts of the animals. The non-Cree cultural practice of displaying moose heads in front of the vehicle is highlighted as particularly offensive.

"When they come into our territory, they do not have the same respect that we have the land. When they have caribou hunting excursion, you see guts and heads left in the bush, on the side of the road. For us the animals are very sacred that's what kept us alive back then, when we did not have stores. Them, they come and disrespect."

There is the perception that non-Cree hunters seem unaware of Cree hunting rights in category 3 lands, that they assume that Cree ways only need be respected in category 2 lands, where they have *exclusive* hunting rights.

"Realize that these people are our out on the land even in category 3, we have the right to hunt, but this kind of stuff, these hunters going everywhere restricts us."

3.6 Limited land user input in decision-making about the land

Nemaska Cree land users feel that their input is insufficiency considered and respected when decisions are made about what happens on the land. This includes a sense that wildlife management provisions are not respected and that monitoring of activities and access to outsiders is inadequate.

“We were given auxiliary badges as tallymen and we were told that if we say to non-natives you couldn’t enter here whether it be outfitters, forestry companies, exploration or mining but the badges don’t even work. Sometime I do not know what non-natives are doing in our lake, Lake Evans they have 3 planes and flying in and out. I was told it will be protected and still today I see mining prospectors and forestry companies. Some non-native hunters even go to the extent of telling Cree hunters: ‘we are hunting here, you cannot hunt in this area.’”

“I noticed that when you come to Chibougamau to Route du North there is no gate to ask you where are you going, as there is on the James Bay highway. No one knows who takes that road.”

Conversely, some report participation and consultation ‘fatigue’, which undermines the breadth of inputs in decision-making processes – especially since the results of the consultations do not always or clearly factor into those processes.

“I heard people have had enough of being interviewed; we had many gatherings where the people were asked their concerns or knowledge and we see the decline in participation of people for these meetings. You tallymen, many times you will hear non-natives will come knocking on your door and seeing interviews concerning development.”

“When hydro started to make the transmission lines, we were told ‘write down on a map where the moose is’. ‘We will avoid these areas’, they said, and when they reached my trapline to put up the transmission lines, that’s where they built them right where the moose were, they destroyed the food of the moose all around. They didn’t even use what I have written down on a map. I don’t think I’m the only one that has gone through this. The way they asked me is they want to avoid these areas and they food of the wildlife they wanted to know where the moose was flag it on the map, they said, and they disturbed those places anyways.”

3.7 Governance and relations with non-Crees

The issue of who makes decisions about the land, and whose input is taken into consideration often comes up as well. There are questions on how to carry out decision making in the patchwork of overlapping jurisdictions across James Bay, and how to work for best interest of all within it.

“The big issues on land we need to pay attention to is how to share the wealth of the land with Quebec. I guess those are the issues that we need to work with at the Eeyou Ischtee James Bay Regional Government. If we want to do a project that is in category 2 and 3 lands, who do we work with? For instance, a member was interested in having a skidoo trail for tourism, from Waskaganish to Nemaska,

which will cross over category 1, 2, and 3. How do we go about issues? Where do we get to obtain a permit to get that to that happen?"

"I heard a couple of people that their trapline is situated in category 3, with the forestry and enhancement fund, even to build a small bridge for their skidoo trails, they are asked to get a permit. It's just for their safety, because the ice is less predictable."

3.8 Impacts from Industrial Developments

Hydroelectric and mining developments, the construction and expansion of roads, and awareness of forest exploitation activities to the south combine for a perception of a degraded environment and that Cree occupation is constrained--the amount of available land is 'shrinking'.

"Little by little, our territory is shrinking, with forestry, the mine. That will take away our tradition as the land shrinks. This is how we have always lived. We have great respect for the land because it provides to us. It's who we are. The more projects that are coming in, it shrinks the territory."

In addition to this constraining effect, industrial development initiatives are seen with apprehension in the light of previous experience with other projects where land-users inputs were not, according to them, adequately taken into consideration.

"When the hydro substation was built here, we were not consulted on that. The tallyman of that area, that's where he used to set out its rabbit snares."

"When they come to tell me they will harvest timber in my area they already have decided where they are going to cut, they don't seek my approval on where they can harvest timber first before they start planning that's the way it always has been."

In addition to feeling that their input is insufficiently taken into consideration by developers, Nemaska Cree also have the impression that they are not provided all the information necessary to make a decision about these development.

"These companies that come into our territory, they don't really ask an tell how long will they be working on a certain project. These local workers get the information they don't tell us what is going on. And if they tell us they would know which areas are the most sensitive and we want to protect, but it's not like that."

Nemaska Crees take note of the impacts from projects as experienced in other communities--from forestry to the south and from hydroelectric diversion to the north--and they are apprehensive about such projects become more widespread in the territory.

“I went to a meeting in Chibougamau, for wildlife management. They were to update a document they made fifteen years ago. Then they asked to a Waswanipi tallyman where the animals are now, the tallyman said they’re all gone. I can’t tell you where my animals are, the bear dens, the beaver lodges, they are all gone. All the trees have been cut down. If you were here fifteen years ago I would have told you, but I can’t now.”

3.9 Changes in animals associated with environmental changes

Land users have reported changes in multiple animal populations: changes in appearance, taste, behavior. They attribute those to the various environmental transformations, including those resulting from industrial development in the region.

Populations of woodland caribou around Nemaska territory have been observed to respond negatively to forest cuts and forest fires.

“Now the migratory caribou that use to come here now we don’t see them anymore; the forest fire that happened in Eastmain and Wemindji affected them because they saw the result of the fire and couldn’t cross to come this way because they saw there was no food for them.”

Hydroelectric development is thought to have a particularly negative impact on a range of animals, including caribou, beaver and waterfowl.

“I found out that the beavers that are living under the power lines, the liver of the beaver has white spots. Maybe something is coming down from the power lines. For moose, something is growing in the gut that looks like round rocks. We can’t eat the liver when it’s like that. Others told me the exact same. The thing hydro said about the vegetation was ‘it will all grow back’, and they were right, but it’s the wildlife that are physically affected by it.”

“Sturgeons nowadays look different than they used to. They have big much bigger heads...On top the weir and downstream of the weir, it’s dry along the shore there, and I see the places where sturgeon food used to be are now bare and dry. It’s dry ground, and at the shore line it’s all hard clay, where their food doesn’t grow, so they cannot eat. These sturgeons are not as healthy as they used to be, and there is no fat in them...when you boil them, the water would turn a bit yellow that’s when you know a sturgeon is fat. My friend ate one of these fish, he just wanted to taste them, and after that he said ‘I think I feel sick’.”

“The river that was diverted, now the shore never gets cleansed because the flow is not at good as it used to be, it’s never strong enough. Also the geese food was there

along these shores, and the flow of water refreshed the grass, and now I don't see them anymore. We only see the geese along the roads eating berries."

3.10 Challenges to Cree-led economic development initiatives

The challenges of completing formal education, professional training and obtaining adequate certification to get employment is a commonly mentioned issue in Nemaska. This is especially challenging in the face of competition from non-Cree workers in James Bay region.

"Our youth have trouble in gaining jobs [you] need diplomas to get those jobs. I have a cousin that didn't finish school and I see his struggle. Even I graduated and I see the difference and I do believe non-native people have more jobs in our territory."

Some have expressed reservation about what the Income Security Program offers hunters who are ageing and might want to retire.

"You know the income security program they don't benefit from what other regular workers benefit from once they can no longer work or retire, which is the pension plan. If they had that benefit they would be able to benefit from the pension plan when they cannot go into the bush anymore."

4. Vision

"My aspiration for this community is, I love this community and my hope is that to grow and prosper, for our people to have a good education and a good life, good opportunities."

The vision Nemaska Crees shared for the future of their communities and lands describes a well-planned and designed community and a territory in which the Crees are active both in their traditional activities on the land, and in the governance and development of the the territory to ensure that these respect Cree values.

4.1 Amenities to foster a healthier community

Mirroring initiatives in other communities, some hope that Nemaska establishes amenities to provide active and healthy lifestyle among youth. This would include a sports complex and greater control of drugs and alcohol coming in the community.

"I know a lot of youth don't have jobs and don't go to school, and I don't like them not doing anything, and I want to start more programs and training to distract them or for them to have an interest on certain things. During the fitness challenge, we had a road block where we checked trucks to see if they are bringing alcohol into

the community. I liked seeing that and that should be done all the time. Also, they said when we had a youth center the crime rate and disturbance was very low, and that's what we are working on right now is having a youth administration building. You could say that's my vision to have an youth administration building."

4.2 Improved municipal infrastructure

When answering questions about vision for future of the community and their land, Nemaska Crees speak of improved infrastructure, starting with the paving of streets and roads.

"We hope for pavement for our roads and streets. Pavement around our community and all the way to the end of the road that meets the Route du Nord. We were told maybe three years from now we will have it; I hope it will be the case."

"I would like to see more landscaping in our community. Paved roads, pavement. Development the community on high lands. We would like to have our paved streets, a permanent bridge."

4.3 Priority of preserving Cree culture

Nemaska Crees' vision for life in the community and in surrounding lands call for measures and initiatives that will help foster the preservation of Cree culture.

"I think that's the future the community wants, to carry on that torch, with our Cree language and culture, that's what our people want."

"We had a moose hunting excursion, they had to take the kids on our trapline, I don't know how far it is from here, eight or nine hours, but that's where you need to go. We also need a cultural site that is accessible. When you notice the other communities, Mistissini, they have their cultural site. We have one here but it's the school board, so we can't really use it. The shaptwan is a bit too small, and Old Nemaska is not easily accessible. The shaptwan is pretty active, people go there a lot, to cook. Mostly in the wintertime, in the summertime it's barely used."

This includes pairing youth with Elders:

"We need to have more programs where Elders and youth work hand in hand. I have only one grandparent, and I always have a time to visit her and talk with her and sometimes I don't understand what she is saying, because these generations speak a bit different from us. I like hearing old stories and I want to know more about our history."

4.4 Professional training and Cree-led economic development

Many observe that meeting the goal of a prosperous Cree Nation and Nemaska community calls for youth's ability to graduate from high school and go on to get professional, Cegep, or University degrees.

"If we were to prosper, I think we need to encourage our youth to continue their education, to finish their secondary education, then go south to get post-secondary education."

"We do have people that have dropped out from school, and for them it's a lack of education. I would like to have here in Nemaska a training center. I would like to see our people have a training center for our youth. Probably like carpentry, home renovation, truck driving, heavy machinery driving, could be mining."

"I worked for the band for so long now and seeing the finance department all these years I have worked I have always seen a non-native working in finance for the band. I encourage you youth to really have Cree local workers to run the finance department."

4.5 Continuity of Cree Occupation of Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

Economic development and professional education are seen as necessarily grounded and combined with the continuity of traditional Cree occupation; the former must not be pursued in ways that would compromise the latter.

"I believe both cultures needs to be accepted in our Cree people: education in school and education in the Cree knowledge and Eeyou iitun, so they can see with both eyes. It is better to see through both eyes and not just one. With income security now, \$10,000 doesn't go a long way nowadays, but what the land that provides goes a long way."

Ensuring this continuity calls for measures similar to the the Weh-Sees Indohoun Special Fishing and Hunting Zone, the management plan that was established to maintain local access to fish and wildlife in the face of the influx of workers brought by construction of the Eastmain-1 and EM-1 and Sarcelle powerhouse. Some see that this plan--set to expire--should be instead extended and expanded to help face the influx of workers expected come with the new mineral exploitation developments.

"We are gonna have the mine here, Nemaska Lithium, also they are talking about the Rose mining project. I imagine there will be again an influx of workers coming this way. I don't know how we can go around the Quebec government to reactivate the Weh-Sees Indohoun management plan. I know the Cree Nation Government is

trying everything it can to uphold this protection, but the Quebec government says we are maintaining that until April 1 2018. That's part of the control and management of the area, they did hire somebody as an information officer, he or she is the one that gives the right of access as to who can hunt and fish in a given area. We go to abide a certain amount of fish that can be caught in a certain lake, and when that quota is reached the lake is closed. If they abolish that it will be free-for-all and we won't be able to continue hunting and fishing."

This vision calls for constraints on the impacts from industrial development.

"Projects need to be limited in how they are doing. It seems it has become all about money. But, where does our culture fit in. I know we have to make a living. But, for me, the vision I have for the future is for us to keep our culture. Where we cannot have too many projects coming in, taking over our land. How would it be if you cannot go out on the land, it's peaceful there, even cell phones don't work there, for me, where we live, I don't allow, my son's getting a satellite TV, my husband too, I don't want that there."

4.6 Cree governance: accountable and forward looking

The Cree Nation land use planning process is seen as something that will provide a solid foundation for improved governance on the territory.

"The land use plan will be a good decision making tool for the community, we are tackling something that will help Nemaska people."

Cree knowledge is seen as the necessary foundation of such planning, as the original expertise.

"We are writing down how we Cree see our territory. When we built our access road there was an area, if we put rocks and gravels in that area, there is so much water, when you put that the trees in that area will die. That's how us Cree we really have a knowledge of what happen in our habitat."

The importance of effective and transparent communication and reliable information has been highlighted as the basis of sound decision-making.

"There has to be a proper communication procedure. How are we gonna share this information to our people, the stakeholders, the tallyman, also the chief and council? I think what we need is people engaged as communication officers, or even liaison officers."

"Depending on the scale of the involvement or project, maybe the tallyman can make a decision. In a large scale project, it is something that we need to decide collectively"

to decide if its socially acceptable. If we want to have a sound or better consultation we need to consent our people, what we think of your development or projects that come into our territory.”

4.7 Environmental protection and conservation

Ensuring the respect of the the Nemaska Cree Values identified above call for effective measures to protect Eeyou Istchee ecosystems from industrial development.

“In terms of environment versus development, we have to find a balance. There is another way they use, harmonization. When we say environment versus development, we have to find ways of minimizing that impact.”

There is widespread enthusiasm about the possibility of protected areas in the area, especially Lake Evans, the Broadback River watershed and Old Nemaska.

“We do have a Nemaska proposal on the protected areas. We are included in the conservation plan within the Broadback River. Our Nemaska proposal on protected area covers half of Lake Evans area and goes straight up to Old Nemaska site. Also, as you know, Ouje Bougoumou they now have a recognized park, Assinica park, we did work with OJ on that, and we have the end-tail part of the park, and it is within the trapline of Isaiah Jolly on the Broadback River. We do have a little part of the park.”

Improved monitoring of hunting and fishing activities on the land calls for more wildlife officers. Nemaska Crees would like to see more Eeyou wildlife officers occupying this role, which would also provide career opportunities in the communities.

“I would like to see too a better monitoring of the territory. We have an absence of wildlife officers, I would like to see more of them. That’s another training and job opportunities.”

5 Conclusion

The values, issues and vision described by Nemaska Crees focused on a handful of main topics. These topics and related descriptions, as seen below, broadly describe some of the main goals and considerations for a Nemaska land use planning process:

Topics	Description
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Community infrastructure	Make improvements to community infrastructure (gas stations, lagoons, roads etc.) to improve public health and safety
Community development	Preserve the heritage of Nemaska while providing opportunities for youth and others to engage in social, economic and educational development
Cree culture	Ensure Cree culture is effectively passed on to future generations, in part by limiting the amount of (industrial development) projects on the territory
Cree-led development	See that Nemaska Crees take a stronger role in leading and managing development on their territory, to maximize benefits while minimizing damage to Cree land and way of life
Governance	Improve communication procedures and integration of land users into decision-making
Environmental protection	Ensure that key areas for Nemaska are protected (existing proposals include Broadback river, lake Evans), including old Nemaska
Environmental monitoring	Improve monitoring, in part through increasing the number of wildlife offices on the territory
Old Nemaska	Preserve the Old Nemaska site and improve infrastructure there
Non-Cree hunters	Educate non-Cree hunters on Cree rights and hunting practices, and ensure these rights and practices are respected
Relationships with non-Crees	Work better with non-Crees to limit non-Cree occupation on the territory and advance projects of common interest
Hydroelectric development	Limit impacts of existing hydroelectric development and force Hydro to take existing Cree land uses better into account