

## **A Conversation to Set Goals for Land Use Planning**

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

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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**. Nemaska's representatives to the EPC are:

- **Matthew Tanoush**, Commissioner
- **Rose Wapachee**, Alternate

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

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



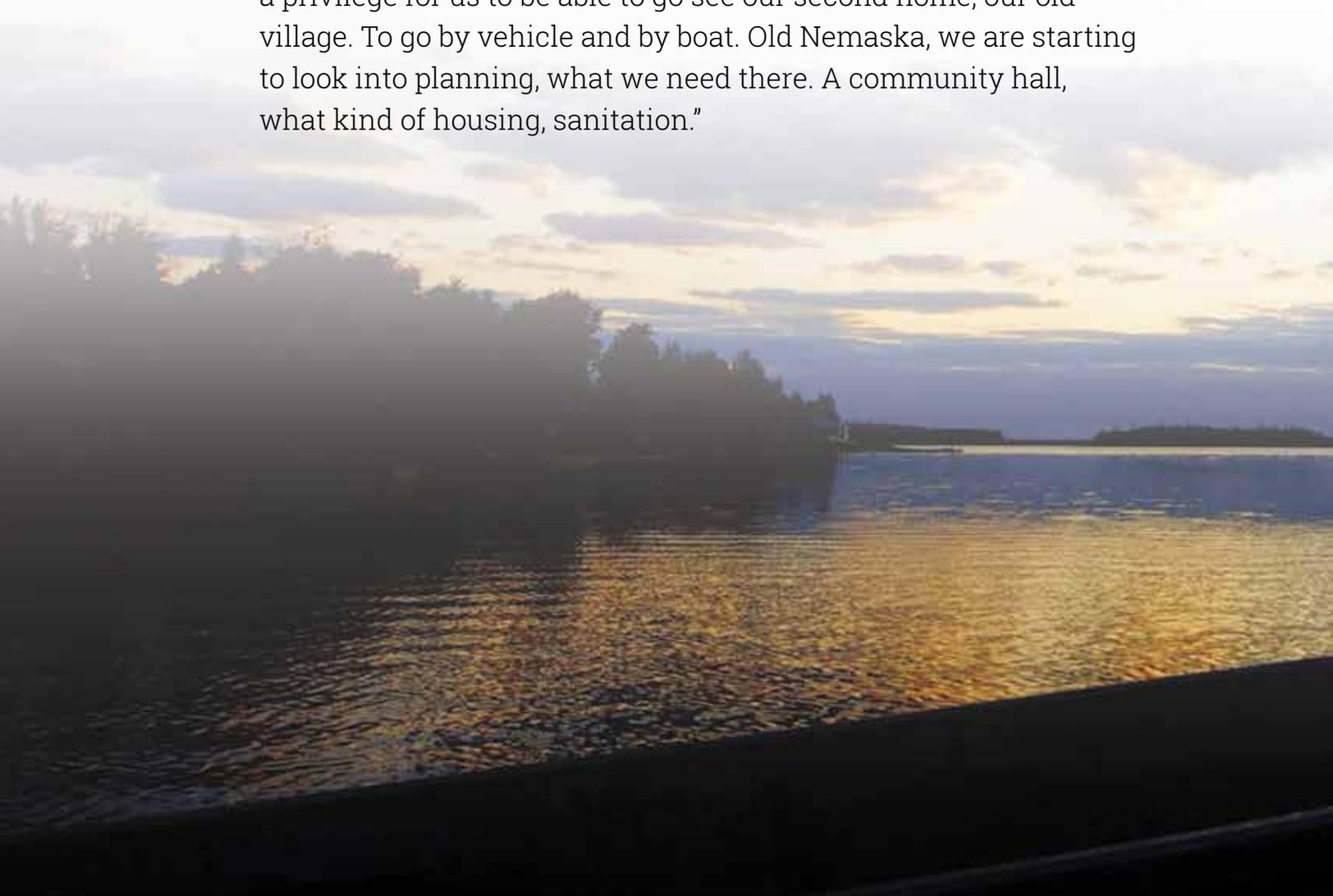
## WHAT DO NEMASKA CREES VALUE MOST IN THEIR LANDS?

### Beauty and Character of Community

“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.”

### Old Nemaska

“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.”



## Hunting and Living Off the Land

“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!**”

## 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.”

## A Healthy Environment

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



# WHAT ARE THE ISSUES THAT NEMASKA CREES ARE FACING ON THEIR LANDS?

## Size and Design of Community

“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.”

## Vulnerability to Environmental Hazards such as Forest Fires

“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.”

## Municipal Infrastructure

“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.”

## Living on the Land: Access, Knowledge and Skills

“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.”

## Problems with Non-Cree Hunters

“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 times.”

## Challenges to Cree-led Economic Development Initiatives

“**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.”

## Impacts from Industrial Developments

“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.”

## Limited Land User Input in Decision-Making About the Land

“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.”

## Governance and Relations with Non-Crees

“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 Istchee James Bay Regional Government.** If we want to do a project that is in Category II and III 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 I, II, and III. How do we go about issues? Where do we get to obtain a permit to get that to that happen?”

## Changes in Animals Associated with Environmental Changes

“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.**”

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

### Amenities to Foster a Healthier 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 in certain things...**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 a youth administration building.**"

### Improved Municipal Infrastructure

"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."

### Priority of Preserving 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."





## Professional Training and Cree-Led Economic Development

"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."

## Continuity of Cree Occupation and Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

"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."

## Environmental Protection and Conservation

"We do have a Nemaska proposal on the protected areas. We are included in the conservation plan within the Broadback River. **Our Nemaska protected area proposal 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."

## Cree Governance: Accountable and Forward Looking

"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."

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

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**PLEASE CONTACT**

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

