

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

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

OUJE-BOUGOUMOU

**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 Ouje-Bougoumou 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 Ouje-Bougoumou representatives to the Eeyou Planning Commission are:

- Norman Wapachee, Commissioner
- Arthur Bosum, 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 Ouje-Bougoumou 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 Ouje-Bougoumou, and what issues and objectives matter most to Ouje-Bougoumou Crees, the Ouje-Bougoumou Commissioner and Alternate 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 Ouje-Bougoumou.

In addition to the focus groups, the Commissioners and the Cree Nation Government held an Open House in Ouje-Bougoumou on March 21st 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 Ouje-Bougoumou Crees or Ouje-Bougoumou 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 Ouje-Bougoumou 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. What is Valued

Ouje-Bougoumou Crees strongly value their lands and culture, and they place great importance on their identity developed through decades of struggles. While non-Crees and non-Cree-led economic development have been the source of a great many of those struggles, Ouje-Bougoumou Crees still value their relationships with non-Crees and the opportunities these relationships represent to improve the well-being of Ouje-Bougoumou. Rather than completely turning against economic development, the Ouje-Bougoumou Crees who participated in this land use planning exercise were shrewd pragmatists, eager to get educated, informed and involved in the future of their territory, drawing from their traditional knowledge and other ways of knowing to protect and promote those parts of their territory, culture and community that they value most.

2.1 Community history and identity

“I like the planning of Ouje-Bougoumou, the circle in town represents how we should be living, it represents a value, a reciprocal relationship. Elders helped with planning of the community, original houses faced East because Elders said traditionally houses face East, that’s who we are as Eenou. That brought a sense of pride to the community.”

The Crees of Ouje-Bougoumou have a strong sense of their own identity that was developed through a decades-long struggle for recognition. Having always hunted the southern part of the Cree territory, they were displaced by mining and the development of Chibougamau, and mistaken for Mistissini Eenou because they traded at the Mistissini Post for years. The current location of Ouje-Bougoumou was selected through years of collective discussion that became a community vision, which became a reality in the 1990’s, complete with unique, beautiful, prize-winning architecture. Though a small community, the decades of successfully overcoming challenges has given Ouje-Bougoumou important self-knowledge and self-confidence as a community.

2.2 Ouje-Bougoumou lands

“Our identity is tied to the land. When the Elders talk about the land they always refer to it with so much respect, you can sense they still have that relationship, mother-child relationship with the land. When you talk to the Elders, it’s the land they want to hold on to, that traditional way of life.”

The Ouje-Bougoumou Cree connection to their land is powerful and sustaining, undimmed by years of displacement and development impacts. Respect for the land is an undercurrent in Ouje-Bougoumou Cree thought and action, connected to the belief that the land takes care of the Cree people and historically always has. Spending time in the bush hunting, fishing and trapping is a means of recharging, of reconnecting to culture and land, and knowledge of the land is very highly valued.

2.3 Proactive approach to economic development

“We’re...the doorway of economic development of the north. I think the Crees of the Southern communities are the doorways to this kind of development. We have our hand on the doorknob”

“We’re a community that’s very innovative. For example our heating, we convert industry’s waste into energy. That’s something we continue doing.”

More than many other communities, Ouje-Bougoumou Crees have been on the front lines of economic development in Eeyou Istchee. This is the role that is embraced by some, who see in this the opportunity not just to be passive recipients of development but to play a pro-active role in what happens on their land and even be a role model in this respect. A good example of this is the town’s central heating system, which is fueled by industrial waste. Its location in proximity to two non-Cree communities and in the midst of natural resource development present it with many opportunities to strive for innovative development that is successful economically and environmentally.

2.4 Opportunities to work with non-Crees

“We are very close to the French communities, unlike other Cree communities, We have the opportunity to development with them in partnerships, good opportunity to teach them Cree and English.”

Ouje-Bougoumou is located more or less between Chibougamau and Chapais, two communities that are largely non-Cree. Being close to Chibougamau and Chapais presents opportunities for collaboration and partnership that aren’t as available elsewhere. Ouje-Bougoumou community members display a unique willingness to take advantage of these opportunities in order to advance developments and projects of mutual interest but also to build bridges with non-Crees.

According to Ouje-Bougoumou community members, their youth is majority trilingual and well-situated to succeed in the context of this kind of collaboration.

2.5 Cree culture

“Youth still maintain stories the Elders used to tell. Even though our Chief and Council are very young, you can see by the way that they govern, they still hold on to a lot of the past.”

Linked with a solid sense of community identity and powerful connection to the land is a strong sense of cultural identity. Ouje-Bougoumou community members value their cultural traditions and practices, including hunting fishing and trapping and other activities on or relating to the land, e.g. traditional preservation methods for game animals. The teachings and stories from Elders are important aspects of Cree culture that are often discussed and which people strive to pass on to the next generations. The culture is not just skills or knowledge but a belief system and way of being in the world and on the land that is at the heart of being Cree.

2.6 Assinica

“In the 90s when selecting a site for Ouje-Bougoumou, the Elders chose Opemiska because the economic development opportunities in Chibougamau and Chapais would be fewer, but also because the whole area north of Opemiska is untouched, and we wanted to focus on that (e.g. creating of Assinica)”

The creation of the Assinica Park, located north of the community of Ouje-Bougoumou, has its roots in the collective discussion that created the current community. The Crees of Ouje-Bougoumou wanted to protect a significant part of its land base that was as yet relatively free from the impacts of mining and forestry. Since there had been so many impacts in the southern part of its territory, Ouje-Bougoumou turned to the north to create such protection and located itself on the doorstep. The Assinica Park is highly valued not just by the families who have traditionally hunted there, but by an entire community which sought to protect a swathe of the land valued by all.

3. Challenges that Ouje-Bougoumou Faces

Ouje-Bougoumou Crees have faced many challenges in the past and indeed, many in the present as well. These center on two main topics: first, the governance of the land through the trapline system and the rights and responsibilities of tallymen, community members and local governments within that system have become somewhat controversial. This results in very uneven access to the land for different community members, especially as development impacts reduce the land base of certain traplines while others remain intact. On the other hand, tallymen and land users seem equally uncertain of how much they can protect the land in their current role,

and all seem fearful that a breakdown in local governance could enhance overharvesting. The second main topic – more self-explanatory – is the development impacts themselves, brought on mainly by mining, forestry, and the related intensive non-Cree presence and occupation of the territory. There is great concern that these impacts are diminishing the quantity and quality of habitat available to animals, especially through contamination of water and fish populations.

3.1 Impacts of forestry

“If industry happens, restoration of habitat should always be done, so it’s like it was before...If we don’t restore their habitat, it affects animals and what they eat. I’ve been to several assemblies where Elders say trees replanted after forestry is not the same as natural, that affects food cycle for animals, you see a change in animals. We have to be mindful of these three things to ensure sustainability of each one, because every one is interrelated, intertwined.”

“I remember being young, seeing those trucks full of trees, it scares me, I always think of that and all the trees that are gone.”

Forestry activities have affected a very large proportion of Ouje-Bougoumou’s lands, bringing with it a host of impacts that community members continue to live with. One of the most frequent complaints relates to the trees replanted after a cut, as jack pine is often replanted where black spruce was harvested, significantly changing the composition of the forest in a way that is detrimental to its habitat value. The impacts of forestry on water and fish habitat is also of concern. All of this serves to limit where and how much a hunter can harvest from a given trapline.

3.2 Impacts of mining

“Mining left a big sludge of chemicals in lake Chibougamau. Companies leave all their garbage, all their stuff there.”

“Water quality on Dory Lac is affecting other places. The water flows there and goes to Waswanapi. The impact of the mining industry and their discarding of their waste is a preoccupation. This is dangerous for Waswanapi and Oujé-Bougoumou.”

Like forestry, mining has had significant impacts on Ouje-Bougoumou territory. Many old mine sites or mining exploration sites have been abandoned on the territory, the worst example being the Principale site. The Chibougamau area, which is also the site of several previous locations of the Ouje-Bougoumou community, was heavily affected by mining activities. There remains great concern about the contamination risks these sites represent, and about how future mining projects might impact Ouje-Bougoumou lands.

3.3 Health of water

“The...big issue I see is water in relation to food, how to keep water good enough that the food (fish) can be taken from it.”

“Development never took into account Cree concerns and Cree interests. They just clearcut family traplines and impacted our water, fish that we depend on.”

Drinking water and fish are critical resources for anyone living off the land. The concern Ouje-Bougoumou Crees have about water stems from the impacts of natural resource development, particularly forestry and mining. Whereas many water bodies were once considered safe sources of clean drinking water and fish, the impacts of natural resource development have in many cases diminished water quality and sparked health concerns amongst the Crees – particularly though not exclusively in the area around Chibougamau. There is a desire to see water quality monitored to ensure it is clean and safe despite development.

3.4 Access to traplines

“There are a lot of projects on those traplines, the families really see the impacts. That’s why it’s important for me...to look at [those traplines], they don’t really have a place to go hunting now. If cat 2 land was opened up, maybe give the opportunity to those trappers to use other parts of the territory.”

“That’s why with the Assinica park project, I was disappointed with Quebec that they consulted only with impacted tallymen. From the start Assinica was a community project not just a tallyman project. The southern and middle part of traditional territory is developed, Lac Dore fish are really contaminated. That’s why I think on category 2 lands hunters and trappers should share those resources. If someone were to go there now, in Assinica, they would be told to go back to their territories.”

Access to traplines is changing as a result of a few different factors, related to development and possible Cree cultural change. Crees of generations past tended to move freely between traplines rather than being tied to one trapline, such that through relationships between families people ended up using all of Ouje-Bougoumou territory. In recent decades, traplines have tended to be seen as more narrowly associated with specific families and even family members, who could regulate and in some cases restrict access to traplines. This can create uneven access to the land, because some community members do not know someone who is willing to allow them onto their trapline, or some families are confined to traplines that have been very severely impacted by development and of which only a fraction remains available for harvesting.

The issue of access to traplines is closely related to the governance of traplines, which will be discussed below.

3.5 The trapline system

“A long time ago there was no trapline system, people shared their land. Used to be no one would be hungry because we would share. Now we sign agreements with governments, adopt this way of using boundaries (which causes disputes).”

“Our way of looking at our traditional land is changing. Youth don't see trapline boundaries the way we used to because of access roads and communication, older people are very connected to individual traplines but youth may know more about the whole territory than a single trapline.”

The governance of traplines is an issue that arose a lot in the interviews, closely related to the role of the tallyman discussed below. Some people feel that the trapline system with which tallymen are now associated is something artificial inherited from the beaver preserve days, and that the adoption of this system has recently served to create a lot of conflict in the Cree world. In addition, thanks to improved road access to the traplines, youth are now coming full circle back to the perspective of generations past on the land. That is to say, their connection to the land is increasingly to the whole of Ouje-Bougoumou territory and not only to specific traplines. All of this signals an interest in revisiting the governance of the land through the trapline system.

3.6 Role of tallymen

“A lot of tallymen are not the guys that were around in 1974, those guys were illiterate, really hunters and trappers out on the land. Now our tallymen are literate, speak French, they have the capacity to manage their traplines in a way that they could promote a partnership with other people. Who else could protect their land as well? Now these tallymen are educated and knowledgeable but they have limitations, they're not given extra responsibilities that would allow them to take care of the land more.”

“Tallymen are really caretakers of the land. In the past, Elders held a lot of strong teachings on what it means to be caretakers of the land. Not just for tallymen, we forget what that means. Even tallymen are so preoccupied, they forget. With that privilege, you have that big responsibility. There are a lot of things that take over, there's so much pressure, it's overwhelming for them, to a point that some of them will just allow things. All I'm saying is caretakers have a big privilege, that needs to be shared in the family, with women, with other family members capable of being land users, to help with the caretaking.”

There was considerable debate in Ouje-Bougoumou over the role of the tallyman and the nature and limits of his/her authority over a trapline. Some people took issue with the tallyman having too many powers, including sometimes being the sole person benefitting from funds and resources related to the trapline, and felt that these powers and related resources should be more

widely shared. Others felt that tallymen do not have enough authority over their traplines, particularly vis-à-vis other levels of government, when it comes to decision-making especially relating to major resource development projects. This contrast signals the need for discussion of this topic, closely related to the access to traplines and the trapline system itself.

3.7 Non-Crees occupation of the territory

“It used to be so hard to get food, when non-Cree came in the area they'd disrupt sensitive habitat areas and the animals wouldn't come back.”

“There is a competition here, between Ouje-Bougoumou, Chibougamau, Chapais, for them hunting fishing is sport, for us its consumption. My father goes out and the whole family eats the beaver. My mother and sister fix the hide themselves and use it themselves.”

The presence of non-Crees who are active on the land, especially hunting trapping and fishing, is problematic for Crees in many ways. To be clear, the issue from the Cree perspective isn't an unwillingness to share the land, but more that non-Cree activities and behaviours can negatively impact the Cree way of life including hunting fishing and trapping. Sometimes non-Crees, likely by accident, disrupt habitats that Crees recognize as sensitive, or overharvest in certain areas (especially related to overfishing certain lakes), which results in less game. They also embrace a different ethic than the Crees when it comes to hunting fishing and trapping, treating these activities as a sport whereas for Crees they are deeply rooted in a sacred connection to the land. Finally, at times they actively prevent Crees from accessing their harvesting areas by putting up chains or barriers, by being reckless with vehicles or firearms, or by confronting Crees.

3.8 Non-Cree community expansion

“Chibougamau, Chapais, their expansion needs to be controlled. An agreement needs to be worked out so our tallymen can maintain control over their lands and families. This is where it comes from, where does respect come from? For me I look at education system, they're unilingual. Our kids are trilingual. Our kids learn faster than their teachers. If development of Chapais and Chibougamau continues, tallymen and their kids will ask, who is in control of land.”

“Our relationship with our land needs to be recognized. Our land isn't just cat 1, 2, 3, it's the whole thing. And if Chapais and Chibougamau continue to expand, we're going to continue losing what it feels to have a clear relationship to your land, because you're not in control, economics is in control. If you don't want to have an identity crisis, you need to maintain that language, control.”

Several years ago, Chibougamau successfully expanded their municipal territory to encompass a large rectangular area taking in much of lake Chibougamau and an important proportion of

several Ouje-Bougoumou traplines. Recently Chibougamau has attempted to double down on this expansion by exerting certain planning powers and attempting to regulate Cree activities – particularly occupation (i.e. cabins) – in its territory. This is very worrisome for Ouje-Bougoumou community members, who see this as an attempt to gain control over their traplines by privileging municipal rights over Cree rights. Ouje-Bougoumou and Chibougamau are currently engaged in talks over these matters in the hope of coming up with a resolution.

3.9 Cultural loss

“Bringing back identity, a lot of youth today are losing that, we need to bring back teachings of Elders. We talk about tradition, but a lot of us don’t even know, what is our tradition? The way we hunt, trap has changed. Livelihood used to be more out on the land, now it’s changing. What are the changes? Need to identify them, what our expectations are in terms of employment, seek balance.”

“Our language, tradition, customs are based on land use. If we want to maintain tradition, language, culture, customs, still in 2050, the youth and everyone else needs to realize that language is based on land.”

“My father was walking with prospectors in the "middle of nowhere", and recognized a place he shot a stump 20 years ago, and pulled the shell out of the stump to prove it. I don't know that land as well as he did, the next generation won't know it as well either.”

“Crees need to keep alive traditional skills with respect to food, e.g. smoking fish. That knowledge is being lost. The old methods of preserving meat aren't being used anymore and it's causing waste.”

In Ouje-Bougoumou as in many Cree communities, there is a deep concern about the rate at which Cree knowledge and culture is being lost. Cree culture exists mainly in life on the land and the language, ethics and activities that entails. The less time people spend on the land due to schooling, employment, access or other reasons, the less able they are to develop themselves culturally, which results in loss of culture. As one participant noted above, there is a need to discuss culture loss, the barriers to acquiring Cree cultural knowledge and skills, and come up with a strategy to ensure the culture lives on.

3.10 Overharvesting

“There was a lot of game back them, not too much was killed, just what was needed. There is over-harvesting today.”

“Overharvesting is a big concern. I survey the animals I hunt and trap, tally and give the numbers to CTA. All trappers should do this, but it's not being done, and this could impact future generations.”

As hunting has become, in some respects, easier due to a widespread road network and motorized vehicles, concern about the Cree rate of harvesting has been increasing. As Ouje-Bougoumou community members pointed out there are very few limitations to Cree hunting, and very little monitoring apart from the Cree Trapper's Association's surveys. In this context of easier hunting and few restrictions, there is fear that some animals may be overharvested, or some individuals overharvesting. How overharvesting is defined is an open question (how much is too much?), but underlying it all is a fear that the animals people are hunting, fishing and trapping today won't be around for future generations.

4. Elements of an Ouje-Bougoumou Vision for the Future

At the heart of what Ouje-Bougoumou Crees want for the future of their lands is to have a larger role in the governance of the territory, and thus more influence in determining what areas are protected and which are developed – and how they are developed. The expectation is that this greater role will help re-establish a balance between protection and development that is more compatible with the Cree way of life than the current balance. Alongside this, Ouje-Bougoumou Crees wish to reassess the trapline system, to bring it more in line with the current realities the community is facing.

4.1 Environmental protection

“We should leave as much as possible for our grandkids, before it is all gone. Keep things intact as possible and enable hunting for our grandkids.”

“Make the land like a national park, but ‘our park’.”

“It's important that our grandkids go to school and have opportunities for employment in communities but also follow traditional way of life, work with Cree Nation Government and Quebec to ensure these lands are protected.”

The conservation of the land and its resources is a priority for Ouje-Bougoumou community members, as manifested amongst other things by their strong support for the Assinica protected area. There is a sense that Ouje-Bougoumou lands are under threat and that their integrity needs to be maintained for future generations, so that they will be able to practice their culture.

4.2 Cree-led development

“We have to voice our concerns, our knowledge, our philosophy, impose it. We need to develop the land ourselves in our philosophy.”

“We should do baseline studies, identify parts of the land to do our own studies, find out natural state of that land. So when development comes in, we know what the natural state of it is, and if they do their restoration plan, we can say this is how it was, and this is how it should be.”

“Making our own long term plans is the best way, that’s how we’re going to know what responsibilities we have, and resources in terms of employment, resource development, protection.”

Ouje-Bougoumou has been very much involved with different forms of natural resource development in the past decades, and with that experience comes a certain clarity about the direction in which they want to steer development. Ouje-Bougoumou community members understand that people need opportunities for employment and that some resources may need to be developed, but they are determined that this be done in a way that fully acknowledges, accounts for and remediates its impacts. Baseline studies emerged as an important tool needed to assess the current state of a trapline and provide a model to which remediation measures post-development should aspire.

4.3 Better forestry and mining practices

“Try to keep things as intact as possible; less forestry activities should go on around hunting areas.”

“So if a mine comes, when it runs out, put it back the way it was.”

“Monitor our waters for contamination.”

Ouje-Bougoumou community members often emphasized they are not against natural resource development, but they are against development practices that do not prioritize the long-term health of the land or the Cree way of life. Their goals relative to the forestry and mining industries reflect this – they are not opposed to forestry and mining as long as these are done with Cree consent, don’t or minimally disrupt Cree activities on the land, are carefully monitored to assess and remediate impacts, and commit to the complete restoration of the impacted areas.

4.4 Larger role in governance

“Our ancestors lived and occupied the territory, managed resources very well, mining and forestry threw off the balance that our ancestors had back then. We felt the impacts when we had to relocate our villages several times. Now we are taking

back what was taken away by Quebec and Federal governments, the right to manage resources as we see fit, the opportunity to recreate balance between environment and development which will address the social issues.”

“Our population is growing, it means we will need to use our lands more and more. Our people are getting more educated as well. Before it was harder to get involved in business because people weren’t well educated. Now we have youth coming out of college and university that can say now this is how we want to develop our lands.”

Ouje-Bougoumou community members feel that to a large extent they were sidelined for a long time from decision-making about their traditional lands. However the agreements the Grand Council and Cree local governments have signed in addition to the higher levels of education of Ouje-Bougoumou Cree youth are providing opportunities to be more involved and more influential in the governance of their territory. This greater control over the fate of Ouje-Bougoumou lands is seen as positive not only environmentally (more ability to protect critical areas) and economically (more opportunities for economic growth and employment), but perhaps most of all socially. A lack of balance between environment and development, as manifested in economic development projects that lacked appropriate consideration and respect for the land, has hurt the morale and the social fabric of the community. Greater powers of governance give the Ouje-Bougoumou Crees tools that can restore that balance to a degree that it is believed would heal some of the social ills that have plagued the community.

4.5 Ensuring a resilient Cree culture

“Hunting trapping and fishing – we need to hold onto that way of life.”

“Make sure the Elders share with the Youth their stories of how well they know the land, when you do that, you will rekindle something in their minds and hearts, and get a response towards what we want, protection of these lands.”

“Cree language – we have to keep it alive.”

“Teaching youth the old ways of keeping food.”

Ouje-Bougoumou community members clearly value their culture and are concerned about it potentially being negatively impacted by development and social change. For this reason, an important objective stated by Ouje-Bougoumou community members was to ensure the continuity and thriving of Cree culture. This is a multi-faceted objective, which includes keeping the Cree language strong, learning the knowledge, stories and skills of the Elders, and continuing hunting trapping and fishing – all of these in turn require spending time on the land to be fully realized.

4.6 Regulation of harvesting

“Overharvesting - if we keep doing this there will be nothing left. We need a bylaw to regulate it.”

“One of the most important things is how you treat the animal on a yearly basis. One of the things I tend to see is there is no limit...we have to limit sometimes how much we can kill a game. If we overdo it, the Elders will sometimes try to make us limit the game so we can prosper more over the year, or years. We're not the only ones that eat, animals eat each other too. Elders know when the time is good to have these limits on game. To me it is important.”

A number of Ouje-Bougoumou Crees are seeking a way of dealing with harvesting rates that are perceived to be unsustainable. Different means or combinations of means have been proposed to address this situation, including bylaws, monitoring of the numbers of harvested animals, and self-restraint. Collaboration with other Cree communities and with non-Crees may be necessary in this area as well to ensure that any regulatory measures the Ouje-Bougoumou Crees put into place are not undone by the actions of their neighbors.

4.7 Reform of traplines

“Times are changing, people are changing, youth are changing, and since we live in a democratic society community can benefit more than individual, maybe something you can consider is look at outside boundary, because minds of youth are changing, they could easily say this tallyman gets 35000 from Niskamoon, from CTA, from forestry, multiply 35000 by 14, instead of one tallyman benefitting from that, why shouldn't the whole community benefit?”

This is perhaps the most clear and most controversial objective put forward by Ouje-Bougoumou Crees. As illustrated in above sections, most of the people who participated in this exercise seemed to agree that traplines as a governance structure needs to be revised in order to ensure that community needs have real weight in decision-making alongside the tallyman's needs. However, some others were of the opinion that the importance of traplines, and specifically tallyman's rights over traplines, should be further emphasized. Both perspectives point to a need for a community conversation about the role of traplines and rights of all trapline users and community members.

5. Conclusion

The values, issues and vision described by Ouje-Bougoumou 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 an Ouje-Bougoumou land use planning process:

Topics	Description
Cree-led development	Take charge in carrying out development that is in harmony with Cree values, e.g. through effective planning and having good information on the state of the territory for baselines etc.
Environmental protection	Protect Ouje-Bougoumou lands, to ensure that it is as intact as possible for future generations to continue Cree way of life
Water	Take special care to ensure that water resources are well protected, managed and rehabilitated as needed
Relationships with non-Crees	Take advantage of position of Ouje-Bougoumou to capitalize on positive relationships with non-Crees
Cree culture	Ensure the transmission of Cree culture and language to future generations, including skills, stories, etc.
Forestry	Reduce forestry and improve forestry management practices to bring them more in line with Cree values
Mining	Ensure that mining in Cree territory is done in a way that protects land and water as much as needed for Cree way of life to continue
Non-Cree community expansion	Act on the continuing efforts of non-Cree communities to expand their territories and powers in order to protect Cree rights
Non-Cree occupation	Work with non-Cree population to ensure they respect sensitive areas, Cree rights and practices on the land
Trapline system	Revise the trapline system to address concerns about traditional governance, access to the land and the role of the tallyman
Harvesting	Regulate Cree and non-Cree harvesting to protect the sustainability of animal populations
Governance	Strengthen the role of Ouje-Bougoumou and Crees in general in the governance of their territory for better resource management and balance between environment and development

