

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.



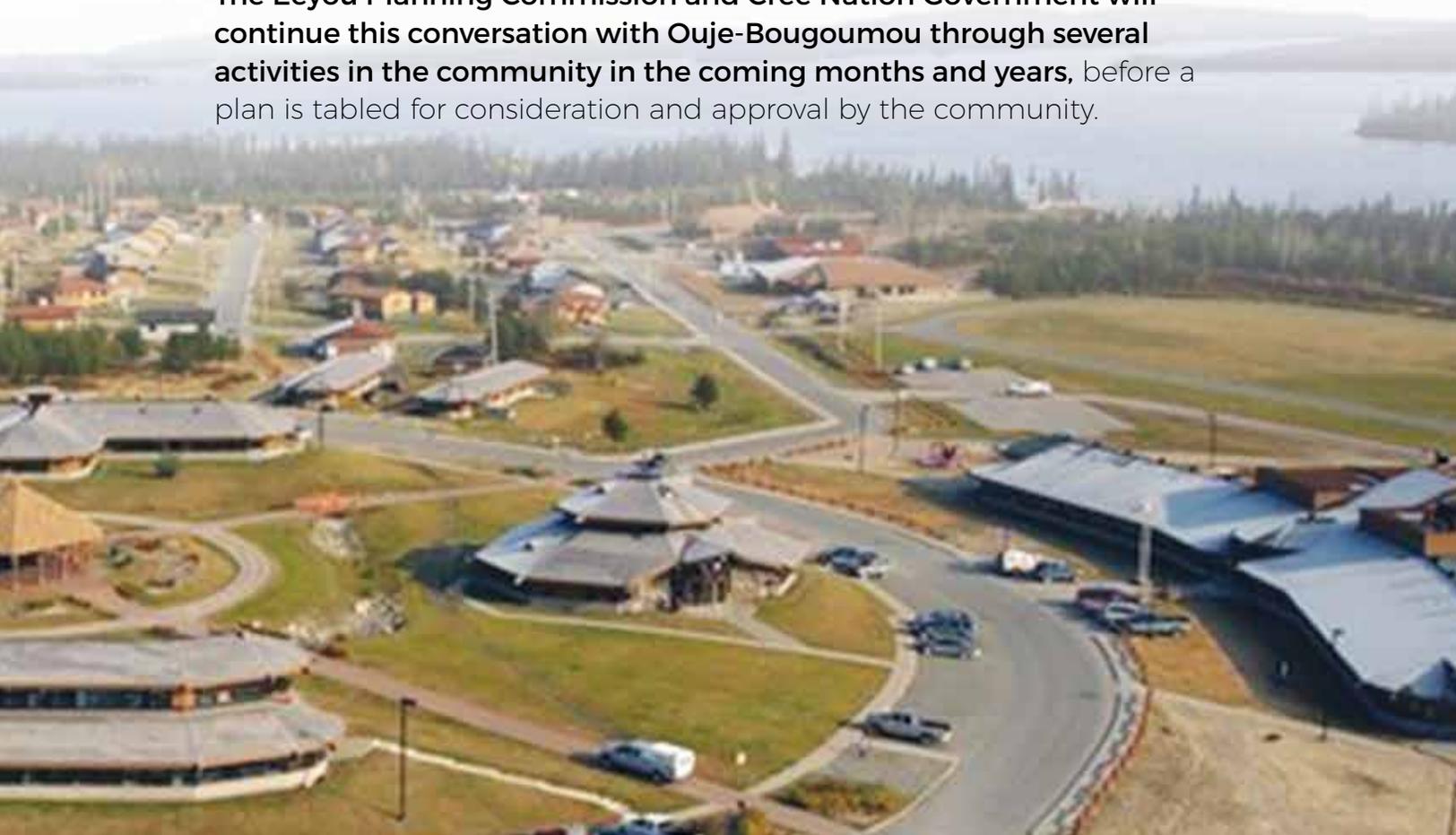
THE EEYOU PLANNING COMMISSION

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**. Ouje-Bougoumou's representatives to the EPC are:

- **Norman Wapachee**, Commissioner
- **Arthur Bosum**, Alternate

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

The Eeyou Planning Commission and Cree Nation Government will continue this conversation with Ouje-Bougoumou 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 OUJE-BOUGOUMOU CREES VALUE MOST IN THEIR LANDS?

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, the original houses faced East because Elders said traditionally houses face East, that's who we are as Eenu. That brought a sense of pride to the community.."

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."

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."



Opportunities to Work with Non-Crees

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

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.”

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).”



WHAT ARE THE ISSUES THAT OUJE-BOUGOUMOU CREES ARE FACING ON THEIR LANDS?

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 the sustainability of each one, because every one is interrelated, intertwined.”

Impacts of Mining

“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.”

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.”

Access to Traplines

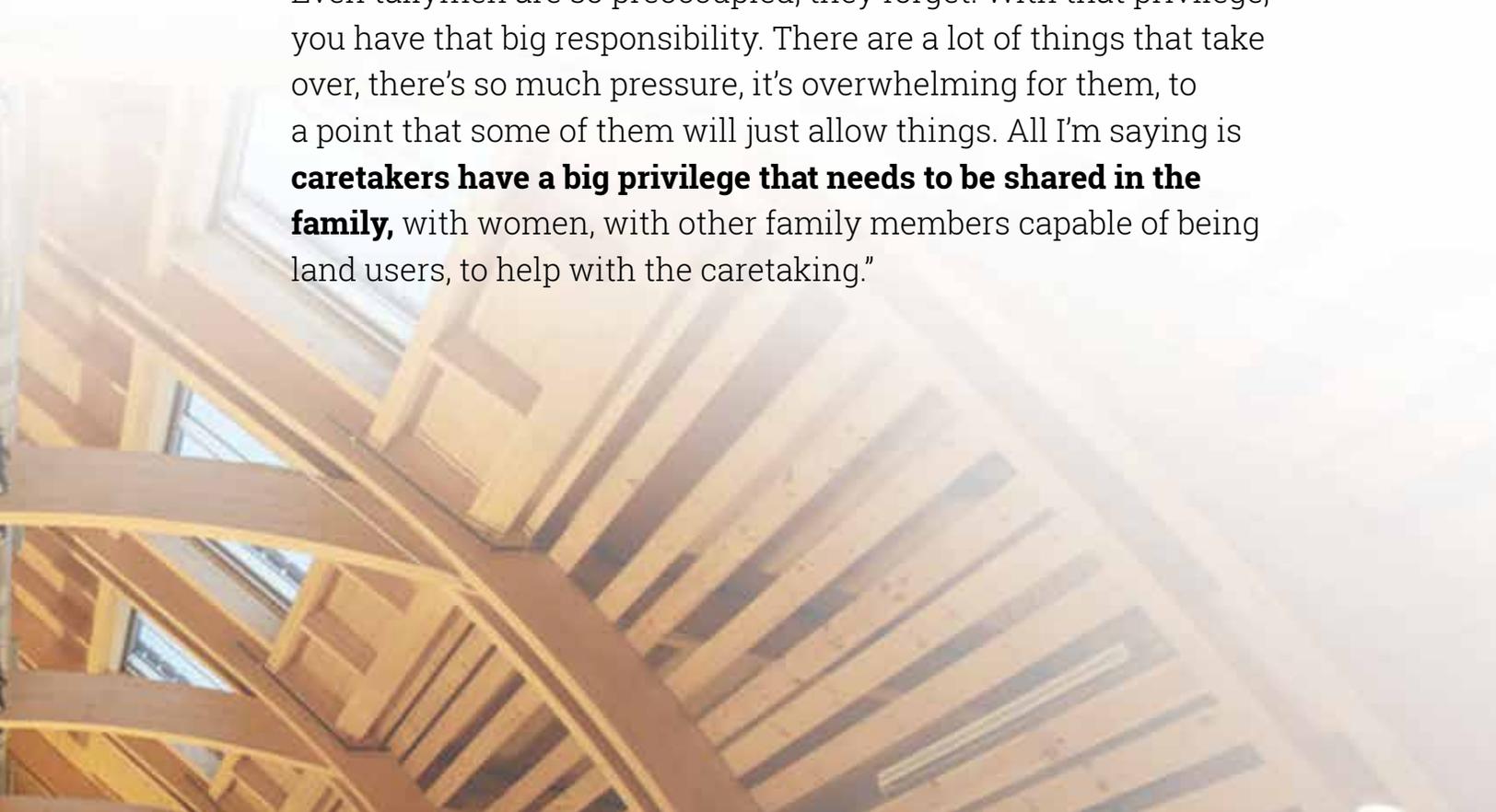
“There are a lot of projects on those traplines, the families really see the impacts. That’s why it’s important for me...to **look at [those traplines], they don’t really have a place to go hunting now.** If Category II land was opened up, maybe give the opportunity to those trappers to use other parts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

The Trapline System

“A long time ago there was no trapline system, people shared their land. **It 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).”

Role of Tallymen

“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.”



Non-Crees Occupation of the Territory

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

Non-Cree Community Expansion

“Our relationship with our land needs to be recognized. Our land isn’t just Category I, II, III, 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.”

Cultural Loss

“Bringing back identity, a lot of youth today are losing that, we need to bring back the teachings of Elders. **We talk about tradition, but a lot of us don’t even know, what is our tradition? The way we hunt and 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.”

Overharvesting

“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.”



WHAT IS THE VISION THAT OUJE-BOUGOUMOU CREES HAVE FOR THE FUTURE OF THEIR LANDS?

Conservation

“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.”

Cree-led Development

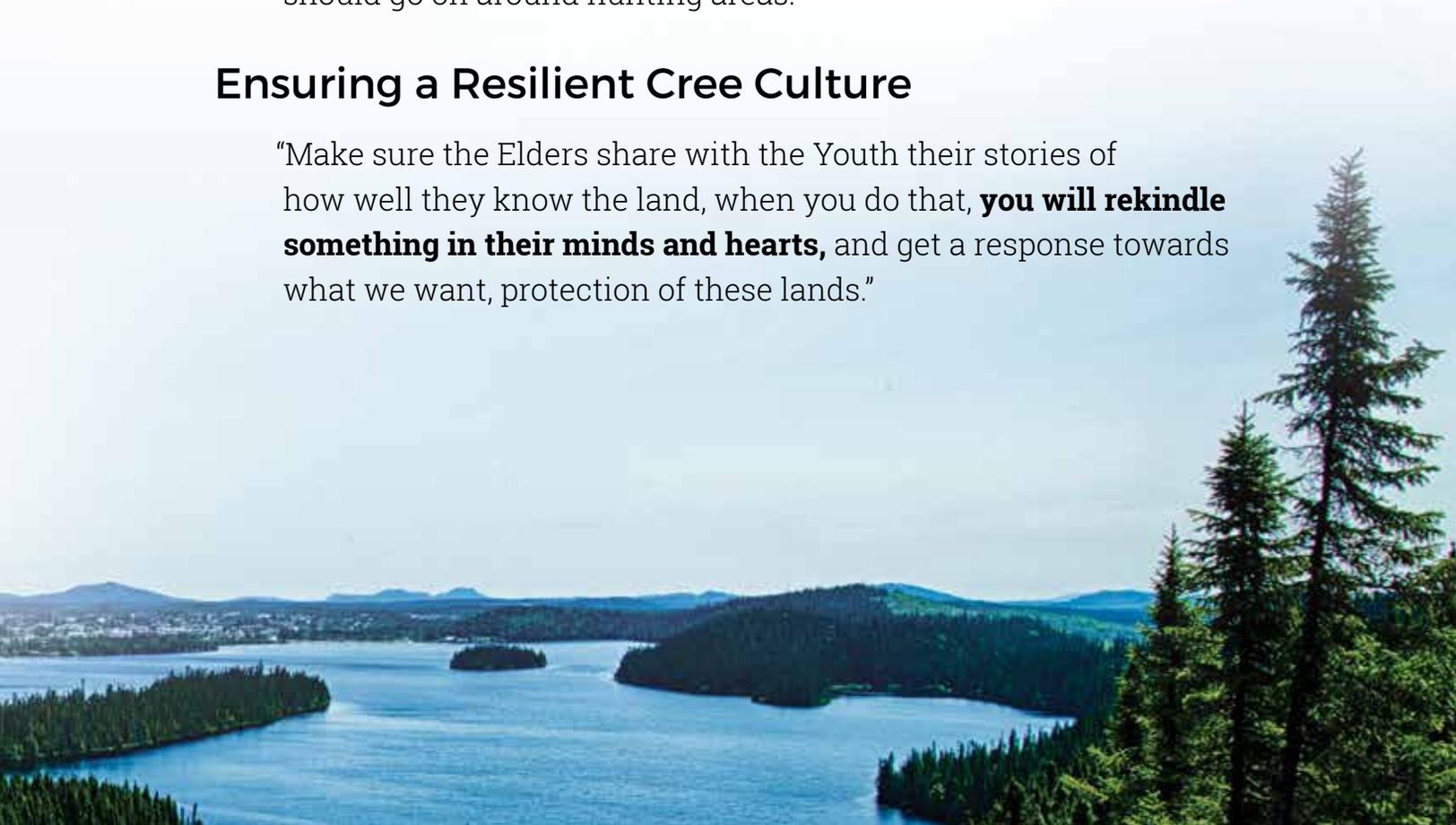
“We have to voice our concerns, our knowledge, our philosophy, impose it. **We need to develop the land ourselves in our philosophy.**”

Better Forestry and Mining Practices

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

Ensuring a Resilient Cree Culture

“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.”



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.”

Regulation of Harvesting

“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.”

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 individuals...because the 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?**”





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