



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

---

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

---

Compiled by the **Eeyou Planning Commission**

December 2017



## LAND USE PLANNING

In ancient times as in the present, **Crees have always planned their use of Eeyou Istchee**, their homeland. As the years went by and the presence of non-Crees increased, Crees saw the challenges and impacts involved in developing the territory, but they also saw **opportunities to live from and care for the land in new ways, to draw from Cree tradition and creativity to meet the needs of a changing world.**

In the 2012 Cree-Quebec Governance Agreement, Crees acquired responsibilities with respect to **land use planning – the right and responsibility to compile and share a Cree vision for Eeyou Istchee, shaped by the Elders’ teachings that have always informed and guided Cree land use.** There are many more activities to consider now than there used to be, and many more people and partners to work with. But the value Crees place upon balance, that is, upon **developing and caring for Eeyou Istchee in a way that ensures that future generations will have as many opportunities to hunt and trap, and work and learn, as possible –** that hasn’t changed.



## THE EYYOU PLANNING COMMISSION

The 2012 Cree-Quebec Governance Agreement led to the creation of the Eeyou Planning Commission (EPC), formed of Commissioners from each of the Cree communities and chaired by Cree Nation Government. The mandate of the EPC is to **work towards building a collective Cree vision and the capacity to engage on land use planning related activities throughout all of Eeyou Istchee**. Waswanipi's representatives to the EPC are:

- **Steven Blacksmith**, Commissioner

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

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

### Connection to the Land

“When the Indooheu Eeyouu (Cree Hunter) was first here on the land, **Eeyouu was the first race here in our territory of Waswanipi** and the Creator has given us abilities to care for ourselves and gave us the means and knowledge to survive out on the land. It was given to us to plan/decide.”

### Health of the Land

“Last week I was at the Elders gathering **the issues that were talked about was culture, language and the territory** to keep it for future generations.”

### Cree Knowledge

“We don’t keep the land, it’s the land that takes care of us. Cree knowledge is very important and needs to be considered. You know the land that’s heavily harvested, it endangers our Cree knowledge. **Everything that makes us Cree comes from the land, and we need to be very careful not to lose our way.** But we need to fight for our children to be rooted to the land and I believe we can accomplish it, it may be hard but we can do it.”

## Cree Occupation and Cultural Activities

“We hope to do more cultural stuff, language, hunting, bringing it back, the youth are afraid to lose them. More cultural stuff instead of what we do now. **Bring back canoeing, going out hunting, set fish nets, traps.** there are a lots of requests for that.”

## Cree Values

“I talked with non-native people out on our trapline and...tell them to care for the land and to dispose their waste properly. I think to myself they don't have all year to hunt or fish but a short time in the season to do these things, and **I look at it as almost like sharing the land, because that's what we Crees do is share.** I heard my father once tell a story of a neighboring family of 8 only had 1 rabbit and he shared his kill with them which was a moose, for us to get along and not to disrespect one another.”



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

### Forestry

“When forestry happens, a trapper loses a job. He can’t work on the income security program. **The forestry industry, when they cut my trapline, the mess they made, I was out of a job.** Very few people work in forestry.”

### Non-Cree Occupation

“The non-native moose hunt, is it true that this year they will be able to kill a buck and a female? If that’s true that will bring problems. They shoot the female first, then the buck comes. Same with the bear. **They just kill the small one and the female, hide them with brush, then they wait for the buck, kill it, and leave the female there.** Non-aboriginal people should receive training before they are allowed to hunt here.”



## State of Animal Populations

"I will talk about the wildlife on how we see the wildlife, knowing they are not healthy. **We see beavers with white spots on their lungs and that's how you know the beavers are impacted negatively by forestry or mining** development and people eat them. That's all I wanted to say, that the beaver is sick and moose is not fat as it used to be."

## Limitations on Cree Rights

"One thing that alarms me is how can we keep part of our land, I think **the government will bring up the agreements that we signed they will say but in this agreement that you signed gives us that right for development.** Even the wildlife is running out of food, caused by development. Our leadership need to fight for our lands because that's what makes us Cree."

## State of Water Resources

“Over on this side, my father in law’s trapline, on the south side of the community, **there is no clear water, it’s all brown, from the logging.** We need to bring bottled water. It used to not be like that.”

## Relationships with Proponents

“We know the forestry companies and how they harvest, but **the forestry companies or the development don’t know who are the Waswanipi people** and how the Waswanipi Cree survive and how they use the territory.”

## Mining

“It takes a really good team to make the link between the mine and the trapline. **Before, we never had consultation with the mines,** they just arrived, “poof!” We never had compensation for the damage.”







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

## Protection of Waswanipi Lands and Water

“My main concern is having a bigger protected area; that is why we have really pushed for the protection of the Broadback. **To keep our tradition alive we need more protection of the land,** everyone should have a protected area. The government is holding back our protected area because of all the resources in our area.”

## Greater Cree Role in Development

“I want help/plan for our future **not to stop development but to find solutions** in the areas that were talked about at the Elders gathering.”

## Promotion of Cree Language and Culture

“I want to talk about language, also writing in Cree as well...the lands and lakes and the territory needs to be in Cree. **Cree place names need to be used, for our children and grandchildren.** We need to push this to make it happen before we lose it. There are documents for place names and we need to use that now not just put it away somewhere in a binder.”

## Enhance Cree Role in Governance and Lands Management

“We have our own Eeyou hunting law and it says if you want to kill a moose you have to ask the tallyman to show respect because he is the steward of the land and keep from over harvesting, **so too the non-natives should ask the tallyman as well if they want to hunt in Eeyou Istchee.** Non-natives need to abide by the hunting law as well.”

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

---

**PLEASE CONTACT**

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

