

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

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

WHAPMAGOOSTUI

**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 Whapmagoostui 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 Whapmagoostui representative to the Eeyou Planning Commission is:

- Eddie Masty, Commissioner

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 Whapmagoostui 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 Whapmagoostui, and what issues and objectives matter most to Whapmagoostui Crees, the Whapmagoostui 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 Whapmagoostui.

In addition to the focus groups, the Commissioners and the Cree Nation Government held an Open House in Whapmagoostui on June 29th 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 through qualitative analysis by theme pertaining to values, issues and vision, these themes being described below. Participants are describes as Whapmagoostui Crees or Whapmagoostui 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 Whapmagoostui 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

2.1 Clean environment and healthy animals

The most commonly expressed values in Whapmagoostui have to do with the ability to spend time out on the land to hunt, trap and fish. The flexibility of work schedules in the community, the absence of massive transformation of the landscape such as those created by hydroelectric reservoirs, and the monetary resources provided by the Income Security Program and the Cree Trappers Association are all seen as enhancing this key aspect of Whapmagoostui life.

“Whenever I feel too much stress at work, I always go out on the land, It makes me re-energized. It’s really therapeutic and calming and you don’t have any worries.”

“Living off the land, and eating from the land, that is medicine.”

Being able to carry out these activities, in turn, is seen as necessary to render possible the continuity of Cree hunting culture.

“We have a chance to go deeper in our culture, we hunt animals that other communities do not hunt anymore, like porcupine or snow geese. We hunt all the animals, caribou, geese, beaver, muskrat, fish.”

2.2 Respect for the animals

“One of most important teachings to keep in mind is to respect the animals.”

“We are told we need to respect the animals, especially the caribou and the bear, all the animals but especially these. We went down a boat ride, we saw a bear, one of the guys let's go see it, going waachyia waachyia... we were coming back on the boat, and was starting to hear the engine, the propeller was having a hard time. One of the hunters said the bear did not like that, that we made fun of him, and that's karma, it's hard.”

“In the south, sports hunters, they hunt for sports, us we take what we need.”

“In the old days before food was really abundant, my gookum used to tell me because food was scarce at the time, they ate anything available, in the summer they would look for eggs/nests, people were desperate. Today it’s because I want to respect the animals, I don’t shoot geese that are spawning, I let them raise their babies. My grandfather used to say don’t shoot ducks in summer, they have kids to feed. I don't bother to go get eggs.”

Paying the proper respect to animals is an important principle of life in Whapmagoostui and especially life on the land. As the anecdote about the bear above demonstrates, animals are

sensitive to acts of respect and disrespect shown towards them and will reward or punish this behavior. Part of this respect is only harvesting what is needed, to allow the animal populations to stay strong. In difficult times, more will be needed, which is all the more reason to show the proper respect to animals so that they will make themselves available at those times.

2.3 Identity and traditional knowledge

Another theme of values to prioritize when making decisions about Whapmagoostui land use and development pertains to Cree language and bush knowledge and skills.

“Decisions should be made in ways that allow us to not to lose Cree knowledge and survival and to keep hold on Cree culture and traditions.”

“One thing my dad told me is each animal has a certain way how to prepare, you need to follow. There are certain parts, where parasites, if you eat it you will be very sick. There are certain things to do with the intestine. There is a certain way to do things, to arrange the animals. For example, I found out there is a way of preparing the loon, in one piece.”

“One thing I'd like to know things that are unique to a place, on a map, like around here, they have small Labrador tea, other places it's the big leaf. Giant Otter Lake, they say that's where giant otters are. Around lake Denis, different lakes, have different kinds of fish, like some have, In this lake, my father said he got in his otter trap, in his a water pup, a dog that lives in the water, it says it looks like a whiteman's dog. Different animals that need to be discovered. In National Geographic, only one freshwater seal species in Europe, but we have them right here. That has not been recognized.”

Whapmagoostui community members pride themselves on having traditional knowledge that is relatively intact and undimmed by development or other interventions from the South. Whether this involves butchering an animal in such a way as to use more of it than others might use, or knowledge of different kinds of animals on the land that are less discussed elsewhere (e.g. the water pup described above), Cree knowledge and identity is rich in Whapmagoostui and community members would like to keep it that way.

2.4 Strong Cree language

Whapmagoostui's relative isolation and lesser exposure to development projects from the South are likely among the factors that have promoted the high level of Cree that is still commonly spoke in Whapmagoostui. It is said that Whapmagoostui Cree is so good that its youth speak at the same level that Elders do elsewhere.

“Cree language is really strong here. For example, the word for this part of the goose, in other communities they call it 'boat bone'. I'm sure that's not how our ancestors called it, we use the traditional word.”

“Our language, that’s what sets us apart. It’s weird for me to speak in English with some of my peers from other communities, because our Cree is so much better than our English.”

Strong language skills are a source of pride for the Whapmagoostui Cree, and many consider that this language connects them to their past, and they want it to continue in the future.

2.5 “Community spirit”

Whapmagoostui Crees want to build on what some describe as a good community spirit, characterized by a strong sense of belonging.

“Our community is one big family, I’m not saying the other communities aren’t like that, but if a family is going through troubling times, the other community members gather to support them.”

Co-existence with the Inuit and the relations with non-Crees are seen in a positive light. Many consider that building on these relationships will provide opportunities to make Great Whale an even better place.

“There’s so much potential in this community, we just have to come together.”

“I see less racism here than in other places. I don’t see people make fun of other people.”

An important value related to this theme is the desire that all, but especially the youth, be involved in community planning.

2.6 Isolation

“No access road, it protects land, surroundings, animals and everything else. It’s a bit of both, up here the food prices are crazy up here, sometimes there’s debate going on if there could be an access road and some people say they don’t want an access road. I’m leaning towards no road, because all in all it’s challenging at the same time but it’s taking away some extra negative stuff towards the land.”

“Maybe they could build a road, if that’s what the people want. A road would be good, if we can avoid the problems that come with it.”

Whapmagoostui community members have a mixed relationship with the isolation of their community, but the degree to which it has shielded their community from some of the negative impacts that come with access – such as sports hunters, increased pace of development, etc. – is very much valued. The isolation also comes with a high cost of living, which is quite difficult to bear. In exchange the community’s lands have been relatively protected, which is important to

community members. Whapmagoostui may decide to build a road, but they will likely value the benefits of isolation no less at that time, and may try to keep these as much as possible.

3. Issues that Whapmagoostui faces

3.1 Challenges of access to the land

Whapmagoostui Crees value life on the land and they see growing challenges in maintaining customary occupations in the face of the demands of life in town with work, school and medical care. Difficulties related to transportation, especially its high cost, figures prominently in these accounts.

The prohibitive cost of obtaining and maintaining a freight canoe challenges access to coastal locations, which is compounded by the fact that Crees must sometimes obtain permissions to hunt in the Inuit-designated coastal areas.

Travel inland is often difficult. Hunters seeking to reach their camps and hunting ground inland must rely on costly airplane travel, and in some cases snowmobile travel in the winter when and where trails are available.

Subsidies provided by the Income Security Program (ISP) and the Niskamoon corporation, the Cree Trappers Association and the Whapmagoostui community council are all seen as essential to maintain access but perhaps not quite sufficient.

“Niskamoon funds us for access to lake for Ski-Doo trails, but only to Lake Bienville, there are no trails elsewhere. We need more access by trail, we need access to each camp.”

“To reach my trapline by Ski-Doo, it can take me nine and half hours, and the conditions are very rough. It would be much faster and better with improved trails.”

“We are lucky to have subsidies from the Band Council. Otherwise we would have even fewer people out there. For example, the Income Security Program participation rate in Nemaska is quite low, whereas it is at 34% in Whapmagoostui. This is because of Band Council subsidy.”

The high price of gas further challenges snowmobile and boat travel. Again, this is somewhat mitigated by subsidies programs, but the challenge remains nonetheless.

“The high cost of gas, that’s one of the biggest challenges we face. People stopped going out on the bay fishing, they used to camp on the coast all the way past Umiujaq but not anymore.”

“On my trapline there is a good place to go ptarmigan hunting, but there were hardly any roads or Ski-Doo trails to get there, and we figured it’s because of the

gas price, so CTA introduced yearly gas supply. I have since seen the difference on my hunting territory, there are more trails. I like that, seeing the land being used.”

Air travel is very expensive. Bush planes require that camps have relatively well maintained runways to be accessed by bush planes. Camps with lakes nearby could accommodate float planes, but the community lacks the docks necessary to make this a practical solution.

“When I talk about young adults, people on ISP make about ten thousand dollars a year, how can people afford to go hunting on that, buy equipment, pay for flights? Air Inuit charges minimum \$2 000 for eighty miles, one way, I pay \$3 000 one way to get to my camp.”

Moreover, there are concerns that reliance on air travel contributes to disturbing the animals, and that those concerns create tensions with the Inuit who hunt in those areas, especially along the coast.

“We have transportation subsidies by Air Inuit, via the Niskamoon Corporation, and some of the Inuit are complaining that there are too many planes, that it disturbs the animals.”

The cost of air travel and its limited flexibility poses problems to accessing hunting camps, since hunters returning to the village for a reason or another are not always able to return to their camps in a given season.

“It’s hard for ISP people to go on the land because you have to pay to get to the camp and pay to come back to get your cheque.”

“There are too many limitations for trappers to be out there on the land, if an Elder goes to his camp, and he has a medical appointment at the hospital in Val d’Or, he has to come back from his camp for it, and then he has to stay in community after because he has no way to get back to his camp. If that happens, for example right now it’s June, one of the best times to go fishing. When the lakes are still not too warm it’s good for the fish, good to share them. You miss out on that.”

3.2 Limited opportunities for Cree-led economic development

The second set of issues that community members brought up pertaining to land use in Whapmagoostui has to do with opportunities for economic development initiatives in the community. These are seen as necessary to, as some put it, move away from dependence on outside businesses and government subsidies.

“There’s a lack of employment, we need economic development more. There’s local business but not enough, a lot of money is going out of community and to the Northern store. We have to find ways of circulating the money within the community, not to the outside.”

“Younger people have all these ideas but they feel stuck, like there’s not enough resources. We do have an economic development program but it was defunct for several years, it was mismanaged, didn’t give help. We are trying to get that going again. There is stuff people want to do.”

Shortages of space and limited infrastructure also hinder such initiatives.

“The major obstacle here is space in the community. People want to start businesses but they don’t have a place to operate.”

3.3 Concerns about intrusions from Impacts from hydroelectric developments

Whapmagoostui Crees have not faced large-scale landscape modifications from hydroelectric developments, mining or forestry. Compared to the other Cree communities, their interactions with hydroelectric and mineral exploration have been limited. Limited as they were, those have, for the most part, occurred in ways that fostered apprehensions about such activities in Whapmagoostui. Hydro-Quebec’s Great Whale project, which was scheduled to follow the La Grande project in the 1990s, was seen by Whapmagoostui Crees as imposed, as against their vision for the land. It was met with a great deal of opposition from the Cree and the Inuit until the shelving of the project in 1994. The controversy surrounding this project played an important role in shaping Whapmagoostui Cree perception of their relations with non-Cree institutions and economic activities.

There are numerous concerns about local impacts from the river diversions and reservoirs created by the La Grande project to the south, and from the various surveying activities from Hydro-Quebec in the Whapmagoostui area.

“At Lake Bienville and Great Whale River, the water is lower now. Since 1980, 1981, east of Lake Bienville, that is when we noticed the water level was lower. We suspect that they built a dam or a dike. Even the fish was affected, the water flows differently. When we came on a plane, in 1981, that’s when we noticed that the water was different. Downstream from Lake Bienville, there is less water in lake-like stretch of the river. There is an island there, you used to be able to navigate by boat down both sides, now you can cross with hip waders.”

“Our cabin south of Lake Bienville could not be reached because the water was too low, because of the dam. Also at the opening of the lake, ABS or PVC pipes were dumped there by Hydro workers. It affects the animals. There is concern that the fish will be contaminated by these debris.”

3.4 Impacts from mineral exploration

“Some of us think we should approach the council, to do 2-3 [mineral exploration] camps, to clean up, that at Lake Bienville, another one at GW07, there is a bulldozer and other materials left there by the uranium mining company. They were nice to us, gave us pop and stuff when we went to their camp. They found out they could not do their project, they left.”

Mineral exploration activities have been relatively sparse in the region, and no actual extraction has taken place in the Whapmagoostui community extent. The materials and waste left behind at some of the exploration camps have made Whapmagoostui wary of the potential impacts of similar activities in the future, however.

One issue that was repeatedly brought to our attention was the exploration materials left behind by mineral exploration crews as they abandoned their camps. This material reportedly includes barrels of fuel and similar litter, but also some heavy machinery such as a bulldozer, which some in the community have expressed an interest in recovering for their own use in the community (see below, point 4.1).

3.5 Language and bush skills

Even though they consider their language and other cultural skills very strong compared to other First Nation communities, there remains a concern about the risk of these skills declining in Whapmagoostui.

“That is what affects us now because hunting, trapping and Cree knowledge are declining the way it was before in the old days, that is what saddens me is when I think about it that we should not lose it and to try harder to keep it going.”

There is a feeling that the expertise collectively held by the Elders is diminishing as they enter old age and pass away, and that people of the current generation are not gaining the same level knowledge and expertise.

“I’m on the committee for the park, and they always ask for an Elder, there is only one Elder that hunts in the area, he’s younger. All the Elders that hunt in that area they passed away recently.”

3.6 Co-existence of Cree and Inuit governance structures

Some of the highlighted land use issues have to do with the coexistence with the Inuit and their governance structures.

“There’s some controversy regarding the land, there are some families that have cabins there, but according to the Inuit, it’s their lands, so they’re trying to charge Crees for use. It was never like that before, only since the road (linking the village to

the cultural camp at km 12) was built. We've been together for so long, and all of a sudden you want to take us to court? Inuit Elders blame James Bay and Northern Agreement for these conflicts. Before that we just gathered here and shared everything, including beluga meat."

"Sometimes it's a challenge, in town, on the coast, if Inuit don't consent to a proposal, we can't do anything. If we want to do a road or a camp, they say we need their approval. Or they may charge us for land use."

It was also reported that having separate Cree and Inuit public amenities, and the duplication that it generates is at times wasteful and unjustified, and that a greater pooling of resources across these groups could lead to better services.

"With the Inuit, everything is doubled, the only thing we share is the clinic where we each have our own side. We have an opportunity to work with each other but it's not like that right now."

3.7 Community health

The challenge of maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle in the community, including avoiding alcohol and drugs, is seen as an important issue that could be in part addressed by land use planning.

"One thing that's saddens me is the effect of alcohol in our community. Non- natives first brought alcohol and a bar into our community in 1955. This is when the issue really became a problem within the community. After that we decided to talk about it and how we can resolve this problem. It hurts the people that cannot stop drinking it, affect them a lot. Many people have passed away because of alcohol related incidents."

"The isolation, that has pros and cons. For example, drugs, we have them, they are limited but they are still slipped under the table somehow, but when there's a road here it'll be easier access to alcohol and drugs."

4. Elements of a Whapmagoostui Vision for the Future

When asked about their vision for the future of Whapmagoostui and Cree lands, community members spoke of a number of different goals. First is enhancing the Cree presence on the land through improving access (trails, roads and infrastructure) and a reconsideration of the trapline system. This enhancement also requires ensuring that the land remains intact through monitoring and protection. One of the big benefits of more Crees on the land is a strengthening of Cree language and culture, which is a clear objective. Other objectives included more and better collaboration, especially with Inuit but also with non-Crees; improving community health, and working on local economic development so as to ensure better employment in the community.

4.1 Monitoring and protection of the environment

Whapmagoostui Crees call for effective and reliable monitoring of mineral and hydroelectric exploration and exploitation. This should be built on the customary land management structures, in conjunction with those of community councils and the Cree Nation Government. To this end, they consider that the role and responsibilities of the tallyman, and the divisions of trapline boundaries should be better defined and recognized as the basis environmental monitoring.

“The other thing too is the trapline, consult the families if you want to do something there. Ask families first.”

Protected areas such as the proposed park at Richmond Gulf and Clearwater Lakes (Parc national des Lacs-Guillaume-Delisle-et-à-l’Eau-Claire) are seen as a development in the right direction. Many recognize the significance of that area and the need to limit extractive activities therein. There is also enthusiastic interest in the possibility of designating other parts of the Whapmagoostui community extent as protected areas, such as Lake Bienville and surroundings.

“I would like to see more protected areas, like around the lake on Lake Bienville, I think that’s important. This is where the caribou raise their calves.”

Beyond monitoring and protection, some call for measures to restore sites that have been degraded from previous activities. For example, the clean up of sites polluted by mineral exploration sites and restocking of fish in lakes.

“At Clearwater Lake there is a work site by the land bridge in the two lakes. In the wintertime in the 1960s we saw a work site there, with empty barrels left behind. A project to clean up these camps would be good. It’s costly to get to these places. Maybe we could identify the sites and negotiate with Quebec.”

4.2 Initiatives and infrastructure to facilitate access to the land

The themes of access to the land and Cree occupation figure prominently in Whapmagoostui Cree vision of the future for their community. Whapmagoostui Crees often highlight their goal of occupying the greatest extent possible of their territory as a bridge to ensure the continuity of their historical, vision, land-use and occupancy in the future.

“Crees are not using hunting territory enough. Maybe the Quebec government will come and want to do Great Whale river again. That’s why we have 26 cabins from the start, we wanted to put one cabin in each hunting territory in the 1990s, to facilitate access.”

We have a canoe expedition on the river, all the way from Lake Bienville, to use that road like our ancestors used to. We keep going where we used to, travel routes, it’s important to show that we’re using it right now.

We used to go real far. Napoka falls, near Umiujaq, that's where the hunters used to go from our community. I don't think many people know that all the land you see further north, that's where the Crees hunted, for thousands of years, as opposed to the Inuit that stayed along the coast other than for winter hunting sometimes.

This requires the maintenance and the expansion of the snowmobile trail network and the preservation of customary canoe routes and portage trails.

"We have transportation subsidies, to have better trails. We are doing a project, with Niskamoon, to make trails go all the way from Whapmagoostui to Lake Bienville."

"We must preserve traditional canoe routes and portage trails with change in the environment. These are part of our Cree heritage."

Some suggest that rethinking the distribution of camps and cabins may be worthwhile. For example, 'clustering' them at higher density might help accessibility and travel safety.

"It would be good to have more cabins built along the coast. If cabins are close together, that would be good for survival, so if something breaks down, like a snowmobile. You can walk to the next one. I leave supplies at my camp for people who might get stuck. There are not as many cabins on coast as before, we go inland more now."

4.3 Reconsider trapline system

Linked to the discussion of enhancing Cree access to the land is the trapline system. There are some who feel that the revision or elimination of this system would allow more Crees to access more of the land. The tallyman sometimes acts as another barrier to access, allowing a relatively small number of people to determine what happens on the land. The argument is that their role and that of traplines should be reconsidered for the benefit of the community as a whole.

"Traplines could be divided, given as lots. We could use the space more. Camps could be closer, so that we are not stuck in town."

"I think the trapline system should be taken out. We go all over the place. Some of the tallymen say 'those are my beavers'. It's not the fur trade anymore, like two hundred years ago, back then the industry was a big deal, not so much anymore."

4.4 Consider construction of road linking Whapmagoostui to the south

Talks of vision for the future often bring up the possibility of roads being built to link the community of Whapmagoostui to inland portions of its territory and/or to the James Bay

Highway to the south. There is a great deal of uncertainty, however, about whether the advantages brought by such development would outweigh its social and environmental costs.

“I would like to see a road, I wonder if we could do that, going up the coast. It is very difficult to travel on ice now, a road would help. Not just to drive inland or on the coast, a connected road (to the James Bay Highway) would be good too. It would bring down the cost of living a lot. The fuel, the stuff, it keeps getting more expensive.”

“A road could bring problems from development, but with the high cost of living, the high cost of fuel, a road would help with that. Maybe it’s a trade-off, maybe we need to give up something in exchange.”

4.5 Strong Cree language and culture

A long-term vision for Whapmagoostui and its land calls for measures to ensure that youth can be exposed to, and learn from, those with strong language and bush skills.

“Those who are out on the land and need to pass that on to the younger generation.”

“Why not have a program in place where you can subsidize bringing in Elders to help with young adults, to teach the youth. The adult could spend two or three weeks, helping Elder and youth work together and also provide fish for community too. We can have a program in place in order for it to work.”

4.6 Healthy places and healthy people

Whapmagoostui Crees envision initiatives and amenities that will foster health and well-being in their community.

“We want to make people more active in the community. A big project we are trying to do is the healthy lifestyle challenge, where entire families can register in the program to try to create healthy habits.”

One of the approaches to this involves programs in the bush for youth, especially those at risk or recovering from addiction.

“I was involved in a project where we sent out people who had trouble with the justice system. So we took them out to this area not far away, they learned the traditional ways for two to three weeks. The trapline we used, we consulted the tallyman first and made sure it was all clean after. That was a pilot project. We did it in the fall and in the winter. I think it’s a good idea and it gives people who never experienced bush life a chance to learn stuff, because maybe their families weren’t really into that. I learn stuff too when I go out, even though I have done that kind of thing all my life.”

4.7 Collaboration with Inuit and non-Crees

Whapmagoostui Crees envision a community future characterized by openness to non-Crees, both at Great Whale and in the greater region. This includes greater collaboration and relations of mutual respect with Inuit and non-Crees.

“The other thing is the talks with the Inuit, because if we can combine our resources we can do a lot for the community.”

“We want to have easier access to the land, more activities on the land, but with certain rules. One of my uncle’s camps, on his door there is a set of rules: ‘you can stay here if you want but if you take something I want it back’. That’s how it should be.”

4.8 Cree-led development

The importance – and challenge – of augmenting the hunting economy with wage employment figures prominently in Whapmagoostui vision for land use and development.

“I really want the community to find a way to end its dependency on the government. To develop something that’s self-sustaining, that does not rely on subsidies. Something here that can continue to grow. Subsidies, they always run out, and then people get mad, but that’s because we are not self-sufficient.”

Many hope to see a greater number of Cree-owned and operated businesses in retail, construction, transportation and cultural tourism. A business incubator initiative is favored in this regard.

“We are looking into business incubators, a plan for our economic development department, to have spaces where business projects can start up at low cost, later come up with funding.”

Whapmagoostui Crees also envision and hope for greater opportunities for training and certification and accreditation, and a greater proportion of Cree workers in Cree joint ventures and contracts.

“For work in town, for construction, we would like to see more Crees involved. We did a partnership with VCC-Massenor. But you don’t see natives working those jobs. The issue of training, they want to make sure to get their accreditation. We want to work side by side with the Inuit for that.”

“We had our first local Economic Development conference back in February. We encouraged people to talk about what they would like to see from our department and what they’d like to see in community. A lot of them raised concerns about the issue of training, hiring a firm to do the training to be accredited. What I noticed is a lot of people want to go into the construction business, but it’s a small community,

we can't have ten companies. So it would help if we could have small meetings locally to talk about innovative stuff."

Cultural tourism is often presented as the type of initiative could be help with tying together issues of access to the land, environmental protection, cultural preservation and Cree-led economic development.

"Maybe we could get funding to fly people, to visit the places, create jobs, as cultural tourism guides?"

"There are a lot of our camps in this area, along where the road could be. The road might bring non-native hunters, but they should have to get a license, take a course on how to process game and take care of the animals. The same course as the MRN gives we have to take, but the Eeyou Istchee version, that would create jobs, and also help avoid the problems with animal waste."

5. Conclusion

The values, issues and vision described by Whapmagoostui 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 Whapmagoostui land use planning process:

Topics	Description
Cree occupation of the territory	Ensure that Cree traditional use and occupation of the territory is sustained or increased
Access	Improve Cree access to the land through infrastructure (trails, better air travel), programs and subsidies
Conservation	Expand the protected areas in Whapmagoostui territory to include Lac Bienville and other sensitive lakes and habitats
Road	Consider building a road to link Whapmagoostui to the South, but while being careful to maintain the beneficial aspects of Whapmagoostui's relative isolation
Cree language	Maintain Cree language skills with the next generations
Cree knowledge and culture	Ensure that Cree knowledge and culture is passed on to the next generation through programs and teachings
Trapline system	Reconsider the trapline system in relation to the goal of enhancing Cree access to the land

Cree-led development	Greater accountability and transparency with regard to decision-making concerning activities and development on the territory
Information on and monitoring of the land	Better monitoring of the impacts of existing and prospective development, and improved information on the state of the land
Impacts of hydroelectric development	Monitor and document impacts of hydroelectric development especially in the Lac Bienville area, and find resources to help address and mitigate these impacts
Impacts of mining development	Monitor and document impacts of mining exploration and potential exploitation, and find resources to help address and mitigate these impacts
Local economic development	Creating resources, training, and space to realize Cree-led economic development initiatives, such as a business incubator
Collaboration with Inuit	Work more closely with the Inuit to see if it's possible to reduce doubling up on basic services and improve relations with respect to land use