

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

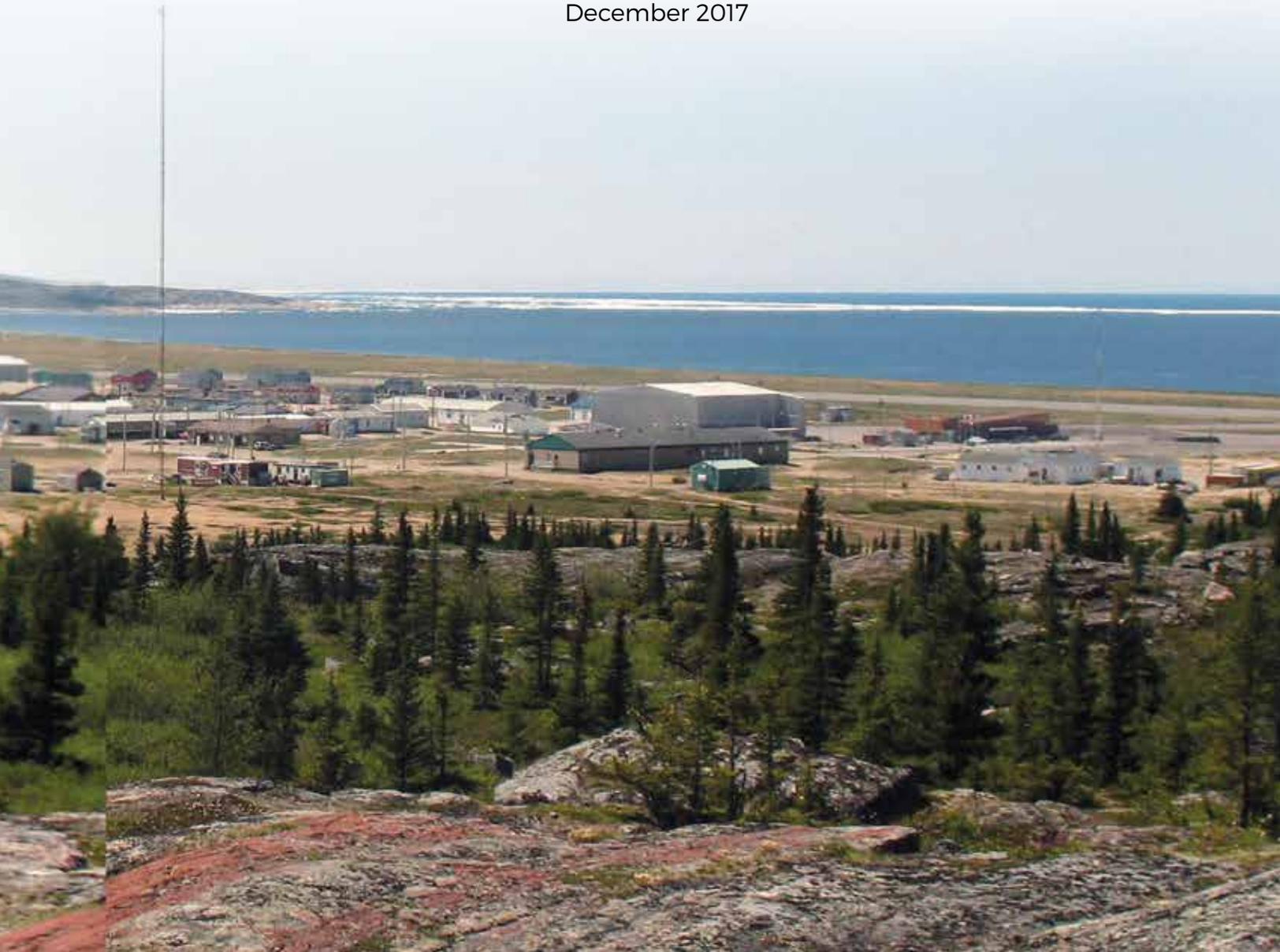
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### **WHAPMAGOOSTUI COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON WHAT THEY VALUE, THE ISSUES THEY FACE AND THEIR VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

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Compiled by the **Eeyou Planning Commission**

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## LAND USE PLANNING

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

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



## THE 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**. Whapmagoostui's representatives to the EPC are:

- **Eddie Masty**, Commissioner

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

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

### Clean Environment and Healthy Animals

“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.”

### Respect for the Animals

“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 breeding**, 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.”

### Identity and Traditional Knowledge

“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.”

## Strong Cree Language

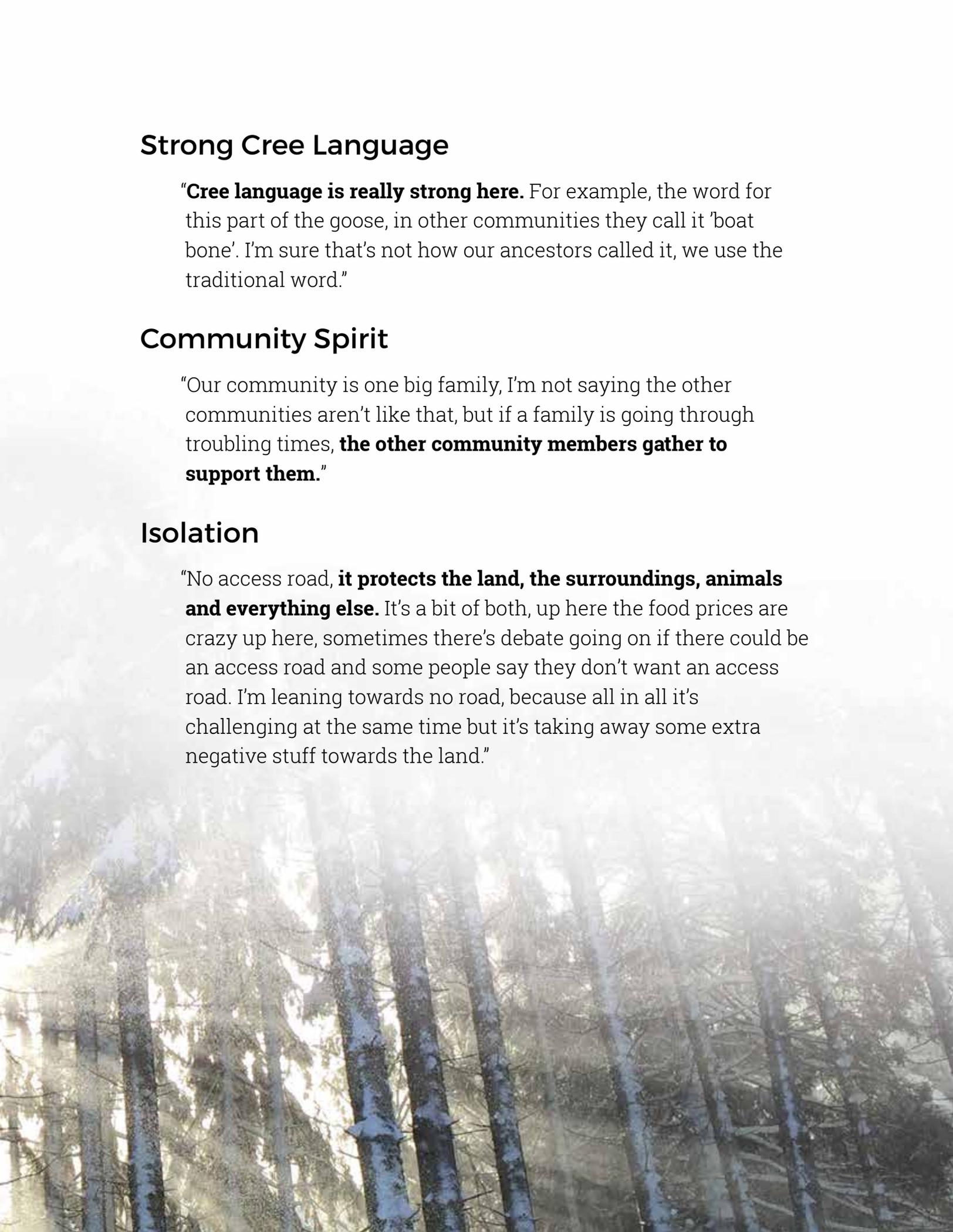
**“Cree language is really strong here.** For example, the word for this part of the goose, in other communities they call it ‘boat bone’. I’m sure that’s not how our ancestors called it, we use the traditional word.”

## Community Spirit

“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.**”

## Isolation

“No access road, **it protects the land, the 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.”



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

## Challenges of Access to the Land

“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.”

## Limited Opportunities for Cree-led Economic Development

“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.**”

## Concerns about Impacts from Hydroelectric Developments

“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.”

## Impacts from Mineral Exploration

“Some of us think we should approach the council, to do 2-3 [mineral exploration] camps, to clean them up. 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.”

## Language and Bush Skills

“That is what affects us now because **hunting, trapping and Cree knowledge are declining from 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.”

## Co-existence of Cree and Inuit 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.”

## Community Health

“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”

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

### Monitoring and Protection of the Environment

"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."

### Initiatives and Infrastructure to Facilitate Access to the Land

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

### Reconsider Trapline System

"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."

### Collaboration 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.**"

## Consider Road Linking Whapmagoostui to the South

“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.”

## Strong Cree Language and Culture

“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.”

## Healthy Places and Healthy People

“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”

## Cree-Led 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.”



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE EYOU PLANNING  
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**PLEASE CONTACT**

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

