



Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Cree Regional Authority





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Cree Regional Authority

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This year marked the official opening of the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute. To highlight this event, we are displaying images of artifacts from the collection of Aanischaaukamikw as a theme for the GCC(EI)/CRA Annual Report. We wish to thank the team of the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute for its cooperation. Cover photography: Gaston Cooper.

It is a pleasure for me to provide to the members of the Cree Nation a report on our accomplishments for this past year. In view of some of the major achievements of the Cree Nation over the course of the last several years, this has been a year of taking stock and renewing direction and commitment.

Governance

In last year's message to you, I reported extensively on the status of the Governance Agreement which we concluded and signed on July 24, 2012. As it was an extremely important development for the Cree Nation, I described in considerable detail the background and the content of the Agreement, although it was signed during the 2012-2013 fiscal year. I am pleased to report that after the recent provincial elections, and the election of a new Premier, Madame Marois, I was able to secure a commitment by the new government on the implementation of our Governance Agreement. Our negotiators, Abel Bosum and Bill Namagoose, have continued their excellent work on this Agreement as we move into the critical implementation phase. I also wish to once again acknowledge the important work of the Cree Nation Governance Working Group under the direction of William Mianscum.

In a similar vein, I have had discussions with Madame Marois about the development of natural resources within Eeyou Istchee and I impressed upon her the Cree vision of development within Eeyou Istchee. Regardless of the name which may be given to any northern development initiative, whether it is called Plan Nord or Le Nord pour Tous, the fundamental Cree

principles will remain intact, namely, the requirement of Cree consent, the participation of our communities and the requirement of our people to benefit from any development projects.

An important element of our Governance Agreement involves addressing the boundaries of the new governance regime based on our traditional family territories, and the need to enter into discussions with our neighbours. I have initiated a dialogue with Inuit and Montagnais leadership to set the stage for more detailed discussions on those boundary issues.

Increasing Self-Government Responsibilities

Justice

This past year, we are pleased to have participated in the opening of several Justice buildings in our communities. New Justice facilities were constructed and opened in Waskaganish and Whapmagoostui.

CHRD

We were very honoured to participate in the opening of a new office of the Cree Human Resources Development Department of the CRA in Chisasibi. This represents another step in our effort to bring the Cree Nation Government to the communities and make its services more accessible.

Defending Rights: Uranium

In support of the position taken by the Cree Nation of Mistissini, we called for a moratorium on all uranium mining within Eeyou Istchee. We have always maintained

Dignitaries and distinguished guests met in the Parliamentary Restaurant of the National Assembly after the adoption by the Québec Government of the *Act Establishing the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government*.



that Cree consent is required for projects that have the potential to seriously impact our environment and our way of life. The notion of "social acceptability" is a critical feature of our treaty and of Aboriginal rights. We have concluded that uranium mining does not meet our test of social acceptability.

In response to our position, the Government of Québec ordered a province-wide moratorium on uranium mining during which time a review would be conducted by Québec's environmental review body, BAPE (Bureau des audiences publiques sur l'environnement). We have taken the position that a public review and public hearings pursuant to the BAPE process do not apply in the Cree territory. Social and environmental impact reviews are already provided for in the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*. We will continue to monitor this situation closely and we will continue to defend Cree treaty rights.

Health Funding Framework Agreement (2012)

During this fiscal year, we were able to successfully conclude negotiations on a funding framework for the Cree Health Board. This agreement ensures funding for the operations of the Cree Health Board, especially for capital investments in buildings, equipment and information systems, and also, for maintenance of assets.

Additionally, there will be improvements to regional services. These improvements will include: a new facility for the Chisasibi Hospital, haemodialysis facilities in Waskaganish, Youth Protection and Healing Services, a Traditional Healing Centre, a Regional Clinical Services Unit including telehealth and telemedicine, increased human resources, and enhanced information technologies.

Support to Communities in Dealing with Mining Companies

Our Cree Nation Mining Policy has continued to apply throughout Eeyou Istchee and it has guided us in a number of discussions and negotiations with proponents of mining projects. The basis of our Cree Mining Policy is that projects must be socially acceptable, they must be environmentally responsible and they must provide benefits to our communities.

During the course of the last fiscal year, we have worked in support of our communities to address several new proposed mining projects. Included in these activities were the negotiations of the Stornoway Agreement with Mistissini, an agreement on a proposed lithium project on the Nemaska traditional territory, a Pre-Development Agreement between Oujé-Bougoumou

and Northern Superior Resources, on-going negotiations between Oujé-Bougoumou and BlackRock Metals, and initial discussions between Washaw Sibi and Balmoral Mines. We have also continued to work closely with Wemindji to support the implementation of the Eleonore Agreement with Goldcorp.

We will continue to apply our Cree Mining Policy to ensure involvement and benefits for our communities.

Roundtable on Capacity Building

In March 2013, we brought together Cree post-secondary students for a very important weekend roundtable.

It became apparent to us that as a consequence of all the major agreements which our Cree Nation has concluded, a huge and unprecedented range of opportunities for employment for our Cree people has been created. All of these agreements point to opportunities for Cree professional development and very significant opportunities in the area of economic development. As I have said on many occasions, we now are poised to become the major economic and political force within Eeyou Istchee, and we are now positioned to truly become the masters of our own destiny.

However, our ability to fulfill this long-held dream will only be possible if we, as a Nation, take the necessary steps to encourage our people to obtain the education and the skills to assume this range of employment opportunities so that we, ourselves, can exercise meaningful control over the territory.

It is clear that the focus of the Cree Nation efforts must be on our youth. It is incumbent on us to find the appropriate ways to encourage and inspire our youth and direct their energies toward the achievement of a meaningful level of nation-building.

Our first major initiative to address this urgent issue was to organize this roundtable conference for our post-secondary students. The purpose of

this conference was to inform our students about the recent agreements we have concluded, what these agreements mean in terms of employment opportunities, and the types of educations that will be required to take advantage of these employment opportunities. The objective of this conference was to assist our students in focusing their educational endeavours in productive directions.

By all accounts, this weekend gathering was immensely successful. Cree leaders, past and present, made themselves available to describe our recent Cree history, the struggles our Nation has faced, and where we

... improvements will include: a new facility for the Chisasibi Hospital, haemodialysis facilities in Waskaganish, Youth Protection and Healing Services, a Traditional Healing Centre, a Regional Clinical Services Unit ...

have gotten to as a Nation. I believe this conference was a very inspiring event for our youth and we look forward to continuing to bring the message of the roundtable to the Cree Youth in all our communities.

Support for Cree Nishiyuu Walkers

We were all very inspired at our last Annual General Assembly by a young non-Cree youth named Wesley Prankard for his commitment to meaningful social change. Like me, many Crees wondered out loud: Where are our youth? Our Cree youth recently showed us where they were. Our Cree youth rose up from the community of Whapmagoostui to undertake a remarkable journey in the most difficult season of the year, to demonstrate their support for the need for change in the way in which the Government of Canada deals with Aboriginal issues. They began their walk as an expression of sympathy with the important initiatives to bring to the attention of Canadians the unacceptable living conditions in far too many of our First Nations communities across this country. And they began their walk to revive the historic unity of the First Nations peoples in our region of Québec. They also marched to demonstrate their belief in the need for Aboriginal unity, at a time when it is most needed.

Our Nishiyuu Walkers have reminded us also of the importance of protecting our lands and protecting our environment. It will be only through our direct involvement in what happens on our traditional territories that we can ensure that what happens there takes into account the preciousness of the land, the waters and the wildlife, and takes into account the future generations who also will need the land and its resources to sustain them. We need to have the rights of First Nations across the country recognized and those rights need to be translated into tangible benefits for our peoples. We are reclaiming our lands in northern Québec and we need to send out the message that this can be done across the country. It is in these ways that our Youth have inspired us, and it is in all of these ways that they are showing the way.

Oujé-Bougoumou Complementary Agreement

I was honoured to be able to participate in the first anniversary of the signing of Complementary Agreement No. 22 in Oujé-Bougoumou. This has become an important commemorative occasion in Oujé-Bougoumou and every year, on November 7, the community will remember where they came from, how far they have come, and use the opportunity to renew their commitment to an even brighter future. We continue to work with representatives of the Governments of Québec and Canada to ensure that the final procedural steps are completed in the long process of formal recognition of Oujé-Bougoumou as a Cree Band.

Official Opening of Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute

It was my pleasure to participate in the public opening of our Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute in June 2012 in Oujé-Bougoumou. This event was a wonderful occasion for people from all corners of Eeyou Istchee to celebrate the coming into being of this new and vital Cree entity, and to celebrate the richness and beauty of our traditional culture and way of life. No longer should the work of our ancestors be stored in the dusty drawers and vaults of faraway museums. We have brought our historical records back home to be admired and to be appreciated, first and foremost, by our own people.

Cree Nation Achievement Awards

In Mont Tremblant in August 2012 we once again held the annual Cree Nation Aboriginal Achievement awards to recognize outstanding achievements by Cree people in many areas of life, including sports, education, culture, arts and business. It is an inspiring occasion when we can give well-earned recognition to our own people who have worked hard to excel in the endeavours of their choosing. They are important role models and inspirations to us all.

Summit on Addictions and Dependencies

I very much welcomed the opportunity to attend, and to address, this important Cree symposium on addictions and dependencies held in Val d'Or in November 2012. It is fundamental, for our mission of building a Cree Nation, that we have healthy individuals, healthy families and healthy communities. In order for us to successfully build the kind of Cree Nation which we have in mind, that Nation must be built on a solid foundation. It is, therefore, absolutely essential that we focus on the problems facing our communities, and that we apply the same determination and creativity to addressing our health and social issues that we have applied to our political challenges over the years.

We can no longer sweep our social problems under the rug, hoping that they will go away. They will only be solved if we are honest in admitting the issues and apply our creative energies to dealing with them. There is now too much at stake and we cannot, as a Nation, afford to ignore those problems.

MOU on Alternative Energy

An important agreement with Hydro-Québec was concluded on the potential for our communities to identify, construct and operate facilities which can provide energy for our communities derived from alternative sources. This agreement has the potential for making an important contribution to the community development



Gaston Cooper

Economic and Sustainable Development

Message from the Director Alfred Loon

The Department of Economic and Sustainable Development (DESD) functions within a vision of the great potential that the Cree Nation has for developing a strong and growing economy throughout Eeyou Istchee. We are committed to putting into place the tools that all Cree communities can use to find new ways to increase employment, open new businesses, create economic activity, and expand wealth creation for all Eeyou and Eenu in their home communities.

Eeyou Istchee holds the promise of many valuable resources that will sustain the Cree Nation for generations to come. However, as stewards of this land, we must take great care to encourage the development of our resource-based enterprises, while retaining the richness of our land and preserving its health. Our territory has been home to the Cree Nation for generations, so as we look at creative ways to build a strong contemporary economy, we must remember our responsibility to care for the land and to ensure the quality of life for all of the generations to come. These are the principles that underlie our Strategic Framework for Economic Development in Eeyou Istchee.

Moving from Vision to Reality

In keeping with these principles, in 2012-2013 the DESD has embarked on a number of projects that have been in the planning stages for several years. The launch of wider operations for the Eeyou Communications Network (ECN) this year means that what was once a vision on a drafting table is now a reality. We are moving

closer to full services in distance education, telehealth, Internet services and public security while offering other fiber optic services to our clients throughout the Northern Québec region. And with the launch this year of the Cree Entrepreneurship Assistance Fund, we are pleased to provide concrete support to Cree entrepreneurs who are opening new businesses or expanding existing ones. 2012-2013 also saw more activity within the mining sector in Eeyou Istchee. We are in discussion with partners in a number of different mining projects to ensure that benefits such as employment and spin-off business opportunities are part of the development process, in addition to any negotiated royalties. The CRA has stated clearly that we are not anti-development, but we will be diligent in the defense of our land as mining operations unfold in and around our territory.

The DESD has also been actively pursuing support for a number of projects through the Regional Development Fund administered by the Provincial Government. Funded contributions such as the *Special Agreement on Cree Elders*, the social economy, and others that support the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association are all important elements that contribute to better quality of life within our communities. As such, we will continue to monitor and encourage growth in funding support for these and other programs and services. We are also exploring innovative programs and services for the youth of the Cree Nation.

Training and education play a critical part in the economic development of our Nation and 2012-2013 has

seen a series of training programs undertaken throughout Eeyou Istchee. Special entrepreneurship training sessions have been held in several communities for small business owners, and many local Economic Development Officers have been participating in courses offered by the Nicola Valley Institute of Training (NVIT) as part of a professional level program for Community Economic Development.

Moving Forward: Looking Back

Development is all about taking steps forward along a given path. Even if it seems to take a long time, progress in economic development becomes evident through the actions and dedication of community-level people who open businesses, create employment and play an active role in their own communities. Evidence of real economic development is apparent in every Cree community, whether we see a new gas bar, construction operation or new community facilities that create employment.

One area where progress in economic development will become even more evident is in the field of residential housing. The DESD has been in discussion with the Capital Works Department throughout 2012-2013, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue in this area. The DESD believes strongly that a key component of economic development is individual home ownership, because owning a home is often the first step for many individuals toward long-term investment. Home ownership also generates the need for local suppliers of goods and services to provide what home owners are looking for to maintain their homes and properties. The start-up of these new businesses also provides incentives for local young people to seek the training and education they will need to gain employment in housing construction and maintenance.

With each step forward in developing local economies, each Cree community has an opportunity to play a positive part in the growth of the Cree Nation. Within the DESD, we will of course offer concrete support to help build new businesses, expand existing ones, pursue home ownership, participate actively in the natural resources sector, train new workers, and continue the dialogue with all of the residents of Eeyou Istchee. Our goal is to move forward on the path to economic self-sufficiency and wealth creation, without forgetting to look back and see the accomplishments of those who came before us as stewards of Eeyou Istchee.

Following is a review of the programs, services, activities, projects and events that have defined an exceptionally busy year for the team members of Economic and Sustainable Development.

Meegwetch.

Aboriginal Community Economic Development Program

In 2012-2013, the Department of Economic and Sustainable Development (DESD) of the Cree Regional Authority has continued to work with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), an Aboriginal-governed public post-secondary institute based in British Columbia, to deliver the Aboriginal Community Economic Development Program (ACED): an important initiative, first implemented in 2011-2012, that is designed to address the needs of the local Economic Development Officers (EDOs) within the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee.

The ACED Program is designed to encourage and support the professional development of EDOs as well as to satisfy the requirements of the Aboriginal Economic Developers' Certification within the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO).

The objectives of the ACED Program are:

- to assist the local EDOs in the acquisition of skills and knowledge essential to the development of healthy Cree communities through social and economic planning, business development strategies and human resource management;
- to provide the local EDOs with current and pertinent information regarding economic development in Aboriginal communities in Canada and around the world;
- to enable the local EDOs to combine Community Economic Development (CED) theory with practical skills that will enable them to readily implement their learning and contribute to the health, well-being and development of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee;
- to enable the local EDOs to satisfy the requirements of the Aboriginal Economic Developer's Certification by fulfilling the sixteen competencies of the CANDO Technician training, allowing them to apply for technician status with CANDO; and
- to recognize the essential role of the local EDOs and to increase their visibility in the development of healthy Cree communities.

Even if it seems to take a long time, progress in economic development becomes evident through the actions and dedication of community-level people ...

Although the training program was initially intended for the local EDOs, due to its success and popularity, it was expanded to include the local Tourism Officers (TOs) within the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee. There are currently fourteen individuals enrolled in the program who have successfully completed ten of

the twenty-three credit courses of the ACED Diploma Program.

With the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee working toward self-government and economic self-reliance, the DESD believes that it is important that the local EDOs and TOs possess the necessary skills and knowledge in all areas of economic development to more effectively and efficiently fulfill the requirements of their positions. This will have a direct impact on strengthening the economic base within the Cree communities of Eeyou Istchee.

The DESD would like to thank the Cree Human Resources Development of the Cree Regional Authority for their continued support in demonstrating our collective commitment to the health, well-being and development, and our interest in providing worthwhile capacity-building initiatives to the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee.

Specific Agreement on Social Economy

Through the Québec Government Action Plan for Collective Entrepreneurship, the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du Territoire (MAMROT) and the Cree Regional Authority (CRA), through the Department of Economic and Sustainable Development (DESD), implemented the *Specific Agreement concerning the Consolidation and Development of the Social Economy in the Cree Communities of the Nord-du-Québec Region* in 2011-2012. The goals and objectives of the Government action plan for collective entrepreneurship are twofold:

1. To maximize the impact of this sector of economic activity that includes cooperatives and non-profit organizations (NPOs); and
2. To give regional stakeholders concrete means, adapted to their reality, to enhance the vitality of the regions and to meet the needs of communities within each region, in a perspective of sustainable development.

During the 2012-2013 year, the DESD has continued the implementation of the Agreement by providing coordination and assistance to the efforts of all parties involved, in order to carry out the objectives of the Agreement to develop the social economy and to strengthen social economy enterprises in the Cree communities. The principal lines of action are:

- Promotion of the social economy;
- Consensus-building and networking;
- Consolidation, experimentation and development of new niches and projects; and
- Skills development.

Under the agreement, the MAMROT and the CRA will pool their resources totalling \$500,000. The MAMROT will contribute \$50,000 per year for the next 5 years, for a total of \$250,000, and the CRA's contribution to this agreement would come from the Regional Development Fund to match the MAMROT commitment.

The DESD organized and attended the first meeting on the Social Economy on September 6, 2012 in Oujé-Bougoumou, QC, to explore the opportunities for the Cree Nation within the context of the social economy. The objective of the meeting was to provide an orientation and training sessions on social economy and to review the Specific Agreement. This resulted in the following measures:

- Establishment of the Cree Social Economy Regional Table (CSERT);
- Development of an action plan for 2012-2013 that outlines the actions to be undertaken to implement the Agreement;
- Development of the Mission Statement of the CSERT; and
- Development of the Cree definition of the Social Economy with a cultural component.

The CSERT has implemented some of the specific actions outlined in the 2012-2013 Action Plan, and the DESD has and will continue to provide the coordination, support and assistance to all the parties involved: the Cree Regional Authority (CRA), the MAMROT, the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association (COTA), the Cree Trappers Association (CTA) and the Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association (CNACA).

Regional Agreement on Equality for Cree Women

The Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine (MCCCF) and the CRA, through the Cree Native Women of Eeyou Istchee Association (CWEIA), are implementing the 2011-2015 Regional Agreement on Equality. The objectives of the Agreement are:

- To promote gender equality through various media sources as well as support Cree women at various levels of industries and areas;
- To promote and recognize Cree women entrepreneurs and employment opportunities in various workplaces and sectors;
- To promote balance between work and home for women and young Cree mothers and encourage various workplaces and organizations in the Cree Nation to improve measures to support women and young single mothers;

- To make a concerted effort to develop programs and projects to promote health and well-being to ensure that the system is tailored to all Cree women and their families;
- To develop various initiatives and projects to combat violence in all its forms against Cree women and girls; and
- To encourage Cree women to seek political and governance leadership training and representation in various arenas.

Under the agreement, the MCCCCF and CRA will pool their resources totalling \$879,000. The MCCCCF will contribute \$17,000 in Year 1, 18,000 in Year 2, \$22,000 in Year 3, and \$22,000 in Year 4, for a total of \$79,000, and the CRA will contribute \$200,000 per year over the four years, for a total of \$800,000. This amount comes from the Regional Development Fund, and is subject to the monies allocated to the Regional Development Fund.

Here is the Report filed by the CWEIA for 2012-2013.

Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association

Message from the President, E. Virginia Wabano

As another year comes to an end, I am taking a moment to sit back and reflect on the accomplishments of our Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association (CWEIA). With a small number of volunteers and minimal paid staff, running the Association has represented a huge learning curve. I have thanked our dedicated team of volunteers and employees on numerous occasions in the past, and I will continue to thank them in years to come. With our world evolving into a time-precious society, it is imperative that we have more people joining the team and spreading out the work to be done.

The year was a good one for CWEIA, as we were able to develop many partnerships and to secure funding for programs and services. This obviously is the result of hard work by the staff, Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, along with their Local Women's Groups and our partners. Congratulations to all involved!

CWEIA is about bettering the lives of all women and children in Eeyou Istchee, and this is a major part of the services that the association provides. It was pleasing to see the hard work of our team and Board of Directors being validated by concrete results. Congratulations to the Interim Regional Coordinator and the various committees on their excellent work. This is encouraging for the future development of our association, and allows many to celebrate success. Well done to all teams for their commitment and enthusiasm throughout the year.

Many things have been discussed, administered and planned during the year. At this point, I must say a special thank you to those individuals who, on numerous occasions, have guided and assisted us with their knowledge – this has inspired us all to continue supporting the development of CWEIA.

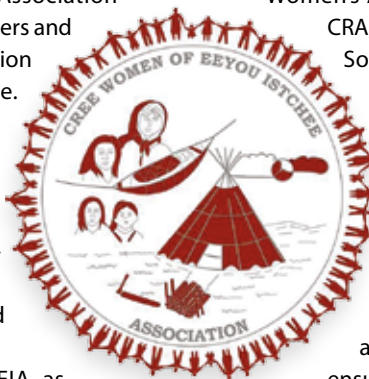
The year has been a rewarding, tiring, exciting and at times a frustrating one, a year that has enlightened me to the enormous debt of gratitude we owe to current and past staff and Board volunteers. On the whole, I have enjoyed this year and I look forward to representing CWEIA in future years. Together we can continue to make CWEIA bigger and better.

The Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association (CWEIA) is a "grassroots" and non-profit organization that was legally constituted on January 28th, 2009, and funded from a variety of sources including government grants, our affiliation with Québec Native Women's Association, Justice Québec, GCC(EI)/CRA, as well as the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of Québec. It is operated under the leadership of a volunteer Board of Directors, composed entirely of women from 12 communities, which include the 9 Cree communities of Washaw Sibi, Senneterre, Val d'Or and Chibougamau. The Board of Directors represents women regionally and at the community level, to ensure the diverse voices and issues of the communities are heard and considered in the programming. The administration staff is composed of a Regional Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development Coordinator and Contractual Employees.

The CWEIA's principal mandate is to improve the lives, livelihood and outcomes of Cree women and children in Eeyou Istchee. Through main activities, CWEIA seeks to ensure the full participation of Cree women in Eeyou Istchee - economically, politically, socially and more - so that they may achieve their full potential and contribute to the building of a safe, secure, just and healthy Cree Nation for future generations of Cree beneficiaries. CWEIA pursues to create healthy communities, strengthen family roles and responsibilities, nurture and protect our Nishiiyuu ways, and help create the



Virginia Wabano, President of CWEIA



conditions where the traditional values, faith, knowledge and wisdom of our Elders are sustained for all Eeyouch.

We would like to acknowledge the following women for their efforts, contribution and commitment:

CWEIA Board of Directors

Rita Masty, Local President of Whapmagoostui
Mary-Louise Snowboy, Local President of Chisasibi
Carman Faries, Local President of Wemindji
Shirley Moses, Local President of Eastmain
Ethel Taylor, Local President of Waskaganish
Rose-Lynn Rabbitskin, Local President of Nemaska
Christine Petawabano, Local President of Mistissini
Priscilla Bosum, Oujé-Bougoumou Representative
Gloria Jolly, Local President of Waswanipi
Rebecca Moore, Local President of Senneterre
Felicia Polson, Local President of Washa Sibi
Urban – Val d’Or, Chibougamau – vacant

CWEIA Executive Board

Virginia Wabano, President of CWEIA
Carmen Faries, Vice-President
Noreen Moar, Secretary/Treasurer
Irene House, Elder Representative
Samantha Awashish, Youth Representative

Elders’ Advisory Group of CWEIA

Irene House, Chisasibi
Nancy Danyluk, Wemindji
Maria Kawapit, Whapmagoostui

CWEIA Staff

Linda Shecapio, Interim Regional Coordinator (Contract)
Charlotte Ottereyes, Regional Economic Development Coordinator
Irene Blacksmith, Administrative Assistant

Annual Activity Report

Although our organization still is in the early stages of its development, we have once again demonstrated our usefulness, with another busy and successful year. We are taking this opportunity to thank all of the women who have contributed to the initial establishment of the Association, and have led us to move forward, facing all of the hurdles and challenges with a positive and determined attitude. Members and partners alike notice that the CWEIA continues to flourish and to conduct itself with professionalism. With this said, allow us to present the report on the activities that stem from the implementation of our Action Plan for 2012-2013.

With its initial objective of promoting gender equality through various media, as well as of supporting Cree Women at all levels of industries and areas in the region

and throughout Québec, CWEIA continues to raise awareness to issues through its website www.cweia.ca and other outlets such as *The Nation*, *Destinations Magazine* (Air Creebec) and Facebook (CWEIA). Earlier this year, the Stop Violence Campaign poster (produced by Beesum) was distributed to the Cree communities. Public announcements were provided through local and regional radio programming as well. During CWEIA’s Second Awards Gala (poster by Beesum), CBC Maamuitau conducted interviews with the women that attended the event and some of the Award recipients.

In terms of representation, CWEIA continues to be the voice of women. We defend women’s interests through advocacy and representation on different committees on the local, regional, provincial and national scenes. The Association is actively involved in various working groups, including:

Québec Native Women Association (QNWA):

- The President of CWEIA is actively involved on the QNWA Board of Directors. She participated in three meetings since her election as President of the CWEIA.
- Three Executive Board members of the CWEIA and the Interim Regional Coordinator attended QNWA’s General Assembly in Wendake, QC on October 27 and 28, 2012.

Cree Nation Youth Council:

- The CWEIA Youth Representative has an active role within the organization.

Regional Elders Council:

- The CWEIA Elder Representative has an active role within the organization.

On behalf of CWEIA, the Interim Regional Coordinator participated in:

- *Second Cree Mining Conference* on Oct. 31 and Nov.1, 2012 in Montreal.
- *Cree Symposium: Addictions & Substance Abuse* on November 19 to 21, 2012 in Val d’Or.
- *Cree Women and Mining*: Active participation in the Working Group.
- *Cree Social Wellness Policy Taskforce*: Active participation in the Taskforce.
- *Cree Social Economy Round Table Committee*: Active participation of Interim Regional Coordinator and Regional Economic Development Coordinator.

CWEIA's 5th Annual General Assembly

The CWEIA successfully conducted its 5th Annual General Assembly on September 15 and 16, 2012 in Chisasibi. The local Native Women's Association of Mistissini will be hosting CWEIA's 6th Annual General Assembly on September 21 and 22, 2013. We look forward to seeing you there.

To ensure success in the implementation of our action plan, we have worked to improve internal communications, and have held meetings on a regular basis. For this past year, Board meetings were organized as follows:

- September 14, 2012 in Chisasibi.
- October 20, 2012 in Val d'Or.
- December 14, 2012 in Ottawa.
- February 15 to 17, 2013 in Val d'Or.

At this last meeting, a strategic planning session was conducted. CSB-Chairperson and some Commissioners, and the Executive Director of Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association met with the CWEIA-Board of Directors as well.

The CWEIA Executive Board met 'in-person' three times this year:

- September 29, 2012 in Gatineau, at the CWEIA's Satellite Office.
- October 20, 2012 in Val d'Or.
- April 19, 2013 in Gatineau, at the CWEIA's Satellite Office.

Please note that the Executive Board also meet right after their regular CWEIA Board of Directors' meetings (4 times) as well. Eight other meetings dealing with administrative matters were held with staff via teleconference.

CWEIA's 2nd Awards Gala

Our 2nd Awards Gala, held on December 15, 2012 in Ottawa, was a great success. It is a celebration that honours all women's gifts and efforts, and more importantly, it empowers participants and recognizes the achievements and contributions of many wonderful women. The awards presented included:

Women in Business – Sarah Moar from Chisasibi, for her perseverance, determination, commitment, hard work, dedication to her business and to the jobs that she has created in her community.

Women in Politics – Violet Pachanos from Chisasibi, for her leadership, influence, politically-focused actions resulting in high-level accomplishments for her community.

Women in Art and Culture – Dinah Loon from Mistissini, for her creativity, artistic expression and cultural pride.

Women in Health Promotion and Fitness – Ethel Taylor from Waskaganish, for her energy, mind-body-spirit consciousness, as well as for her passion for wellness.

Women in Education – Stella Masty from Whapmagoostui, for her knowledge, dedication, experience and her desire to learn and to teach others the importance and quality of education.

Women in Public Service – Marlene I. Kitchen from Waswanipi, for her compassion and care for others, willingness to help, dedication and commitment to serve the people of her community.

Elder Contribution – Harriet Coon-Come from Mistissini, for her beauty, honour, wisdom, experience, strength and high zest for life.

Youth Contribution – Savannah Blacksmith from Mistissini, for her vibrant, energetic, motivated spirit that is an inspiration to the youth, elders and her entire community.



Award Winners (from left) Sarah Moar, Ethel Katapatuk Taylor, Elder Harriet Coon-Come, Savannah Blacksmith and Marlene I. Kitchen. Missing are: Violet Pachano, Dinah Loon and Stella Masty.

Health Issues

The CWEIA is involved in various programs and projects aimed at fostering the health and well-being of Cree women and their families. The following activities were carried out with this focus:

- Completion of the Resist-A-Ball Program in Whapmagoostui and Senneterre during the winter months.
- The President of CWEIA, an Elder Representative and the Interim Regional Coordinator participated in discussions on the Midwifery file with the Cree Health Board's Assistant Executive Director of Nishiyuu.

- The Interim Regional Coordinator participated in the Ontario Aboriginal Health and Healing Centre visit from March 11 to 17, 2013, organized by the Nishiyuu Department of the Cree Health Board. CWEIA also participated in the recruitment of possible candidates for Interviewer Trainees.
- Arlene Faries was hired as Legal Consultant to provide a research report on the Charter of Rights of Cree Children, in the context of family violence legislation. The report will be presented at the CWEIA's Board of Directors' meeting scheduled for June 15 and 16, 2013.

Violence Issues

One of the CWEIA's objectives is the development of initiatives and projects to combat violence in all its forms against Cree women and girls in the Cree Nation and within Québec. To this end, the Association has taken part in the following activities:

- As previously mentioned, Stop Violence Campaign posters were available in each Cree community and urban centres for the month of February 2013. Posters include the selected winners' drawings from the Elementary level, with a heading stating "Say No to Violence".
- Local Women's Groups continue to implement a variety of activities in their respective communities to address the issue of violence.
- During CWEIA's fifth Annual General Assembly in Chisasibi, a female survivor shared the story of her encounter with all forms of violence during her childhood and adolescent years. She has continued her healing journey as a woman, mother, and wife. It was a powerful and inspiring message, and it moved everyone in the Assembly.
- The Association recently received an official approval of funding from Status of Women Canada, in the amount of \$195,000, to implement a project from March 2013 to May 2015. We will conduct gender-based analysis to develop evidence-informed programs, policies and service to combat violence against women and girls. This project will assist in fostering a movement that will involve Cree men united for a better Cree Nation. We would like to thank Donald Nicholls, Michael Chettleburgh and Wayne Rabbitskin for their wonderful assistance and expertise.

In conclusion, with the help and guidance of traditional values, faith in the Creator and ourselves, knowledge and wisdom of our Elders, support from sponsors and partners, the CWEIA has been able to develop and sustain partnerships that will contribute to

improving our Nation. Our Association's programs and services continue to innovate and to evolve in order to better meet the specific needs of all Cree women and children in Eeyou Istchee. It was indeed another year of success and endless commitment for CWEIA, and we thank all of our members, volunteers and team members for your respect and participation in our projects and events.

Study on Business Activities in Eeyou Istchee

Although the DESD has experienced success in carrying out most of its mandates during the past year, we were unfortunately unable to deliver on the directive issued by the GCC(EI)/CRA Council/Board to conduct or acquire a study to determine the division of public contracts between Cree and non-Cree companies in Eeyou Istchee. The difficulties that we encountered were due to the nature and scope of the study, the range and extent of contracting done by the Cree and non-Cree companies in Eeyou Istchee, low participation rates from the Cree companies of Eeyou Istchee as well as to time and budget constraints.

However, the DESD believes that it is imperative to have data on the level of business activity in Eeyou Istchee, be it in the construction, mining, forestry, energy and transportation sectors, for the planning of economic development initiatives at both the local and regional levels. We will therefore be revisiting the directive issued by the GCC(EI) CRA Council/Board, with a view to incorporating it into a more comprehensive study that we are planning in 2013-2014.

The planning for the study has taken place and some preliminary preparations have been done to undertake it; these involve:

- Reviewing the directive to determine the relevant time frame to use, the industry sectors to include and the data to be collected;
- Identifying, collecting, reviewing and analyzing primary sources of data;
- Identifying and recruiting the proper professional expertise to determine the most efficient and cost-effective methodology to be utilized, and to choose the data analysis and report preparation methods; and
- Identifying and recruiting the proper professional expertise to compile and analyze the data and prepare the final report.

Given the nature and scope of the planned study, it will need to be a joint effort between the DESD, CRA, CreeCo and the nine Cree communities of Eeyou Istchee.

Cree Entrepreneurs Assistance Fund

In July 2011, the CRA established the Cree Entrepreneurs Assistance Fund (CEAF) to encourage new business start-ups as well as the expansion of existing Cree businesses in Eeyou Istchee. Since the program was established, its implementation was assigned to the DESD's Business Services Officer.

The CEAF is supported by a first-time allotment of \$2.5M. Since this is the first time that the program has been operational, a very small percentage of the initial fund has been disbursed to date, for a number of reasons:

- The CEAF was established, rolled out, and put into operation simultaneously in July 2011, and should have been operationalized over a longer period of time. Our first challenge consisted in recruiting a qualified Business Services Officer (BSO).
- Public awareness of the existence of the CEAF had to be created so that its objectives and limitations were publicized. Therefore a broader, more comprehensive communications strategy was required to encourage new entrepreneurs from all communities to apply. DESD purchased advertising space in the Nation magazine, had graphic designers prepare a brochure, and printed promotional posters for distribution to all communities.
- EDOs from all communities were expected to promote the CEAF and provide their community residents with information on how to apply for the subsidies.
- The range of applications varied widely in terms of quality. Most applicants required additional assistance to prepare a proper business plan and provide backup documentation.
- The CEAF is provided as a supplementary funding source, where contributions from the CEAF are contingent upon other funders being confirmed first.
- Review and analysis of applications was delayed due to lack of experienced manpower in the DESD. Specialized training was given to the BSO, to provide guidance and to streamline the evaluation process. Weekly teleconference meetings were held with representatives of other funding entities so that the BSO could gain valuable knowledge and experience in the analysis and evaluation of applications.

In addition, three community-level training sessions were held on the subject of entrepreneurship. These sessions, held in Oujé-Bougoumou, Waskaganish and Mistissini, all contained material and information on the CEAF. Moreover, a tour of Cree communities held during

the summer included representatives from Aboriginal Business Canada, Business Development Canada and the Eeyou Economic Group. The BSO from DESD took part in this tour and promoted the CEAF at each session.

Essentially, in this first Stage of the CEAF operation, management of the program has come into a stronger focus, and problems with the timing, receipt and handling of applicant files are being dealt with. EDOs at the community level will assume greater involvement with the application process, and will work closer with new and existing applicants who wish to access funding.

Since the CRA is neither a registered charity, nor a venture capital investment vehicle, the DESD will continue to maintain a high level of control over the review process, and will continue to apply tight levels of control over recommendations for the disbursement of the CEAF funds.

As we move into the next stage of the CEAF program, the DESD will require additional experienced personnel to 1) promote the program, 2) communicate the parameters of the program and 3) review the applications files as they are received. Human resource issues are being dealt with at this time. An additional improvement may be the extension of the review and approval process to include a small evaluation committee to review existing applications and reduce the backlog of files received to date.

The CEAF is supported by a first-time allotment of \$2.5M.

Projects Submitted

The DESD is pleased to report that although there have been some challenges in the first stage of the CEAF program, there have been many positive outcomes from the establishment of this funding program. Economic development within Eeyou Istchee is a crucial element of building strong local communities, and will make a tangible difference in the lives of Cree beneficiaries. Whether in the form of small business start-ups, expansion of existing businesses, or the development of additional industrial activity, growth in economic activity will produce growth in job creation, and send strong messages throughout the local community that more commercial development will make each town stronger.

DESD received 29 applications since the beginning of the program in July 2011. Of these, some creative and innovative projects have come forward that have viable business plans and strong potential to succeed.

For example, the following promoters brought projects to the CEAF for funding:

- Cree Nord – Simon Mianscum from Mistissini was the first recipient of the CEAF. Mr. Mianscum purchased an item of heavy machinery equipment and was awarded a contract on the

construction of the extension of 167 North to the mine site of Stornoway.

- Bryan Wynn proposes to open CBBK Convenience in Whapmagoostui as a retail enterprise. Mr. Wynn will supply the community with its basic needs of milk, eggs, bread and other confectionary items that community members require on a daily basis.
- Elaine and Anthony Macleod, siblings from Mistissini, have an ambitious project to establish a Tim Hortons franchise that will be a welcome addition to the community. It will be the first in Eeyou Istchee, and the two partners will commence operations in April 2013, following their intensive training program for franchisees offered at Tim Hortons University.

While each of these applications has been approved for CEAF funding, they have also been supported by other governmental agencies, showing their strong potential to become successful. We applaud the efforts of these local promoters, and are pleased to contribute to their projects. With the opening of any one of these start-up businesses, very real employment is created that will benefit a number of community members.

We note as well that the applicants to the CEAF program include several women entrepreneurs, first-time business owners, sole proprietors, and long-standing entrepreneurs. Of the nine Cree communities, applications were received from eight, while we expect new

thirty years ago. If the CEAF helps to sustain the level of interest and supports the success of Cree entrepreneurs at the local community level, economic development expansion throughout the region will become a reality.

Other projects submitted include some interesting potential business start-ups, but still have more work to do before their plans can be approved and CEAF funding awarded. A brief review of some of the ideas brought forward follows, while specific details are not revealed to maintain confidentiality:

- a consulting company;
- an entertainment company;
- an office supplies company.

Most projects submitted to the CEAF in this first stage of operations sought the maximum amount of subsidy available. While this is certainly not to be unexpected, there is a need for greater understanding of the overall purpose, and vision of the CEAF. As we see it, the CEAF will offer strong promoters of good business ideas an opportunity to expand, and supplement, the funding they have already secured to implement their business plan. The DESD has a responsibility to the CRA to manage its funds professionally and conservatively, and is not about to expose Cree funds to unnecessary risk. For this reason, a stringent set of criteria and evaluation guidelines mean that not all applications will be approved, particularly in their first submission. We expect that the quality of applications and business plans will improve dramatically in the next stage of the CEAF operations, since most applicants will gain valuable experience from their first submission. Once the goals and objectives of the program, as well as the criteria and procedures, are more fully understood, the DESD expects that more successful applications will be fielded. As entrepreneurs gain an improved, and perhaps more sophisticated vision of the CEAF, particularly as a supplementary (and complementary) source of funds to larger external grants, the overall amounts requested by each applicant may be reduced slightly.

As the CEAF program continues to operate, a clear picture will also emerge of the kind of projects that will not be considered acceptable. EDOs will become more knowledgeable of the program's limitations and restrictions, and will be able to advise their clients of this information. Typical examples of these proposals might include:

- production of substances / products harmful to the environment;
- transfer of existing non-Native owned companies to Cree-owned operations;



CEAF, DESD

Dignitaries (and a lot of hungry people) attended the official opening of the first Cree Tim Hortons franchise in Mistissini.

applications from the ninth – Chisasibi – in the near future. Businesses included in this round of applications include: catering, lodging, transport, sports outfitting, towing, tire shop, lumber, consulting, bed and breakfast, and convenience store operations. Such a variety of business opportunities is very exciting, and is a clear indication of the type of economic development diversity that was envisaged in Section 28 of the JBNQA over

- entities not offering local employment opportunities;
- bars or drinking establishments / tobacco distribution.

Conclusion

Section 28 of the JBNQA made it clear that economic development needs to be an integral part of the growth of autonomy for the Cree Nation. As the economy of Eeyou Istchee begins to emerge at this time in the advancement of the Cree Nation, progress in the form of business start-ups and expansion must be promoted enthusiastically and practically by the regional government. This kind of economic progress underlies not only the intention, but the realization of the spirit of Section 28. It shows that Eeyou and Eenu are taking significant first steps to support their own families and their own communities, and to offer real employment opportunity at the local level.

By continuing to support this important initiative, specifically by renewing the annual allotment of \$2.5M for the CEAF program, the CRA will acknowledge, on a tangible level, the strong relationship that exists between local economic development, financial support for Cree entrepreneurs, autonomy for the Cree Nation and overall progress for the people of Eeyou Istchee.

While the CEAF is a regional program, we would also like to emphasize that real economic development at the community level must emerge from local operators, entrepreneurs, business owners and individuals. It is not something that can be dictated, imposed or shaped from outside the context of each Cree community, no matter how strong the understanding of that context by regional leaders. While there might be models that could be replicated from one community to another, the actual establishment of a local business needs to fit the community where it will reside. This aspect of local-community engagement in the process of economic development remains at the core of the Strategic Plan for Economic Development in Eeyou Istchee. The DESD has noted, on many occasions, the importance of allowing, and encouraging, each individual community to take the initiative to establish its own foundation for economic development. Where several micro-business start-ups may be the path that one community chooses, another may find it more efficient to pour its efforts into one large-scale production facility that would create many jobs for its residents. Another Cree community may choose to develop a modest, commercial operation location with several entrepreneurs, yet another may become focused on IT-based e-business opportunities.

However Cree entrepreneurs choose to venture into the world of economic development, the DESD is

committed to be supportive at each step along the way. Our engagement includes:

- better preparing EDOs to offer guidance to applicants;
- offering training sessions on how to start a business;
- facilitating proposal-writing seminars;
- opening dialogue with Cree youth on managing their own businesses;
- planning for business needs in the natural resource sectors (mining & forestry);
- encouraging artisans and artists to become entrepreneurs; or
- simply offering advice to existing business owners.

As more expansion of business ownership and economic activity takes hold within each Cree community, DESD will find creative ways to share information throughout the region. In this way, the success stories of business owners and operators might encourage other Crees to open their own shops, transport companies or internet-based service companies. Youth who witness the opportunities available through business development might also be encouraged to seek out the training and education they need to follow this path.

As the DESD, we look forward to the many advantages that will result from the continuation and expansion of the CEAF.

SAENCAT

The Secretariat to the Cree Nation - Abitibi-Témiscamingue Economic Alliance (SAENCAT) has continued its work in 2012-2013, with several activities and events undertaken to promote economic activity between the communities of the Cree Nation and businesses of Abitibi-Témiscamingue. As a financial partner of this organization, the CRA is committed to the continued success of the SAENCAT through the DESD, which has participated in a number of initiatives. Here are some highlights below:

Northern Lights Conference

A delegation of approximately 50 members attended the third biennial Northern Lights Conference held in Ottawa from February 1 to 4, 2012, exploring opportunities for northern development in a variety of sectors: mining, transportation, telecommunications, public relations, land surveying, environment and engineering.

Section 28 of the JBNQA made it clear that economic development needs to be an integral part of the growth of autonomy for the Cree Nation.

Business Matchmaking Event with Goldcorp/Éléonore project, Rouyn-Noranda

In March of 2012, the SAENCAT organized a special “matchmaking” event with business contractors and stakeholders who wish to pursue business opportunities with all major influential departments of Goldcorp. The importance of the discussions was underlined by the presence of key members of the Goldcorp project team who met with some 20 companies that were pursuing business. Members of the SAENCAT Board of Directors were also present including Mr. Mario Provencher, Mayor of Rouyn-Noranda, Mr. Alfred Loon of the Cree Regional Authority and Mr. Marcel Jolicoeur, President of the Val d’Or Chamber of Commerce.

Visit of Latin American Media to Abitibi-Témiscamingue

The development of several mining projects in Latin America has been delayed or hampered by the sensitive climate that exists between indigenous people and the local governments. Development work continues to improve this climate and also to attract Canadian investors, so a group of Latin American journalists were invited to learn how the Cree Nation and the Provincial Government do business harmoniously and in an environmentally friendly way with surrounding communities. Several prominent community leaders including Dr. Ted Moses, Mr. Romeo Saganash, and Mr. Claude Major participated in the visit on March 9, 2012. Officials cited the on-going work of the SAENCAT as an important model of how Canada develops successful relationships among different communities within a specific region.

Revamping of the SAENCAT website

Work was done to redesign and improve the Secretariat’s website, and involved reorganizing information, implementing new tabs and retaining historical materials. New space was added to register new members, post articles of interest and publish statistics related to the organization. Most importantly, elements of interactivity have been added to improve the users’ experience with the site.

Building the North Mining Conference

The City of Val d’Or, the Cree Mineral Exploration Board and the GCC(EI) hosted a major conference on May 31 and June 1, 2012 in Val d’Or. Prominent speakers, panelists and presenters addressed the many northern opportunities, challenges, issues and strategies related to mining exploration and development in the Cree Territory. Over 400 registered delegates also explored strategies to promote business alliances, Aboriginal co-enterprises, and address the human resources development issues and interests in the mining sector.

SAENCAT sends a delegation to Wemindji

A group of eighteen people from Abitibi-Témiscamingue participated in an orientation/familiarization trip to Wemindji on June 6, 2012. The focus of the mission was to build awareness of the economic development potential for the community of Wemindji. The experience was also intended to explore and develop business alliances and future partnership opportunities. The visit included a series of presentations for the visiting delegation by several speakers including Chief Rodney Mark, Mr. Gilbert Georgekish, Mr. Jonathan Saganash and former Chief Reggie Mark.

Business Exchange Day

The 10th Annual Business Exchange Day was held on December 5, 2012 in Val d’Or. The highly successful event brought 168 businesses from the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region and 46 enterprises from the Cree Territory together to explore business opportunities. These networking initiatives are an economic development lever for companies to establish strategic partnerships across many different sectors and fields. The SAENCAT reported on a 2011 study that found the matchmaking format resulted in several million dollars in contracts that directly influenced economic development in the North.

Eeyou Communications Network

Eeyou Communication Network (ECN) is a non-profit telecommunication corporation that provides regional broadband carrier services for the Cree communities of Eeyou Istchee and municipalities of the James Bay region. ECN delivers advanced reliable and cost-effective network access for the benefit of communities, families, youth and elders. This unique network brings diversified connectivity to global telecom networks and to the Internet highway for a broad range of social and economic opportunities. ECN was born in 2004 from former Cree Grand Chief Ted Moses’ vision, which aimed at the elimination of the digital divide affecting Northern Québec regions. ECN infrastructures use state-of-the-art



One of the vehicles used by ECN to install fiber optic cables throughout Eeyou Istchee.

optical fiber and Internet Protocol (IP) technologies to provide access to global communications for:

- Telehealth;
- Distance education and remote learning;
- Public safety and security;
- Administration of justice;
- e-Government and commercial services;
- Industrial and mining development;
- Virtual private networks;
- Internet high speed access;
- Broadband transport for telecom services providers;
- Connectivity to multiple public-service networks.

Under the leadership of the CRA and of its DESD Director, Mr. Alfred Loon, this innovative project is the result of a collective effort through an agreement between the CRA, the Cree School Board, the Conférence régionale des élus de la Baie-James and the Commission scolaire de la Baie-James.

After its first full year of operation providing services to Eeyou Istchee and James Bay organizations and businesses, the ECN management team is happy to report how this Cree initiative has already started to change the way telecommunications are delivered by eliminating the digital divide and allowing the whole region and the communities to have access to modern and better services. Many organizations now benefit from having the ECN network in place, such as the Cree School Board, Kinwapt Cable of Chisasibi, Creenet cable of Wemindji, the Commission scolaire de la Baie-James, community centres, municipalities of James-Bay, Hydro-Québec, public libraries, tourism centres and sport centres. And there is more to come.

Before ECN, the Cree School Board had interconnected its facilities using the usual local telecommunication service provider's infrastructure, as this was the only option available. By switching over to ECN, it now has access to more than fifty times the bandwidth it had previously, enabling thus the deployment of exciting new services for the School Board's staff and students. Technologies such as telephony over IP, video conferencing, distance learning and a blazing fast internet service have all improved the School Board's capacity to deliver excellent service within its establishments.

Another noteworthy example of the elimination of the digital divide is the community of Chisasibi and its local cable services provider, Kinwapt Cable. As one of the northernmost communities of Eeyou Istchee, Chisasibi was heavily affected by the digital divide. Even with the presence of Kinwapt Cable, the community still had poor Internet service due to the prohibitive price of Internet bandwidth from Télébec. This situation became

a thing of the past as Kinwapt upgraded its local Internet distribution infrastructure and switched over to ECN. Chisasibi now has more than ten times the bandwidth it previously had and the Internet service in Chisasibi is now better than in many communities in "the South".

Those are only some ways in which ECN has started eliminating the digital divide, and the best is yet to come, as ECN is an enabler of many bandwidth-intensive information and communication technologies such as high-definition video services, very high speed Internet, telemedicine, cloud computing and much more.

We are also proud to report the start of a major training initiative in telecommunications and IP networks for Cree and non-Cree individuals in the region. This \$3,000,000 and three-year program, initiated by the Cree Human Resource Development (CHRD) in partnership with ECN, also benefited from a \$1,500,000 grant from Services Canada's Strategic Partner Fund. As of yet, more than twenty Cree individuals have begun this training program and will benefit from the expertise of training and field-expert organisations such as the CEGEP de St-Félicien, Électro-Saguenay Ltée and C2T3, a training organization and research centre in telecommunications affiliated with the CEGEP de Trois-Rivières. CHRD and ECN are also actively working to integrate this training program in the 'Reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences' (RAC) process of Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. The recognition of competencies (RAC) in vocational and technical training is a process that allows adults to obtain official recognition for competencies acquired on the job or through real-life experience in relation to a program of study. Recognition is recorded in an official document (e.g. a report card or diploma).

To diversify its connectivity and to enhance its access to networks and services, ECN is currently deploying a fiber optic cable from Matagami to Amos to expand the fiber connectivity to Washaw Sibi. In its first phase of construction, ECN had connected over 100 sites to support schools, health, public security and public administrations. ECN is now proceeding with a project to connect 40 new sites by fiber optic to support organisations like the Eeyou Eenu Police Force, the Cree Justice facilities, the LG2 airport, the Health Board in regions 18 and 10, the Band offices and Departments of the CRA.

ECN is also addressing two key challenges this year. The first one, critical for health services in Eeyou Istchee and also for ECN operations, is the connectivity to the 'Réseau intégré de télécommunications multimédia' (RITM) of the Québec Government. This connectivity is absolutely required by the Cree Board of Health and

... this Cree initiative has already started to change the way telecommunications are delivered by eliminating the digital divide ...

Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) to adequately support health services, including the telemedicine applications that the Cree communities need. After two years struggling with complex and lengthy processes with governmental organizations, no tangible results were obtained. CBHSSJB, CRA and ECN are working jointly to address this very important issue.

The second challenge of ECN this year is to kick off the deployment of its Phase 2 to connect the communities of Eastmain, Waskaganish and Whapmagoostui, and to close the large fiber ring with a cable along the James Bay road. The ECN team is currently proceeding with analysis and have initiated discussions with potential partners.

On a final note, ECN's success has established Eeyou Istchee as a leader in its field by implementing a new and innovative model of telecommunications delivery in northern communities. Other regions struggling with

the digital divide have started looking up to us and following our lead, and this is something every one of us can be proud of.

Natural Resources Development

The DESD created the position of Regional Economic Resources Officer, which was filled in August 2012 by Melinda

Martin. She brings her legal education and work experience as a policy analyst to the position. She oversees the natural resources development files for the DESD, including mining and forestry.

Eeyou Istchee is undergoing tremendous development, and natural resources are at the centre of that expansion. Many partnerships between Crees and non-Crees are being formed to partake in the economic advancement of the territory. DESD strives to foster trust, build relationships, and have meaningful engagement while increasing economic opportunities for the Cree of Eeyou Istchee.

Forestry

The Provincial Government has been working toward a new forestry regime that came into force in April 2013. The Crees of Eeyou Istchee were granted an exemption to the application of such changes until negotiations are complete – namely recognition of the impact that the proposed legislation will have on their rights as recognized in the JBNQA and the subsequent agreements. DESD and other Cree representatives sit on that

negotiation committee. The forest industry appears to be finally experiencing an upswing. More opportunities are being made available to the Crees. DESD endeavours to maximize contract and employment opportunities for the people of Eeyou Istchee in the forest industry.

Mining

Mining represents a tremendous growth area for the economy of Eeyou Istchee. Three major projects are nearing production in the next two to three years. The potential economic opportunities are considerable.

A number of mining companies have negotiated Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs) that provide for preferential hiring with the local Cree communities as well as address training, jobs, contracts and profits. Enterprising individuals and companies are looking to fill the supply needs of the mining industry. People are getting trained in the various trades to meet the employment needs brought about by the mining activity. DESD personnel have participated in several mining meetings at the regional and national levels. The regional meetings include the second annual Cree Mining conference. DESD has participated in discussions with Goldcorp and Stornoway, where the focus of such discussions has included creating employment opportunities, education and business start-ups in mining-related fields.

CANDO and Natural Resources Canada jointly sponsored a pilot project workshop in Val d'Or entitled "Mining 101 Course". DESD and individuals from the communities were able to learn the basics of mining and see first-hand what a mine looks and feels like.

DESD joined the other representatives of the Crees of Eeyou Istchee at national mining meetings including the Canadian Aboriginal Mineral Association, Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, and the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.

Cree Human Resources Department and DESD have partnered to address the needs of Cree women and natural resources (with an emphasis on mining). Key Cree women have been brought together to discuss the women's perspective on the social and economic impacts of the development of natural resources as well as on traditional activities. Research and recommendations will be assembled to provide a comprehensive examination of these important issues for the communities and industries alike.

Biofoods

Foods that fall into this area originate from controlled organic sources, are not genetically modified, and do not involve the use of conventional pesticides. Biofoods represents a 14 billion dollar industry in Québec. Biofoods is a burgeoning area of economic activity in Eeyou Istchee. A number of local initiatives are under way



Melissa Martin

As part of the "Mining 101 Course", EDOs and a number of other participants visited a mine in Val d'Or.

and DESD is working with local entrepreneurs to develop more opportunities in the biofood industry.

Interdepartmental Coordination

DESD has been working on improving interdepartmental communication, especially with regard to data collection and research. Joint ventures and collective reviews enhance each Department's ability to address areas of mutual interest.

Eastmain Community Session

The (then acting) Economic Development Officer of Eastmain, Kenneth Gilpin, invited DESD representatives to Eastmain to assist with conducting a community session on Economic Development. The main goal was to identify the types of economic activity that members wish to see in their community. DESD employees acted as facilitators to help itemize Eastmain's economic goals. A future session to identify action plans was proposed. Participants were split into two groups, one for men and one for women to ensure the each perspective was recognized and documented. Findings from each group were shared in a plenary session at the end of the two-day event.

Specific Agreement on Elders

In 2008, the CRA and the Québec Government concluded a *Specific Agreement on Adapting Regional Services and Infrastructures in Order to Improve Living Conditions of Seniors in the Cree Regional Authority, Nord-du-Québec region, 2008-2013*. Accordingly, this is the final year for this Agreement.



Larry Shecapio

Through the Specific Agreement on Elders, programs provide opportunities for Elders to enjoy each other's company and to take part in various projects.



Larry Shecapio

Waswanipi Elders take a group picture in front of the Waswanipi Log House.

This past year, the list of projects that have been approved by CRA and implemented by the recipients include:

Elders Assistance Project – Whapmagoostui

The program's main activities undertaken by the community members of Whapmagoostui included: temporary camp set-up and dismantling, spring water delivery and snow removal, and finally oral and traditional teaching. The main goal of the traditional teachings was to transfer the skills and knowledge to the younger generation. The Elders demonstrated how to make snowshoes, fabricate ice chisel handles, skin stretcher sticks and skin scraper handles from objects found in nature such as trees and caribou bones. Elders shared with interested community members and visitors the proper procedure of how to butcher, cut up, dress and clean a killed caribou. Elders also taught students how caribou bones are cleaned and crushed in order to make traditional fare such as broth and fat. Elder women demonstrated traditional sewing skills used to transform material into supplies used to survive on the land. Items included moccasins and mittens from caribou hide, tents made from canvas and fishing nets from rope.

Supplying Firewood to the Elders – Waskaganish

Given the high cost of heating oil, community members try to curb their expenses by using firewood as a heating source. Firewood is not easily accessible to the members of Waskaganish, especially the less mobile Elders. A small number of labourers were hired to deliver at least two cords of firewood to the

majority of Elders living of the community. This program was well received by the Elders of Waskaganish.

Weechadow Chainow project – Mistissini

The Weechadow Chainow project began in 2012 with a variety of initiatives that were recommended by the local Elders’ Council and implemented by a coordinator, including:

Summer Camping Activity: Elders were able to spend a week on the land in August. The traditional camp was located in close proximity to the community – just a five-minute boat ride away. This short distance allowed all Elders, including those with health and/or mobility issues who would not be able to travel long distances, to re-live their traditional way of life. They ate traditional foods, slept in traditional canvas tents, played games, participated in a fishing derby, socialized and re-connected with each other.

Wood shed projects: Woodsheds were built by labourers for each of the Elders to protect their winter’s worth of fire wood.

Cooking houses project: Tent frames were put up to cook traditional foods such as goose, beaver and fish, and to clean big game kill.

Harvesting Projects: Hunters were hired to harvest traditional foods for the local elders; they came back with moose, rabbit, ptarmigan and beaver.

Natmachwewen program: Two Elder couples were hired to take young couples, in troubled relationships, out on the land to counsel them through active bush life, in hope to teach them the duties of being a good partner and parent to their children.

Chiyuutetaau program: A Cultural Coordinator visited the homes of several Elders twice a week to provide them with companionship, help out with light housekeeping duties and reduce loneliness.

The year provided a learning experience for all stakeholders. Projects and programs were all well received by the Elders in Mistissini, and were viewed as an on-going need in the community.

Aayanishchaa – Chisasibi

Aayanishchaa is a project undertaken by the Cree Nation of Chisasibi. The project involved preserving and maintaining Cree culture through audio and video recordings, as an educational tool for future

generations. Two interviewers were hired to interview Elders about their traditional knowledge and memories and stories about Cree history. The recordings were done in high quality format and will be exhibited in the community, to explain the history of the people.

Other activities included beadwork, sewing, knitting, embroidery, carving by using traditional tools such as the mookitaakin (crooked knife). During these activities, traditional food was served to participants and Elders. Thirty-two young Crees were taken out on the land by Elders and taught the traditional methods of trapping beaver in the wintertime. They learned where to look for beaver and about the raw materials used to trap beavers.

In closing, we are pleased to say that this program was very well received by elders in Eeyou Istchee and by front-line workers, and highly recommend that it continues in the future.

Regional Development Fund

The end of fiscal year 2012-2013 marked the expiration of the Regional Development Fund (RDF) Agreement. The RDF was established as part of Québec’s plan to devolve services and programs to the various regions in Québec.

For the purposes of the administration of the program, the CRA was recognized as a Regional Council (known as CRÉ in French) and was mandated, pursuant to the *Act respecting the MAMROT*, to coordinate funding on behalf of the communities. From 2003 to 2013, a number of major projects were undertaken thanks to RDF funding:

Major projects sponsored:

Eeyou Communications Network	\$2,000,000
Support to ECN Development	\$2,807,923
Aanishchaa Cultural Institute	\$1,000,000
Whapmagoostui Commercial Complex	\$1,000,000
Whapmagoostui Cellular Service	\$ 372,548
Whapmagoostui/Makivik – Port development	\$ 250,000
Nemaska Commercial Complex	\$1,000,000
Waswanipi Nabakatuk Wood Products	\$ 750,000
Specific Agreement on the Elderly	\$ 750,000
Cree Women’s Association	\$ 700,000
Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association	\$ 380,920
Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association	\$ 233,972
Secretariat – Cree Nation Agreement	\$ 225,000

It should be noted that numerous smaller value community projects were also funded through the RDF.

Pursuant to the Agreement entered into with Québec for the RDF, the CRA was recognized as the primary interlocutor, in terms of regional development for the Cree communities (restricted to Category I lands). Our



Larry Shecapio

Elders are happy to be given an opportunity to share their expertise.

role consists in evaluating local and regional planning and development bodies funded in whole, or in part, by the Government of Québec, and in promoting concerted action among partners in the region.

In 2008-2009 Québec had requested that the CRA fully comply with all of its requirements, including that of providing a 5-year development plan. At the time, the CRA did not want to reveal its development plans, bringing about a stalemate in the application of the program. The Crees maintained their position but Québec decided to withhold funding while the Crees refused to comply.

During the period in which the dispute took place, Québec cut some \$25 million from the RDF, of which the Cree share was \$4,039,402. It is the position of the CRA that \$3,105,188 was unjustly cut as a result of Québec deeming that the Cree CRÉ was in a surplus situation because funds had not been disbursed, as a result of the dispute.

For the period 2014-2019, the Québec Government renewed the RDF Agreements throughout the province, for an amount of \$60 million over the five years. It is worth noting that the RDF has been integrated into the *Cree Governance Agreement*, and that we will be entitled to receive a yearly envelope of \$2,338,943 for the next five years.

For the new fiscal year 2013-2014, the CRA authorized the release of \$2,524,070 under the RDF. Funded projects consist of ongoing initiatives as well as five new projects that amount to \$873,720:

Cree Nation of Eastmain –Study on km 381 Rest Stop: \$50,000

The Cree Nation of Eastmain requested financial assistance from RDF to finance part of a study with SDBJ. The study will examine the different options that the potential partners would pursue regarding the future situation of the rest stop located at 381 km along the James Bay Highway.

Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association: \$150,000

The CRA is pleased to enter into an agreement with the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association for a period of three years, with an annual contribution of \$150,000 for tourism development. Also under the Agreement, a Management Committee will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the agreement.

Auberge Oujé-Bougoumou Lodge Expansion: \$750,000

The community of Oujé-Bougoumou is interested in expanding the present Lodge to reflect the changing needs of the industry. Presently, the Lodge is too small to sustain its profitability, so the community searched for

various options to increase the clientele and renovate the existing facility. The project will be financed by different partners; RDF funds have been allocated for two fiscal years, including this year's allocation of \$300,000.

Laundry Facilities in Wemindji: \$250,000

The Cree Nation of Wemindji initiated a project to set up laundry facilities for the workers at the Éléonore mining site. The facilities will be equipped with industrial-type washing machines and dryers that can handle the miners' working clothes. The laundry facilities will seek other customers such as Hydro-Québec and local entities that will require heavy duty washing and drying.

Cree Nation of Waswanipi—Study on Nabakatuk Forest Products: \$123,720

Under the auspices of the Cree Nation of Waswanipi, the CRA authorized the request of \$123,720 to finance a study for Nabakatuk Forest Products Mill. The community has been experiencing financial difficulties with their mill and the Council hired a consulting firm to conduct a study on various ways to sustain the operations of the mill. Nabakatuk Mill employed up to fifteen local residents when it was in operation.

Conclusion

This past year has seen an unprecedented level of activity for the DESD. We have been particularly pleased to participate in community-level workshops and seminars on economic development. Three communities held sessions for their local entrepreneurs where discussions led to planning for the development and expansion of local businesses. We look forward to other opportunities to meet in all Cree communities to support local efforts to identify goods, services, products, equipment and materials that will help our economy grow.

Moreover, DESD has been actively involved in regional discussions as well, taking part among others in meetings on the Regional Economic Development Fund with other Québec representatives. Within the CRA itself, we have also been working closely with the CHRD and the Capital Works Departments on a number of files.

Perhaps one of the most exciting developments in 2012-2013 has been the continued growth and expansion of available services from the Eeyou Communications Network (ECN). The network now supports service delivery to benefit more and more Cree citizens in a broad variety of ways.

As we move forward into the next fiscal year, the DESD will continue to support Cree entrepreneurs and encourage more local people to consider opening businesses for the benefit of all.