

Eeyou Eenou

NEWSLETTER

GRAND COUNCIL OF THE CREES (EEYOU ISTCHEE) / CREE NATION GOVERNMENT

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ISSUE 5

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WINNIPAAKW MOU

Crees, Parks Canada, and Environment Canada protect our marine environment



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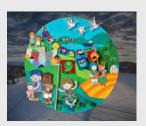
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A profile on Mistissini's singer songwriter, Siibii, discussing music style, their new album and performing at the Olympic Stadium



UPCOMING EVENTS

Stay connected through www.cngov.ca



EARLY CHILDHOOD WEEK

NOV 18-24, 2024

Be part of this transformative week as we champion the rights and needs of our youngest community members. Your participation can help shape a future where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

LEARN MORE HERE



BOARD COUNCIL MEETING

DEC 4-5, 2024

Meeting of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government in Gatineau, QC.

WATCH LIVESTREAM HERE



CREE KNOWLEDGE FESTIVAL

DEC 6-7, 2024

The 2nd edition of the Cree Knowledge Festival will take place in Ouje-Bougoumou. For more details:

https://www.cree-festival-cri.com



MESSAGE ON THE 49TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE JAMES BAY AND NORTHERN QUEBEC AGREEMENT

November 11, 1975

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed November 11, 1975. The year leading up to the historic signing consisted of some of the toughest negotiating in Cree history by some of our most revered leaders.

The signing of the Agreement-in-Principle on November 16, 1974, a year before the final signing of the JBNQA, effectively ended the dispute over the James Bay hydro-electric mega project which threatened our land and our traditional way of life. Defying all odds, an Indigenous group had successfully negotiated the recognition of Aboriginal rights leading to the first modern-day treaty in Canada. These negotiations were nothing short of historic, reshaping the future of our Nation and marking a turning point in the relationship between the Cree Nation and the governments of Canada and Quebec.

Demonstrating that we were not mere bystanders but rightful stewards and protectors of Eeyou Istchee, our leaders, with great vision and determination, worked tirelessly to ensure that our voices were heard and that our rights were recognized.

Marking this important milestone, we look back with pride on the strength and resilience of our past leaders, and we celebrate the enduring legacy of their efforts. This is a time for us to remember the path that brought us here and to honour their vision, fighting for our rightful place at the table and creating the partnerships and alliances we benefit from today.

Throughout the upcoming year, leading up to the 50th Anniversary of the JBNQA on November 11, 2025, the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/ Cree Nation Government invites everyone across Eeyou Istchee and beyond to join us in commemorating these important dates in our history, celebrating our resilience as a strong Indigenous Nation.



EEPF HONOURS LEGACY OF SERVICE TO THE CREE NATION



Eeyou Eenou Police Force (EEPF) held its first Exemplary Service Awards Ceremony on September 6th, 2024, in the Cree Nation of Chisasibi.

At this first Exemplary Service Awards Ceremony, the Valour Award was given to Officer Johnny Kawapit, Investigator Derek St-Cyr, Former Mistissini Police Officer Sylvain Proulx and Late Officer Charlie Gunner. The Distinguished Service Award was presented to Late Officer Eric Benac, accepted by his son and wife, Hayden Benac and Linda L. Shecapio. The recipient of the award for Meritorious Service was former Officer Joey Odjick, Director Shannon Nakogee accepted the award on his behalf.

The legacy of Cree policing is a valued tradition in Eeyou Istchee and we thank the EEPF family for your continued service in keeping our communities safe.



Officers Charlie Gunner, Derek St-Cyr and Sylvain Proulx received the Medal for Valor for an event that occurred in Mistissini in the middle of the night October 15th, 2010 while responding to shots fired, engaging a drunk male on a shooting spree with a 12 gauge shotgun and a "lunch pail full of rounds."

Medal of Valor recipient, Sylvain Proulx was on duty that night with fellow Mistissini Police officer Charlie Gunner and were the first on the scene in the nearly three-hour standoff while receiving gunfire. He shared his experience.

"I heard shots hit the house beside me, then I heard Charlie saying he was hit," Detective Proulx recalls.

Bleeding from minor wounds Charlie stayed on duty returning to the police station to take calls from terrified community members. Next to arrive on the scene was

Mistissini police officer Derek St-Cyr followed soon after by RCMP backup.

The incident ended with a dramatic takedown of the shooter after officers had taken between 100-120 rounds of shots towards them and the scene spread over a kilometre and a half, strewn with shell casings.

All the officers involved received the Governor General's Medal for Bravery in 2012.

Proulx is now a violent crimes detective with the Gatineau police and secretary of the police union in charge of communications while sitting on several important committees in service to his fellow officers.

Detective Proulx does not carry a gun and as a result of the incidents of that night he now lives with PTSD.



"GREAT MAN" LATE CHARLIE GUNNER



Rachel MacLeod, widow of Charlie Gunner, accepted the award on behalf of her late husband and was in attendance with her children.

It was an emotional honouring ceremony as Rachel spoke in support of the Cree Nation's dedicated officers noting "they see a whole lot that we don't see behind closed doors."

Charlie was one of the "Five Great Men", the group of Mistissini hunters that passed away in 2015 due to a tragic cabin fire.

Rachel said her husband was an excellent hunter, husband and father but he was also a dedicated law enforcement officer whose heart was with the badge.

Charlie was respected and admired by all, especially his children who looked up to him as the hero he was.

Whether it was responding to shootings, suicides or pulling people out of burning buildings, Charlie was fearless and his dedication to the safety of his community was unwavering.

Charlie's son Kobee Gunner is currently in the policing program in Rouyn, graduating in October 2024 and Rachel said she is "Very proud. Beyond words."

Charlie's daughter Cherysh graduated from high school this year and Rachel and the kids miss him very much.

At his funeral Charlie's casket was handmade topped with a Superman logo.

"Even to this day that is our symbol for him. I have a plate on our truck that has a superman logo and my son wears a superman t-shirt. It's our way of remembering him."

"He was our superman."

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Linda L. Shecapio accepted the Distinguished Service Award with her son Hayden Benac on behalf of her late husband Fric Benac.

Linda provided a heart-warming statement on her late husband's honouring, speaking to Eric's great dedication to the uniform, what it was like for her being a police officer's wife and she calls for systemic change in the faith and trust in our EEPF officers:

"Eric began working for the Mistissini Police in 1999 later joining EEPF in 2011.

In 2015, he was diagnosed with colon cancer. Despite his illness, he continued working. He made every effort to return to work whenever possible, but eventually, his fragile health prevented him from continuing and was still in the service until his passing.



Eric dedicated himself to community outreach, building trust between the police force and community members. He fostered positive relationships through kindness, respect, and empathy and made everyone feel heard and valued. He deeply cared for the well-being of his community and was always supportive. He also took the time to mentor younger officers and inspire the next generation. He was a courageous officer who always put others before himself. His passion and commitment left a lasting impact and are deeply missed. He enhanced community safety and worked to change public perceptions of law enforcement, showing that officers can be trusted guardians and allies for their communities.

As the spouse of a Police Officer, I faced unique challenges and experiences that significantly shaped my life. My late husband's career became a central part of my life, and I often felt the impact of high-stress and traumatic situations he encountered on the job. Balancing my own emotional well-being while supporting him during critical times was a challenge. I often felt lonely due to his demanding schedule, and I had to adapt to unexpected changes to our family schedules, but he always tried his best to show up. Over time, I learned to be patient and understanding, and I developed the habit of praying for his safety every time he left for work. Despite the challenges, my late husband's compassionate nature and professionalism always shone through, bringing comfort and inspiration to those around him.





As the spouse of a late Police Officer, I understand the unique challenges faced by our iiyiyiu/iinuu Police Officers serving in their communities. These challenges include navigating personal and professional boundaries, overcoming historical mistrust, addressing systemic issues, and working with limited resources. It is imperative that we, as iiyiyiu/iinuu people, unite to drive essential changes. This requires unwavering collective action and unwavering support for one another. Such positive change is crucial for healing the current state of our communities, thinking of the next seven generations, and fostering reconciliation and mutual respect among all peoples.

To every police officer, thank you for embodying empowerment and leadership within the community every time you fulfill your duties, setting an exemplary standard for others throughout Eeyou Istchee. Stay resilient, hold onto the spirit of your people, and know that your bravery is acknowledged and highly valued by all. Your unwavering commitment serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration. You are not alone in this journey."

"Miikwehch for your continued service in protecting our communities."





GRAND CHIEF RECEIVES GLOBAL CONSERVATION RECOGNITION



On October 17, 2024, Mandy Gull-Masty, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) and Chairperson of the Cree Nation Government, received the 2024 International Land Conservation Network Conservation Visionary Award from the International Land Conservation Network.

Grand Chief Gull-Masty was honoured for "effective collaboration across sectors and dedication to thoughtful intercultural dialogue and reconciliation."

The Global Congress of the ILCN brought together experts in conservation from the public sector, academic, Indigenous and other essential sectors engaged in land conservation on six continents.

They met in Quebec at the site of the December 2022 COP15 summit where over 100 nations reached the extraordinary agreement agreeing to land protection targets for the year 2030.

The "30x30" targets commit each country to a goal of protecting 30 per cent of the earth's surface and its waters by the year 2030.

Working in collaboration with communities across Eeyou Istchee, through the Cree Regional Protection Strategy, the CNG has

legally protected 39,000 km2 successfully protecting 23 per cent of Eeyou Istchee.



Grand Chief Gull-Masty was thankful to be recognized and honoured accepting the award on behalf of the Cree Nation Government, Cree tallymen, land users and all Eeyou Istchee.

"I would like to thank all those from Quebec and Canada who were part of supporting this process, but I would also like to acknowledge the most important people that took part in this project, our traditional knowledge keepers."

The Grand Chief also thanked "our relatives to the east", the Innu Nation for their support and incredible working relationship and she was also thankful to her family for their unending love and support.



FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY SYMPOSIUM 2024

The Fire and Life Safety Symposium took place on September 24-25, 2024 in Mistissini and was supposed to be followed by the Cree Nation Firefighting Competition which had to be cancelled this year due to lack of participation.

Lee-Roy Blacksmith is the fire marshal at Capital Works and Services and the person in charge of putting on the event. Blacksmith says last year's competition was to be held in Nemaska but was cancelled due to the forest fires. It has been over a decade since the last firefighter's competition which is unfortunate because they are seen as good training and team building exercises.





"We had five communities confirmed but they were forced to back out at the last minute. So we decided to cancel the team events and change it to individual events and open it to the public but no one showed," Blacksmith said.

Some good did come from the event not from the competition but from the symposium workshops and booths set up in the gymnasium.

One of the booths was a CRP information booth and Blacksmith had hired a Cree certified trainer to attend and during that one day five community members were trained on the spot and they were thankful for receiving their CPR certification.

Blacksmith says the timing was wrong this year, but he is looking forward to lots of participation at next year's event which is scheduled to take place in Wemindji.





THE CANADIAN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & CLIMATE ADAPTATION CONVENTION (CEPCA)



The Canadian Emergency Preparedness & Climate Adaptation (CEPCA) Convention, held from September 24-26, 2024, in Ottawa, gathered experts and policymakers to address urgent climate risks.

CNG representatives Olivier Kölmel, Killian Abellon, from the Climate Change Unit, and Kristy Franks with the Department of Environment and Remedial Works, along with CBHSSJB's Jason Coonishish and Imi Khailat, working on emergency measures and climate adaption respectfully, participated in key discussions aimed at bolstering community resilience.

A major takeaway was the cost-saving power of early preparedness: every dollar invested in early warning systems saves six dollars in recovery. Culturally sensitive evacuation plans and real-time data sharing were highlighted as vital to improving disaster response in Indigenous communities. Another key focus was the need to integrate climate data into Canada's National Adaptation Strategy, with Indigenous roundtables planned for 2025 to enhance coordination and funding.

Universal emergency training was also emphasized as a vital tool to boost response capabilities across various scenarios, helping communities to better manage crises. Experts also pointed out a common gap in emergency management—the lack of focus on recovery. Planning ahead and building back better—whether for homes, infrastructure, or camps—is critical for long-term resilience.

These insights underscore the importance of bridging the gap between climate adaptation and emergency preparedness and response. The Cree Nation Government continues to explore ways to strengthen Cree communities' ability to face future climate risks with proactive, coordinated efforts.





AFN 3RD NATIONAL CLIMATE GATHERING / FNCLA



Starting in Ceremony, the AFN 3rd National Climate Gathering, held from October 7-10, 2024, on Treaty No. 7 Territory in Calgary, brought together over 1,000 leaders, youth, Elders, and allies to champion bold Indigenous climate action.

Focused on self-determination, conservation, and resilience, the gathering showcased how First Nations are shaping the future of climate policy.

The Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee played a central role, with Deputy Grand Chief Norman A. Wapachee, CNG's Climate Change Manager Olivier Kölmel, Waswanipi's Forest Authority Department representative Michel Arès, and Steven Nitah of Nature for Justice delivering a powerful presentation on Pathways to Conservation Finance to a full room. They emphasized how Cree values can drive biodiversity recovery and restoration after forest fires through the recognition of carbon rights over traditional territories, leveraging tools like carbon credits to protect land and culture. A message that deeply resonated with the Deputy Grand Chief was,



"Mother Earth has taken care of us since time immemorial—it is now our time to take care of her."

The delegation from Wemindji—Deputy Chief Arden Visitor, Director of Environment Howard MacDonald, Youth Chief Margaret Danyluk, Youth Development Coordinator Chelsea Moses Blackned, and three youth—along with Reggie Tomatuk and Imi Khailat from the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, participated in sessions addressing land-based healing, youth engagement, chronic wasting disease, nature-based solutions, and holistic climate responses through the OneHealth approach. These discussions also delved into environmental justice and the vital connections between health, land, and climate.

Additionally, the Cree Nation delegation visited green energy startup SixRing and the First Nations majority-owned Alexander Chemical Ltd. enterprise, gaining valuable insights into Indigenous-led innovation and Alberta's green energy sector.

Building on momentum from June's First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda's leadership meeting in Ottawa, where Cree leadership met with federal ministers to advance climate policies protecting Cree interests, this gathering reinforced Indigenous leadership in shaping transformative climate solutions.



PREPARING FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FUTURE CLOSURE OF THE ELEONORE MINE



Representatives from Newmont Eleonore joined the community of Wemindji for the 5th Opinagow Summit titled "Our Shared Connections" offering participants an update on the Eleonore Mine and discussions for the future.

Eleonore's earliest closure date was predicted for 2029 back in 2015. Although the life of the mine is expected to surpass that date, mine representatives are advising the Cree Nation and specifically the Cree Nation of Wemindji to start planning for the end.

Newmont is predicting plenty of opportunities for potential contracts, Cree businesses and jobs during the upcoming closing phases.

The closure of the mine will take place in two parts. The first phase of "active closure" takes between three to five years and entails dismantling infrastructure and land rehabilitation. The second monitoring phase takes place over a prolonged period to ensure the environmental stability of the land and waters.

Contract and business opportunities include demolition, site security services and maintenance of power and water systems.

The Cree Nation of Wemindji with support from the Cree Nation Government were on hand to contribute with local participants in discussion groups exploring ideas for future jobs, contracts, infrastructure and the health of the land.

Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty was thankful to be invited to take part in the event and commented on economic possibilities for the future emphasizing the economic potential in closure phases, noting that funds are already secured for this eventual process.

"The community has an opportunity for their active participation from the beginning of the closing phases. The land users' traditional knowledge is especially a key factor to land restoration. There are economic opportunities for us in this process and it will also prepare us to adapt to life after the mine." - Chief Christina Gilpin

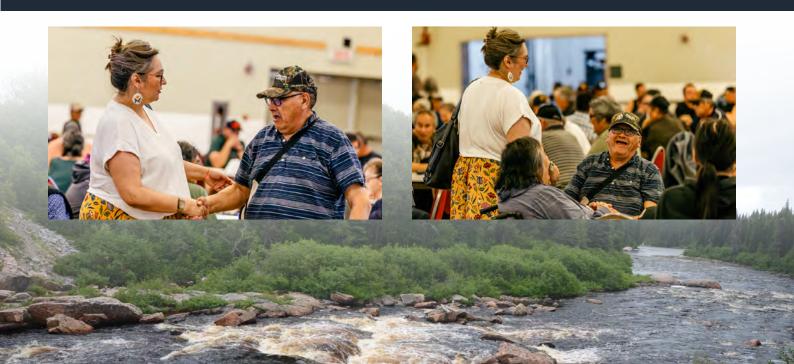


MINING INFORMATION SESSION FOR INLAND COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS IMPACTS IN EEYOU ISTCHEE



The Cree Nation Government and Cree Trappers' Association recently hosted a landmark mining information session in Mistissini, gathering vital input from nearly 300 participants including tallymen, land users, and community representatives.

"I want to thank the participants who attended the session. Their knowledge and feedback were very valuable in guiding us to determine the next steps. I heard over 44 key messages that will be worked on. We are looking forward to hosting the next session on the coast in the fall." – Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty





Led by Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty and Deputy Grand Chief Norman A. Wapachee, the session brought together key leadership from both organizations to address mining impacts in Eeyou Istchee. The Department of Commerce and Industry, Department of Environment and Remedial Works, and the Cree Trappers' Association presented crucial information on topics ranging from the Cree Hunting Law to environmental assessments.





The collaborative event fostered meaningful dialogue between leadership and community members, with participants sharing their perspectives both orally and in writing. All concerns were carefully documented for future action.

KEY PRESENTATIONS INCLUDED:

- Cree Hunting Law and tallyman roles
- James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement rights
- Environmental assessment processes
- Mining Policy implementation
 Hunting, fishing, and trapping rights

"Regional Cree Trappers' Association was pleased to be able to join the Cree Nation Government to meet the inland tallyman at the joint session... we always appreciate the opportunity to meet our members, and we look forward to addressing and responding to the key points shared at the meeting."

Allan A. House, Chief Financial Officer/Interim Chief Executive Officer-President, Cree **Trappers' Association**

LOOKING AHEAD

A follow-up session for coastal communities is being planned for fall 2024. Stay tuned for date and location announcements.





END OF SEASON MESSAGE TO INDOOHOO EENOUCH/EEYOUCH

The Eeyou Istchee Land Keepers Coordinator of Operations Benoit Longchap was out on the land this Moose Break passing out pamphlets and spreading awareness over the new Cree Nation Moose Conservation Guidelines.

With Moose Break now over, Benoit says through his interactions with Eeyou hunters, one of the guidelines receiving mixed reactions are those warning against night hunting.





Benoit says the younger generation of hunters does not see the danger with hunting at night and say today's modern equipment makes it possible to do so.

The other side of the argument comes from the Elders who say night hunting is not worth the risk of losing a wounded animal in the dark, therefore wasting good meat.

While some hunters may have the wrong idea and avoid the Land Keepers, Benoit assures Indoohoo Eenouch/Eeyouch they are not there to hassle them or issue any tickets or confiscations.

While engaging with hunters the Land Keepers message first and foremost is one of safety, whether it's in the handling of firearms, knives or in their daily activities on the land.

The Eeyou Istchee Land Keepers would like to thank the Cree Nation for continuing to practice safety on the land while carrying out traditional activities.







IMPLEMENTING A TAG AND PERMIT SYSTEM FOR MOOSE CONSERVATION IN ZONE 17

In response to the concerning decline of 35% in the moose population as reported by the last aerial survey conducted in 2021, the Cree communities in zone 17 have taken significant conservation measures since. The Moose Conservation Cree Guidelines were established in the fall of 2022, marking a pivotal step towards preserving the moose population. Building upon this foundation, a mandatory tag and permit system for hunting moose in hunting zone 17 is now being implemented.

This new approach has been developed to address the imperative need for the recognition and respect of Tallymen in wildlife management and conservation. It has become evident that many land users are not honoring the traditional role of the Tallymen, consequently leading to a disregard for the established conservation guidelines. By instituting a mandatory tag and permit system, the Cree Nation Government, the Cree Trappers' Association, and the communities of Waswanipi, Ouje-Bougoumou, and Waskaganish aim to gather reliable data that will inform management decisions to effectively address the decline in the moose population.

The implementation of the tag and permit system signifies a collective commitment to responsible and sustainable wildlife management. It is a proactive measure that underscores the importance of upholding traditional roles and respecting established guidelines. Through this system, we seek to empower our communities to play an active role in preserving our natural resources for future generations.

By adhering to the principles of the Moose Conservation Cree Guidelines and embracing the mandatory tag and permit system, we are taking a significant stride towards mitigating the decline in the moose population. This collaborative effort will not only benefit our ecosystem but also contribute to the preservation of our cultural heritage and traditional practices.

As we move forward with the implementation of this system, we urge all stakeholders to actively participate and support these conservation efforts. Together, we can work towards restoring balance to the moose population and ensuring a sustainable future for our communities and Eeyou Istchee.

Guidelines

Zone 17

GUIDELINE 1

A limit of 2 moose per trapline must be respected.

GUIDELINE 2

All Cree hunters in Eeyou Istchee should limit their harvest to one moose per family.

GUIDELINE 3

All Cree hunters should report their moose harvest to the local CTA.

GUIDELINE 4

In zone 17, the moose harvest in winter and spring (January/March) is only allowed within traplines where harvest has not already reached the 2 moose limit.

GUIDELINE 5

Full-time Trappers and Land Users (Income Security Program) are given priority for the harvest of moose.

GUIDELINE 6

Avoid the harvest of female (cow) and big bull moose.

GUIDELINE 7

Use every parts of the animals, not leaving any waste behind and share the harvest. Hunters are invited to donate to the community freezer located at CTA office.

GUIDELINE 8

Hunting at night is prohibited

GUIDELINE 9

Hunters from other Cree communities shall NOT be permitted to hunt moose within Zone 17. Except those invited by the tallymen.

GUIDELINE 10

Hunters are expected to share their harvest with elders, family, members of the community; especially low-income families.

GUIDELINE 11

Harvesting shall be for cultural, educational and sustenance purposes; not for the purpose of sales or any monetary profit.

GUIDELINE 12

Every hunters will refrain from publicizing any moose hunt on social media in respect for the animal.

GUIDELINE 13

The use of skidoo for chasing and the use of drones is prohibited to hunt moose in Zone 17.







GRAND CHIEF TOURS CREE-OWNED ODEA BUILDING WITH MONTREAL MAYOR

The Cree-owned Odea building, a significant new addition to downtown Montreal, was officially inaugurated back in August and features condos, apartments and commercial rentals. Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty gave Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante a firsthand tour of a taste of Eeyou Istchee at the heart of Montreal.

The building is the vision of Creeco, the parent company of Eeyou Eenou Realty Properties with contributions from renowned Indigenous architect Douglas Cardinal.

The building is on the site of the former and soon to be new Montreal Embassy of the Cree Nation Government (CNG).

After completing the Mayor's tour of the building, the Grand Chief visited the site of the future CNG office still under construction.

"It is a testimony to Cree resourcefulness and determination that has brought the Odea project to fruition. We can now welcome our urban neighbors to experience the beauty of Odea and immerse themselves in Cree hospitality. The Odea project represents how far we have come as a Nation, where we are now in a strong position to dictate our own economic future and prosperity for generations to come." - Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty

"The ODEA real estate project, carried out in collaboration with the Cree Nation, offers 435 housing units in the heart of our downtown. The building stands out for its Indigenous-inspired design, which represents a vertical canoe on its facade. It is a collaborative work by the Lemay firm and the Indigenous architect Cardinal. We continue to accelerate our efforts to issue building permits, house more people and fight the housing crisis. When we work together and investments are there, we build and preserve more housing. We are taking action to house Montrealers!" - Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montreal.









CNG SIGNS WIINNIPAAKW MOU AND ANNOUNCES TRIPARTITE COLLABORATION



On October 18, 2024 the Cree Nation Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Parks Canada and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change launching the next steps towards establishing the proposed Wiinnipaakw Indigenous Protected Area and National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) in the offshore waters of the Eeyou Marine Region.

The signing ceremony took place after the closing ceremony of the 2024 Global Congress of the International Land Conservation Network in Beaupré, Quebec with federal environment minister Steven Guilbeault, Nadine Spence, vice president of Indigenous affairs and cultural heritage for Parks Canada signing on behalf of Canada, Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty and Deputy Grand Chief Norman A. Wapachee signing on behalf of the Cree Nation.

Deputy Grand Chief Wapachee said development of the NMCA idea started in Wemindji back in the 2000s and the current Wiinnipaakw feasibility assessment process was overseen by a steering committee comprised of CNG members and representatives of Parks Canada.

"The efforts that we are announcing today marks a milestone as it will be the first time that we work on establishing protected areas for the waters of Wiinnipaakw (James Bay). Today's announcement is the result of many years of hard work and we will continue improving and expanding this network going forward."

A second announcement was made at the same event by the Gouvernement du Québec, CNG and Parks Canada that is complimentary to the Wiinnipaakw Indigenous Protected Area. Joined by Benoit Charette, Minister of the Environnement, the Fight against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks, Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty and Steven Guilbeault announced their





intention to work together on a project to establish the first marine protected area (MPA) in the coastal waters of Eeyou Istchee. This is a first step, discussions will continue to determine the precise area and conservation objectives.

The signing taking place after the ILCN congress was fitting as main discussions focused on Indigenous inclusion in conservation initiatives. During a panel discussion at the ILCN Congress taking place right before the announcements Grand Chief Gull-Masty was asked on her thoughts about the power of partnerships and how Indigenous-led conservation is helping mobilize and evolve knowledge.

"When I look at the participation of Indigenous peoples in conservation I frame it in two ways," The Grand Chief said.

"One, it is a secret weapon for success because you are engaging individuals that have in-depth and intimate knowledge of those spaces and second, it is seen as a guarantee. It's a guarantee on investment. You are getting social acceptability and you are essentially going into partnership with an exceedingly overqualified group, overqualified because of the knowledge they carry."



ABANDONED MINING SITE CLEAN UP



In 2008, Cree Nation Government and Cree Mineral Exploration Board conducted interviews with tallymen and land users in all Cree communities regarding abandoned mining sites on the territory. As a result, 601 sites were identified as abandoned mining exploration or unknown origin (more sites were identified related to Hydro-Québec and the federal government, among others).

The Agreement Concerning the Cleanup of Abandoned Mineral Exploration Sites on the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory was signed in 2018 between CNG, Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government (EIRJBRG), Fonds Restor-Action Cri and Quebec. This Agreement established measures to cleanup 429 abandoned mining sites in the territory. A Steering Committee was formed to ensure implementation and oversee cleanup work. Project Manager Aurora Hernandez was appointed as the CNG representative on this committee.

Adario Masty was hired in 2020 to coordinate cleanup work. SYM Consultants, who collected information in 2008, joined the team to administer and implement the cleanup strategy. Work was delayed due to COVID-19 measures in the territory, so first site visits were undertaken in summer 2021. Visiting sites and characterizing contents is the first step in the process as it allows for a better understanding of the extent of cleanup work required and helps plan the strategy. The sites are characterized with the tallyman or an appointed family member, benefiting from their knowledge of the area. The results are recorded using mapping and database tools provided by the GIS team.

The initial focus of the cleanup plan was in Mistissini, as it has the most abandoned exploration sites in the territory; and

Whapmagoostui, due to the volume of waste left and the complexity of the sites. In Whapmagoostui, there are a total of 20 abandoned exploration sites. Most notably is the Rupert site, one of the largest on the territory. Only 8 sites south of the 55th parallel are covered under the agreement. The rest are located north of the 55th parallel, requiring collaboration with Kativik for cleanup.

Δ22>∩'YJ''Y GOVERNANCE

Chief Robbie Kawapit and council member Eddie Masty supported Adario in preparing and working alongside local tallymen for the characterization and cleanup of the sites. The team focused on Rupert site which included the cleanup of over 400 barrels, half of them containing diesel content, deteriorating camps, hoses and scrap metal scattered around the area. Tallymen John Rupert and Edward Kawapit participated in the characterization and cleanup exercise.

Local workers from Whapmagoostui were hired and trained. Tasks also included coordinating schedules, purchasing and delivering equipment, transportation, lodging, camp preparation and conducting interviews with community leadership and members. The team underwent training in Wilderness First Aid, hazardous waste management, spill response and wildfire response. An environmental consultant supported the Project Coordinator and the team with training, logistics and site work.





The team removed an estimated 41,000 liters of diesel and a total of 115,000 pounds from the land. The team's shared vision and determination highlight the project's success, showcasing the positive outcomes of collaboration between local and regional authorities to heal the land for future generations. The team plans to return in spring 2025 to finalize cleanup work.

The cleanup of abandoned mining sites is a complex endeavor involving the Ministry of Natural Resources, EIJBRG, Cree Communities, Tallymen and Land Users. Each stakeholder has unique interests, priorities and concerns, leading to potential conflicts and challenges in decision-making so effective collaboration is crucial.

The Rupert site cleanup shows what can be achieved through a coordinated approach to protect the environment and community. The team aims to continue this work, focusing on environmental protection, community empowerment, sustainable development, awareness, accountability in mining, and improved training and education.





SIIBII: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MUSIC

Interview with Siibii



Based in Montreal since 2017 to pursue their music career, Indigenous queer artist Siibii grew up in Mistissini and is a star that just keeps getting brighter.

Siibii has captivated audiences in cities like Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa. The Cree Nation Government (CNG) caught up with Siibii earlier this year after their performance at the Fierté Montréal festival at the Olympic Stadium.







What was it like performing at a huge venue like the Olympic Stadium?

That was so cool! Because it was Pride there were a lot of queer artists so that felt super validating as a queer person. It was really cool to see so much talent and to be among that talent. The event was beautiful. It felt like one of those rare experiences you get in your life if you are lucky enough.

03

What kind of reaction is the song getting?

I was really nervous about that subject matter and people not responding to it, but it seems people actually do want to listen.

That makes me feel really happy to know that my audiences are ready to hear these kinds of songs.

05

Thank you so much for sharing your newest project with us. Do you have a message to Eeyou Istchee?

Just for everyone to watch out for my new releases dropping sometime this winter. I can't wait for the public to hear them.

02

Your newest project has a bit of a darker tone to it, and at Fierté you performed one of those unreleased songs, can you tell us about it?

It's called "User". It's pop with electronic influence. The subject matter is about being a survivor of "grooming". It felt important to talk about.

When I was growing up back home, because of generations of intergenerational trauma, there was this air of hiding abusers. Being able to talk about it is empowering yourself instead of continuing the cycle of staying silent.

04

Is it personal?

It's super personal but it also makes you feel vulnerable, because when you create art that talks about personal stuff, you're essentially showing the world an aspect of something that you've lived through or something that you currently live through. Some people respond really well to it and some people say they're not ready and everyone has their own reasons as to why that might be.

THANK YOU SIIBII. CNG WISHES YOU SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS IN YOUR INCREDIBLE MUSIC CAREER AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR LONG-AWAITED NEW ALBUM.



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Thank you to everyone that contributed to this issue's images and content.

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Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

Àבל העב"רולי Cree Nation Government Gouvernement de la Nation Crie

EEYOU EENOU NEWSLETTER

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