



Eeyou Eenou NEWSLETTER

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

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ISSUE 7

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story of how he joined the United We Walk
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LEARN MORE HERE



NEWSLETTER GOOSE BREAK MESSAGE 2025

The Cree Nation Government (CNG) and Eeyou Istchee Land Keepers would like to wish everyone a safe and a happy Goose Break 2025!

The Eeyou Istchee Land Keepers is a CNG program employing Cree land experts to work alongside provincial wildlife protection officers in service of Eeyou Istchee and its land users.


Benoit Longchap, Coordinator of Operations for the Eeyou Istchee Land Keeper Program, states that the land keepers' role is to be a positive presence for land users in the territory. "They are our eyes and ears on the land and out in the bay across Eeyou Istchee," he explains.

At this time of year, Benoit and his crew patrol both inland and along the coast, engaging with hunters they come across hearing their news and concerns.

The main concern is safety on the land, especially around ice and open water. As we all witness the changing conditions of our modern-day environment, the public is reminded to take extra caution when out on the land and to always listen to the advice and guidance of our safety personnel and Elders.

Benoit has also been approached by health professionals from the Cree Board of Health, who have asked him to continue raising awareness about the health risks of using lead shot for hunting. They say people should strongly consider switching to steel shot, as lead can accumulate in the body. This poses a particular risk for Crees, given our diet, which includes a significant amount of harvested meat.

Whether on the land or at camp, always remember that our best source for safety guidelines are our Elders and when hunting in the blind, Benoit advises always following the instructions of the Paaschicheu Uchimaau.



CARIBOU UPDATE: PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE LEAF RIVER HERD

Reports coming from Quebec's Ministry of Environment following the 2024 fall classification survey is showing troubling numbers for the Leaf River migratory caribou herd, the main herd migrating into Eeyou Istchee in winter.

According to recent information, the Leaf River herd population estimate shows a decline of 11 per cent since last year, dropping from an estimated 175 000 to 155 000 caribou.

The results revealed a lower survival rate among male caribou. The female survival rate and recruitment of calves is considered moderate, adding to the shift from stable to a declining trend of the herd. Furthermore, the low average winter mass of female caribou calves (43 kg, compared to a healthy average above 50 kg) suggests inadequate habitat quality, high energy costs from migration, and increased vulnerability to infections and extreme weather despite population declines.

Habitat disturbance in addition to the 2023 wildfires have significantly impacted caribou habitat in Nunavik and Eeyou Istchee, exacerbating the effects of hydroelectric reservoirs and reducing winter range quality and availability. Since 2018, the Leaf River herd has shifted its winter range further south, with the 2023-2024 range extending southeast beyond previously recorded locations. Roads, mining sites, large water bodies, and wildfires continue to influence migration patterns, while disturbances within the herd's traditional range have increased. By late 2024 and early 2025, caribou were actively avoiding large water bodies and recent wildfire zones, further reducing habitat quality and availability in the southern winter range. The expansion of mining in calving and wintering areas compromises habitat quality, availability, and migration routes, raising concerns for long-term population sustainability.

The Cree Nation Government has requested that the responsible ministry deploy a specialist to Eeyou Istchee to conduct further assessment of the herd's overall health and body condition.

The Cree Nation of Chisasibi, the Cree Nation Government and the Innu Nation in Quebec have agreed that the annual harvest for the Innu communities will not take place this year in response to this recent data. Last year, due to the forest fires and their potential impact on the herd, the Innu Nation agreed to reduce their harvest from 300 caribou to 50 caribou.

Additionally, the Cree Nation of Chisasibi, with the support of the Cree Trappers' Association and the Cree Nation Government, has issued a statement recommending strict harvest limits for the Leaf River Herd. These include restricting harvests to essential needs only, imposing a limit of one caribou per household, reporting of harvests, and encouraging collaboration among all communities and nations to apply these same precautionary measures.

The lack of consistent and reliable harvest monitoring introduces bias in population trend assessments, hindering effective monitoring of the herd and the impact of conservation measures. As a result, the effects of harvesting remain unclear and must be addressed through active leadership and collaboration from the concerned nations to establish a consistent and reliable harvest monitoring system.

According to the recommendation of the caribou management plan adopted in 2017 by the Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table, a sustainable harvest level between all nations should not exceed 3 100 caribou.



IINUU METAWEWINH GAMES 2025



Mistissini, iinuu aschii from March 25 to 27, 2025

The Cree School Board (CSB) iinuu metawewinh Games 2025 took place in Mistissini from March 25-27. It was a wonderful celebration of our iiyiyiu/iinuu culture through fun and educational teachings and games.

The remarkable gathering was the crowning achievement of the CSB's five-year Strategic Action Plan focusing on the three aspects of educational success, student experience and iiyiyiu iyihitiwin.

The games were widely seen as a great success with the entire Cree Nation playing a vital role in bringing the event to life. "Every community sent a delegation of students, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and teachers," Andy Baribeau, Deputy Director General - Operations at the Cree School Board explains.

"WE HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE TO THANK, STARTING WITH THE ORGANIZING TEAM, THE SCHOOLS WERE GREAT IN PREPARING THEIR STUDENTS FOR THE GAMES AND ALL THE ELDERS INVOLVED. I WANT TO THANK ALL THE PARTICIPANTS AND ALL THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS THAT HELPED OUT MAKING THE GAMES A BIG SUCCESS."

The focus of the games and events was the promotion of iiyiyiu/iinuu ayimuwin (language) and iiyiyiu/iinuu iyihitiwin (traditions and practices). Rather than building teams around the best or most athletic individuals, schools were encouraged to form teams based on inclusivity, where participants of all ages and abilities had a meaningful purpose and role in the games.



"A lot of people learned from each other and a lot of people made new friends," Baribeau added.

As it happened, the GCC(EI)/CNG Board/Council's meeting was taking place in Mistissini at the time and Baribeau was glad to welcome to the event members of the Board/Council, including Chiefs and CNG representatives, Grand Chief and Deputy-Grand Chief.

"The community was great," Baribeau said. "The Chief offered his full support and was visible during the games. The support was amazing."

Baribeau says a second edition of the games is not part of the CSB's current strategic action plan, but the overwhelming success of the 2025 games could open the door to future possibilities.



CHISCHAAYIHTIMUWIN
CREE KNOWLEDGE



IIYTYU CHIIHKAAYAAPIMUWAAWIN
CREE IDENTITY



IIYIKIYAAWIIU
CREE SKILLS

Games, workshops and lessons provided an opportunity to engage in physical challenges, connect with knowledge and skills and learn from elder's over the course of three days. Some highlights include



INDIVIDUAL SNOWSHOE RACE



TRADITIONAL MOSS BAG



TRADITIONAL GOOSE CALL CONTEST



CARIBOU
BONE
GAME



TOBOGGAN PACKING LESSON



YOKE AND PAIL RACE



You can learn more about the linuu Metawewinh Games 2025 on the Cree School Board website to find photos, video highlights and explanations of the workshops and games that were part of this years event: <https://eevoueducation.ca/org/cree-games/>





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**THE UNITED WE WALK SERIES CELEBRATES THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE
JAMES BAY AND NORTHERN QUEBEC AGREEMENT
BY REVISITING ITS CONTEXT, PROCESS AND OUT-
COMES. THE ANIMATED VIDEO FORMAT IS MADE
AVAILABLE FOR EVERYONE AS AN EASILY
ACCESSIBLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON
CANADA'S FIRST MODERN TREATY AND
STEPPING STONE OF CREE MODERNITY.**

EPISODE 1-3 ARE AVAILABLE NOW



EPISODE 4 COMING SOON

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE JBNQA WITH UNITED WE WALK

Artist Feature - Vangorian



This year marks the 50th anniversary of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). To commemorate this historic milestone, the Cree Nation Government is releasing *United We Walk*, an animated film that recounts the events leading up to the signing of the JBNQA.

Like all film productions, *United We Walk* requires many roles to fill such as writers, animators, and music composers to create the film's musical score. Among those involved in the project is Franklin Moar, known by his stage name Vangorian—a DJ and electronic music producer from Chisasibi.



Vangorian specializes in real-life recordings and sound manipulation, drawing inspiration from a wide range of electronic music including works from the likes of deadmau5 (pronounced dead mouse), Skrillex and German artist Virtual Riot.

"I SAW AN AD CALLING FOR MUSICAL ARTISTS AND AMBIENT MUSIC. ALTHOUGH IT'S NOT MY AREA OF SPECIALTY I HAVE MADE AMBIENT MUSIC IN THE PAST. IN FACT, AMBIENT STYLE MUSIC IS THE BASE FOR SOME OF MY SONGS. I EMAILED A DEMO; THEY REALLY LIKED IT, AND I GOT THE JOB. I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE, I MOSTLY MAKE MUSIC FOR MYSELF-IT'S PRETTY COOL TO TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT."

Music has always been a central part of Franklin's life, even though his path is unconventional.



"It's funny because I don't know how to play any instruments, I just use my computer to make music. I program it. I'm all self-taught."

"I used to play sports but when it got serious, I got bored of it. I once wanted to be a doctor but it turns out I'm not good at science. Then I found music and being a creative person, it became a great source of happiness in my life."

"The music industry is brutal and it's really hard from a business standpoint, but my goal is to make a fulltime living through my music."

To those looking to break into the music industry, Franklin's advice is persistence but to also be resilient as there will be fierce criticism of your work and you have to be prepared for that.

"I SAY JUST DO IT AND PEOPLE MAY NOTICE IT AND THEN YOU GET HIRED TO DO STUFF. IT'S LIKE, JUST GRAB A GUITAR AND START PLAYING. IN THE BEGINNING IT'S NOT GOING TO SOUND GREAT, BUT IF YOU KEEP DOING IT THEN YOU ARE GOING TO GET BETTER."

To hear Vangorian's music, search for him on any music streaming platform such as Spotify, Apple Music or iTunes. Keep an eye out for his upcoming fourth EP, and don't miss United We Walk to hear his contribution to this special CNG project.



COVER:

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

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NEXT ISSUE: JUNE 2025



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