

# Eenou-Eeyou Community Foundation

## The Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee

Eeyou Istchee, the ancestral home of the James Bay Crees, comprises ten coastal and inland communities in north-central Quebec. Our Territory encompasses 400,000 sq. km., or a fifth of Quebec's total land-mass. It includes the lakes and rivers that drain into eastern James Bay and south-eastern Hudson Bay, along with the salt marshes, coastal islands, interior uplands, dense coniferous forests and tundra. For the Cree, this entire natural bounty—the lands and waters, the plants and animals—is sacred.

Our relationship with Eeyou Istchee has been shaped over thousands of years of hunting, fishing and trapping, guided by the values of respect and gratitude for the land, both to our Elders and to the Creator. Courage and patience, sharing and self-reliance defined our ancestors and inform who we are today.

## Protection of our ancestral rights

Our duty to be wise stewards of our ancestral lands remains strong, even as it has evolved to accommodate a rapidly changing world. Indeed a series of landmark treaties have both strengthened our traditional way of life and ushered in new opportunities to better our communities. They include:

- ▲ James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) with Quebec and Canada (1975)
- ▲ Paix des Braves with Quebec (2002)
- ▲ New Relationship Agreement with Canada (2008)
- ▲ Eeyou Istchee James Bay Governance Agreement with Quebec (2012)

Through these agreements, the Cree have assumed responsibility for governance, education, health and social services, culture and language, communications, economic development, tourism, police, and the protection of natural resources and the environment.

In addition, the Cree Vision of the Plan Nord (2011) has laid out a blueprint for the use and sustainable development of Eeyou Istchee that respects the Cree traditional economy.

More recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), which laid bare the abuse of Indigenous schoolchildren across Canada, including within Eeyou Istchee, set a framework for healing, affirmation and redress.

## THE PEOPLE OF EYYOU ISTCHEE

We call ourselves Eeyou and Eenou, which simply means “the people.” There are more than 18,000 who belong to our nation, with nearly 16,000 residing in ten Cree communities.

Whapmagoostui, Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain and Waskaganish are on the east coast of James Bay. While Nemaska, Waswanipi, Ouje-Bougoumou, Mistissini and Washaw Sibi are inland.

## BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Eeyou Istchee is fully occupied and intensively used by our people. Based on traditional family territories, the Cree land management system has been operating with great efficiency for centuries.

Our economy is not limited to traditional pursuits. While we continue to practice and protect our hunting, fishing and trapping ways, our communities and region are engaged in all manner of modern economic activity, generating economic development and employment within and outside Eeyou Istchee, and contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to the regional, provincial and national economies.

Recognizing that sustainable development is necessary for our economic future, and particularly for our youth, we have concluded numerous energy, mining and forestry agreements within Eeyou Istchee.

## Philanthropy can be a community builder

The Aanischaaukamikw Foundation, which raised \$26 million to establish the world-class Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute, demonstrated that philanthropy can be a positive force in our community—especially as we come to terms with the past and seek positive, mutually-beneficial relationships with non-Indigenous communities.

As in southern Canada, philanthropy is a vital addition to government funding for enhancing much-needed social and community projects.

## Broadening the scope of philanthropy

The Aanischaaukamikw Foundation has evolved to become the Eenou-Eeyou Community Foundation (EECF). Granted charitable status by Canada Revenue Agency (No. 86904 2549 RR0001), EECF is a member of Community Foundations of Canada, and is in the vanguard of Indigenous community foundations. As a community foundation, EECF will develop philanthropic capacity throughout Eeyou Istchee.



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