



Eeyou Marine Region Land Use Planning Value, Issues, and Visions

Report on community input on land use planning goals for the
Eeyou Marine Region

WEMINDJI
Compiled by the Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission
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1. Introduction

The Cree of Eeyou Istchee have occupied and cared for the coastal regions identified in the Eeyou Marine Region Land Claim Agreement (EMRLCA) for millennia. The EMRLCA is a result of several decades of intermittent negotiations between the Crees and Canada which began in the 1970s alongside the negotiations that resulted in the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA).

These negotiations eventually led to the signing of the EMRLCA (a modern treaty) which came into effect on February 15, 2012. The EMRLCA covers approximately 61 270 square kilometers of James Bay and south eastern Hudson Bay off the coast of Quebec (see Figure 1), the northern part of which is also subject to an overlap agreement with the Inuit of Nunavik, and all of which is situated in the territory of Nunavut (See Figure 2).

The EMRLCA provides for the creation of an independent body responsible for the development of a land use plan for the Eeyou Marine Region, called the Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission or EMRPC. According to the agreement, the purpose of this land use plan will be to:

protect and promote the existing and future well-being of residents of the EMR and of the coastal Cree communities of Eeyou Istchee taking into account the interests of all Canadians, and to protect, and where necessary, to restore the environmental integrity of the EMR.

During the summer of 2018, community consultations were held by EMRPC staff in each of the coastal Cree communities to gather input to contribute to the development of a land use plan for the Eeyou Marine Region.

This report provides a summary of consultations that were held between August 27 and 31, 2018 with Wemindji Cree people including representatives of local government, youth, elders, women, tallymen and land users to hear from them:

- what is important to them about the marine area,
- what issues exist in the marine area, and
- what is their vision of their future of the marine area?

These conversations will help define the goals for land use planning in the Eeyou Marine Region and are described in this report.

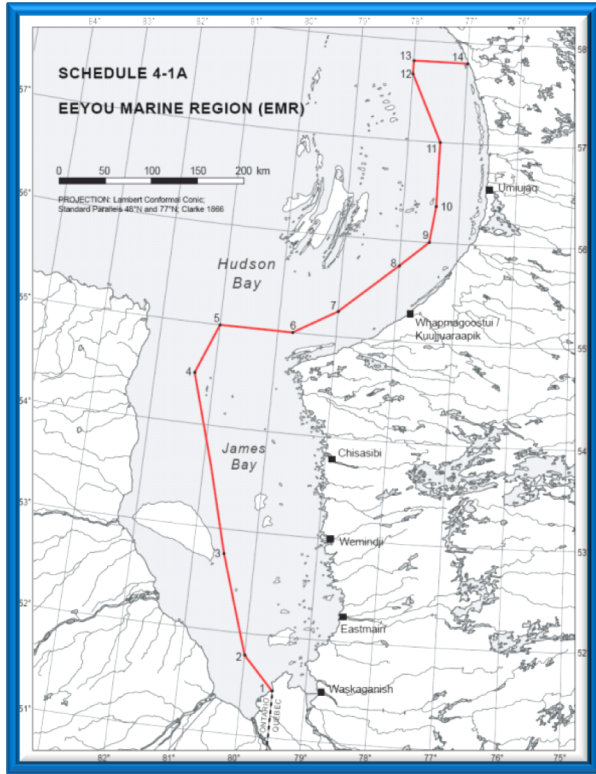


Figure 1. Eeyou Marine Region

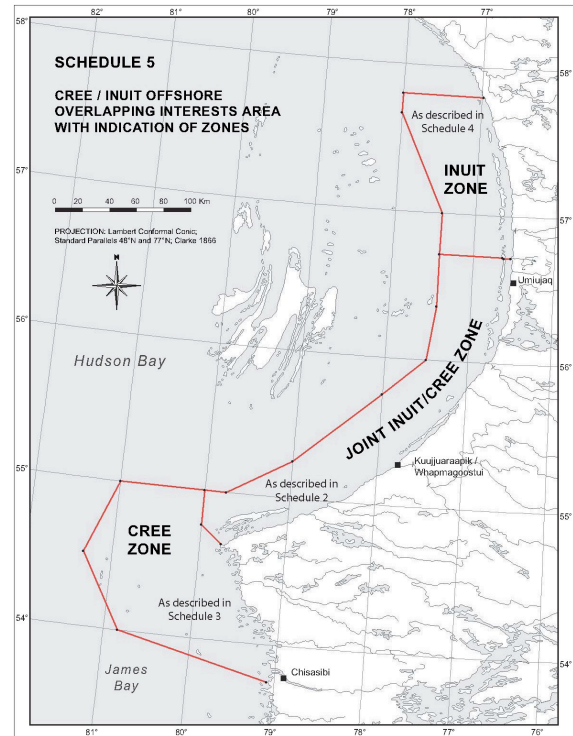


Figure 2. Cree/Inuit Offshore Overlapping Interests Area with Indication of Zones

1.1. Background On EMRPC

The EMRPC is responsible for developing a land use plan to guide development and conservation in the Eeyou Marine Region. The EMRPC is currently made up of two commissioners nominated by the Grand Council of the Crees (GCC), one nominated by the government of Canada and one nominated by the government of Nunavut. The commission also includes a chairperson nominated by the other commissioners.

At the time of the community consultations the EMRPC included:

- Chairperson: Tina Petawabano
- Cree Nominee: Chris Beck
- Cree Nominee: Chantal Otter Tetreault
- Canada Nominee: Lorne McNeice
- Nunavut Nominee: David Alagalak

1.2. Land Use Planning in the Eeyou Marine Region

Put simply, land use planning is a process of gathering and analyzing information about an area to develop goals, objectives and strategies to achieve those goals.

According to the EMRLCA:

The purpose of a land use plan shall be to protect and promote the existing and future well-being of residents of the EMR and of the coastal Cree communities of Eeyou Istchee taking into account the interests of all Canadians, and to protect, and where necessary, to restore the environmental integrity of the EMR.

The EMRPC land use planning process will involve several stages as described in Figure 3. During the summer of 2018, community consultations were held in each of the coastal Cree communities to gather input to contribute to the development of a land use plan for the Eeyou Marine Region. These consultations will contribute to the development of goals and objectives for the plan and guide research and analysis processes that will lead to the development of a draft land use plan. The draft land use plan will go through a public hearing process before it is approved.

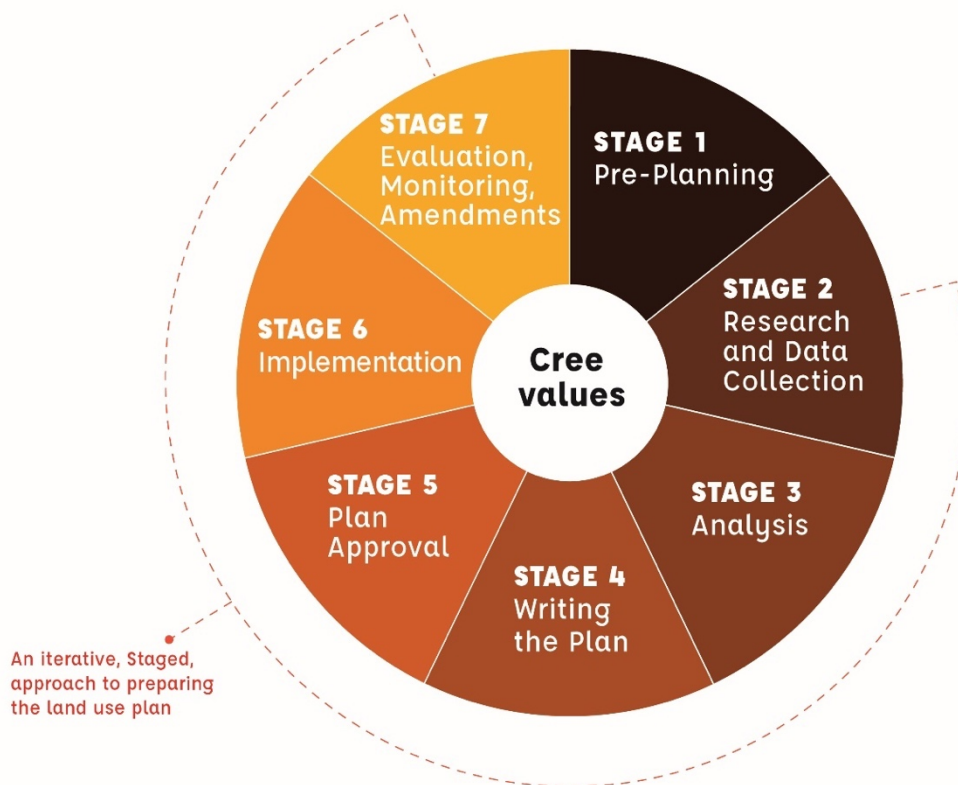


Figure 3. Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission Planning Stages

2. On the EMRPC Community Consultations

The following section provides a summary of the objectives and processes for the community consultations that were undertaken in each of the coastal communities over the summer of 2018.

2.1. Objectives of community consultations

The objectives of the community consultations were:

- To build awareness and community engagement in EMR planning process
 - Increase community understanding of EMRPC role and the EMR planning process
 - Build relationships with key planning partners within the communities
- To gather input to contribute to the development of goals, objectives, and measures of success for the marine area land use plan
 - Acknowledge and verify existing information on Cree values, issues and visions related to the marine area
 - Gather information on community values, issues, and visions for the EMR

2.2. Community Consultation Details

The community consultations were held in Wemindji between July 30 and August 2, 2018. The EMRPC relied on assistance from the Eeyou Planning Commission commissioner Elmer Georgekish and Johnny Mark (alternate) to assist with the planning and coordination of community consultations. The consultations also relied on a team of individuals including translators and notetakers.



Figure 4. Discussing Cree Terminology at Old Factory

The team members who were involved in organizing and leading the community consultations in Wemindji are:

- Tina Petawabano – EMRPC Chairperson
- Frances Dietrich-O’Connor – EMRPC Planner/Research
- Johnny Mark – Wemindji Eeyou Planning Commission Alternate Commissioner
- Edward Georgekish - Translator

The community consultations involved meetings held in Wemindji and at the Old Factory Visit. The meetings included:

- Women
- Tallymen and land users
- Youth
- Wemindji workers
- Elders

During the consultations, the EMRPC team held a terminology workshop to develop Cree translations of some key planning terms. A summary of what was shared at these meetings is provided in the following sections. The sessions were promoted on Facebook and local radio. See Appendix A for the poster developed to promote the consultations.

3. Values

During the consultations, the participants were asked to share what they valued about the marine part of their territory. In the land use planning process, it is important to understand what is important to Cree people about the marine region to ensure that these things are protected or supported by the land use plan. The following section provides a summary of the comments that Wemindji Cree shared about what they value in about the Marine area.

3.1. Everything is valuable

Many community members shared stories about their enjoyment of the marine area. Several individuals expressed that they could not identify one specific thing that they valued because it is all valuable to them. Community members also spoke about their favourite memories and their love of the scenery a feeling of freedom they get while in the marine region.

“I value hunting, being out on the lands, really everything about being out there.”

“I love everything about the marine area. The scenery, hunting, fishing, camping, picnics, boating, setting fish nets, sailing, kayaking”

“I love the fish and the freedom, it’s so quiet and so peaceful. The waters can be unforgiving but I feel so free when I go out there.”



3.1. Living off the land

Several Wemindji Cree shared that they rely on the foods and materials they harvest from the marine area. Several community members spoke about living off the land and all of the different uses that come with that way of life. People spoke specifically about the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping.

"I mostly lived off the land learning the traditional way of life. I had limited education because I'd rather learn the traditional way of life."

"I love fishing and hunting the red throated loon and collecting bird eggs from turns, eiders and seagull."

"I enjoy hunting and picking berries. I grew up on the Kakabat trapline on the coast."

"Harvesting beaver and other furbearing animals was a good source of income."

Some of the species that people mentioned harvesting most frequently include geese, whitefish, trout, walleye, and pike.

"I always admire when a hunter brings his harvest of geese. And the fish are really good, I love cleaning the fish."

"I love hunting on the coastline and the islands and fishing for whitefish, trout, walleye, and pike."

"I also like to sit out on the islands for long neck. I hop on with friends who have boats. Sometimes it's tiring you have to run over to where they fly but the joy of it keeps me going out."

"Setting up nets and making smoked fish is one of the things I loved the most. We would also get birds with snares instead of rifles. We would use a hook to retrieve the baby birds from under the rocks when they've just hatched."

One person also spoke about a community fishing derby that takes place in July for sea trout.

"I value collecting firewood, driftwood, having picnics, tourism, and fishing derbies. We do a local fishing derby for sea trout in July. It's mostly Cree, there are some non-Cree that participate though."

Wemindji Cree also spoke about collecting a number of different foods from the marine region including eggs, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, gooseberries, cranberries and crow berries. People also spoke about gathering other non-food resources including driftwood and cedar for floats, decoys and fish nets, firewood, drinking water and moss for diapers.

"I started first at the Georgekish trapline collecting driftwood, cedar and different woods for floats and decoys. You need to collect different woods for cooking. You can't use cedar for cooking because you can taste it. We used to collect eggs too."

"I love collecting cedar to make fish nets and collecting fire wood to smoke fish and geese."



Figure 5 Cleaning Fish Nets at Old Factory

"I love collecting drinking water and eggs on the islands and berry picking. I collect strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, crow berries and shokatay (berry) – out on an island."

"I harvest raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, goose berries, and cranberries. Also gather cloud berries they can be found by small lakes on these islands."

"What I love doing is getting moss for diapers."



3.2. Connecting with Others While out on the Land

One theme that emerged was the importance of going out to harvest with family members and connecting with others while out on the land. This included descriptions of fond memories of living on the land with family members and an annual canoe expedition.

"I love Goose Island. That's where I spent most of my time in the summer. I'm very emotional remembering my time on the island with my late husband and spring goose camp on the mainland. We used to spend every summer out there just the two of us."

"My grandson likes to come with me when I camp. Spending time with him out there, that's what I like to do."

"Every summer people used to go out in the bay to fish, I used to live out there with my grandma every summer."

"We do a canoe expedition up Old Factory River every year and end at Old Factory."



3.2.1. History

Several Wemindji community members spoke about the importance of their long-term historic ties to the marine area. In particular, people spoke about the historic importance of Old Factory Island. Many community members were raised on or near Old Factory Island and return to the island each summer during the Old Factory Visit community celebration.

"I moved from Old Factory when I was 19. I used to love living out there. When the geese lost their big wings, you could chase after them like a rabbit along the shore."

"I was born on one of the islands. I used to love the sea air, it's gone now. I used to go out with my dad when hunting season was over. We would go to certain areas where my dad would set nets. Just out here, not far."

"The coastal families who had coastal traplines would all stay together on a particular island. I often went by canoe with my mom to set nets and stay on the islands."

Participants also shared stories about the importance of historic uses in the area such as the harvesting of seals. One Wemindji community member also shared the importance of land-based legends.

“We used to make clothing from seal that was water proof, like hip waders. We used to set seal nets. We used seal for many things: clothing, ammunition cases, medicine and food.”

“People used to eat seal, it has good nutritional value. We used to seal hunt when we had dog teams but not anymore. Maybe some still go out to hunt for seal.”

“There are many legends about marine area. There is one legend that originated from Chisasibi. According to the legend, a man was being chased by a cannibal, to escape the cannibal the man jumped into a ravine and shot up and killed the cannibal. That is why the land is red in that place.”

One community member shared that he took part in the process of developing the EMRLCA and went with some elders to South Twin Island to determine if it was a good location for hunting. Under the EMRLCA, the southern portion of South Twin island is Cree owned.

“I took part in the initial process when we decided to take a portion of the islands. Daniel Moses and I went to south twin with the elders they decided at that time this is a good site for hunting.”

3.3. Monitoring

Several Wemindji Cree spoke about valuing their roles as fish monitors and Canadian rangers.

“Coastal fish monitoring used to generate good revenue.”

“I’m part of Canadian rangers. When I first got into it, in the early 1990s, they had rangers all along the coast as the eyes and ears for Canadian government so if we see any odd ship, we would notify the government e.g. the Russians have a mind to come in and get access.”

4. Issues

During the community consultations, the participants were asked to share any issues that exist in the marine area that the EMRPC needs to be aware of in developing the land use plan for the EMR. The following section provides a summary of the issues expressed by the participants.

4.1. Changes to land and waters

Several participants spoke about changes that they have observed to the marine area. In particular, the participants spoke about changes to the size and number of berries on the islands.

“Back in the 80s when I was growing up, I spent lots of time on islands. There were lots of berries, that’s disappearing now.”

“The blueberries are small right now. The blueberries, blackberries, and raspberries they’re still there right now but they’re small cause there’s not enough rain.”

“There are not as many berries on islands. Maybe the seagulls are eating them?”

Many Wemindji Cree also spoke about the depletion of eelgrass in the area and the impacts this has on their harvests.

“The depletion of eelgrass has great impact on our harvest.”

“There’s no eelgrass, the brants can’t feed on it so they go onshore and consume other vegetation.”

“Geese are bigger now. They change course and eelgrass is missing.”

Several participants spoke about changes they have observed to ice conditions. One participant described how, in the past, seabed gouging would help to restore vegetation, however they observed that this gouging does not happen in the same way anymore.

“The ice conditions in spring are not as sure as before. The way ice is melting, ice patterns it just moves now not the way it used to be in the past. The ice would go out come back to shore and sometimes because ice would scrape the seabed that would help restore the vegetation.”

Between 1971-1984, Hydro Quebec built three hydroelectric power stations on the La Grande river. This project involved construction of over 200 structures to alter the courses of 19 waterways. Three rivers, the Eastmain, Opinaca, and Caniapiscau were diverted to reservoirs on the La Grande River. Community members shared their belief that some of the changes they have observed were caused by the hydroelectric developments in the region. In particular, people spoke about changes to water colour, salinity levels, and travel conditions.

“They told us long ago, you’ll be buying water and carrying it with you. I never believed that. A lot of damage has been done. In some places in the sea, you can see bubbles coming from hydro. You see bubbles way down in the bay. Eastmain river is the worst. Because of the changes, we see a lot of damages to outboard motors. When the tide

goes out, you can get stuck now. Probably in Waskaganish it is the same. The clean and dirty currents are fighting all along in a line.”

“Quebec committed to a guaranteed level of harvest. They said that our harvest wouldn’t change, it’s not true. It’s easier said than done. Certain projects handed out benefits to people from the immediately affected area but we are still feeling the effects in the coast and we are not seeing any benefit. Hydro Quebec says that we’re not impacted.”

“I was born on one of the islands, I used to love the sea air but now it’s gone. 25 years ago, when you would go around the point you would smell the sea air but now with the hydro dams, yesterday I went all the way to Old Factory and hardly smelled the sea air at all.”

“I went to residential school and when I came back the waters were different, as soon as you get to shoreline it’s a brownish colour. It used to be grey. Now you see brown coloured sediments. You know green glacial water, it used to look like, that now you won’t see that. I don’t know how it affects the animals.”

4.2. Changes to wildlife

Wemindji Cree expressed concerns about changes to wildlife that they have observed. The following section provides a summary of some of the changes that community members spoke about.

4.2.1. Birds

In particular, people spoke about how the geese and other shore birds are not as abundant as they were in the past and that people are getting sick from eating brants. One Wemindji Cree shared that they no longer eat fox or seagull eggs because they eat garbage from around town.

“Way back as far as I can remember the harvest for brants was very good, but now, during the fall harvest the brant looks so nice but you can’t consume them. They look nice but you can’t eat them. In the old days there was abundance and now its depleted.”

“The harvest of [Canada] goose harvest is getting very low. They don’t stay long. We depended on brants to supplement the harvest but now we can’t. There’s no eel grass and no brants. When there was eel grass it helped with the waterfowl. Even if we kill some, people get sick, because the birds they don’t eat vegetation.”

“Geese they’re not as abundant anymore they don’t get as many as they used to. They just touch and go. It’s not like the old days, there aren’t as many berries as before. Even the small shore birds are not as many as they used to be.”

“We used to eat fox, and seagull eggs but not anymore because they’re around town eating garbage.”

4.2.1. Fish and marine mammals

Wemindji Cree also spoke about changes to fish populations that they observed. They shared that some fish including whitefish and trout are now soft and not good to eat.

“I’m sure the fish are damaged too. They need to check it once in a while. They could have something else other than mercury. Some fish are soft like jelly. I have to throw them away or burn them. This happens to whitefish and trout. Some are sick too. There needs to be research on this.”

“That’s supposed to be fresh water here. Sometimes fish die too. I don’t know what is wrong with them. That’s a thing that needs to be checked. The animals are drinking more dirty water than we eat them what’s going to happen to us? That’s a thing that needs to be checked.”

Community members also shared that they have observed decreases in whale and walrus populations.

“Whales are disappearing. Whales in James Bay are much smaller than in Hudson Bay and the water dried up in Eastmain they can’t get in there.”

“Don’t see many belugas or walrus anymore.”

4.2.2. New Species

Wemindji Cree people also shared that there are new animals starting to come into the area including cormorant, deer, and eagles. People shared that the increased populations of cormorants and eagles, in particular, have impacted their harvesting by scaring off geese or competing with people fishing.

“We’ve started seeing cormorants up here now. We are getting heavily impacted by these birds. They swallow fish whole. They compete with our fish harvesting.”

“Eagle is a protected species and it’s causing problems, they are disturbing hunting areas. Following customary law, we make geese feed and go there when there’s a north wind. But sometimes the eagle goes in and spooks your hunt.”

“We are starting to see deer on the islands. Many things will arrive.”



4.2.3. Polar Bear

Wemindji community members also spoke about changes that they have observed related to polar bear. People shared that they have safety concerns because of the increased polar bear in the region.

“It seems we see more polar bears now. Because of climate change, polar bears now venture out more to hunt for other food. They used to rely on seal and since ice melting, they can’t do that anymore.”

“Polar bears have started to damage our camping areas, they’re coming south now. They weren’t here in the past.”

“I used to go out to the islands looking for eggs, but polar bears are taking over during the time we would usually go so we can’t travel anymore because of the ice. Then the polar bear eats them and there are none left for us.”

“We can’t change anything now, everything is getting worse and worse. Polar bear are coming into this area from Churchill. They fly polar bears anywhere to get them out of the community. When the polar bears wake up, they just walk.”

“I’ve noticed a lot of polar bears recently. Someone spotted a female with babies when they were doing water taxi service into the bay. Polar bears even vandalize camps. The little ones get stuck in camps and moms go after them.”

“Polar bears are scaring people, they have been destroying camps along the coast. We’re seeing more and more of them.”



4.2.4. The land is growing

Several participants spoke about changes to water levels. Wemindji Cree spoke shared that the area is getting drier and that areas that were once islands are now part of the mainland. People also expressed that new vegetation and reefs are appearing. Community members expressed concerns that while some level of isostatic rebound is inevitable, they feel that it is occurring very quickly and expressed that some people believe that this may be due to the reservoirs.

“We moved from over there because that area was getting drier and drier.”

“There are new reefs now. The land is growing. What used to be sand bars now has vegetation and is growing.”

“Vegetation has grown so fast. When you cross the river there used to be a place where people would travel when we have high winds but now vegetation grew so fast you can’t get through. Even at high tide you will notice it’s changed. It’s not as high as it used to be 25 years ago.”

“They say that with global warming water rising, it is happening everywhere but not here. Here the vegetation is growing fast. What was once an island has now become the mainland. I went hunting when I was 12 years old, when we hunted, we saw willows and trees back then. The uplift is supposed to be only so many meters. According to studies, uplift is inevitable but don’t know why it is happening so fast. The theory is that maybe it has to do with reservoirs.”

4.3. Changes to Cree Way of Life

During the consultations, people spoke about concerns that the Cree way of life and traditions have started to change. People were shared concerns that proper land management and harvesting practices may not be being passed down to younger generations.

“There are more and more hunters now. When young hunters go out to hunt on the coast, they don’t always ask. Elders used to advise people not to hunt when it’s calm (yostiich) only when it’s windy because the sounds of the shots carry far and the sound scares other animals.”

“Young generations don’t want to spend time out in the bay practicing traditional way of life. It will affect the young generations they won’t be able to practice their traditional ways if don’t want to spend time in the marine area.”

“Not as many people as used to set the nets and use the marine area as much. Growing I used to travel with mom and dad and step sister from here to Chisasibi.”

Many Wemindji Cree raised concerns about how the younger generations will be able to maintain the Cree way of life because of pressures of “modern life.” Some people spoke about the challenge of younger generations needing to stay in town for school and therefore not receiving their education from the land. Other Wemindji Cree spoke about the changes that come with roads and modern technologies such as skidoos.

“We are going out less now. My grandson is in school. It is hard for everyone. They built the school here, they told us to stay in the community. They talk only English and money. Every little boy asks for money. Besides alcohol going on in community and new things coming in new skidoos. It all means more families are split apart. One family over there another over here.”

“Culture how will they keep it is a question most of us are wondering my generation are the ones keeping it but next generation will they? How do you balance the world you live in and your culture for next 50 years? The way I see it now, you mix your culture with modern society. Go to work or go to camp it’s almost like you have to choose. I went out on the land with my grandson for one week. He loved it so much I made him stay out for

an extra week. The teacher said "oh you missed too much school" but I taught him many things."

"There is a generational gap. Our elders could walk to the coast and get back but later generations don't do that. The life style changes over time become more lazy stick to the roads."

Community members also shared concerns that the younger generations are losing the Cree language.

"Another time we went out for 2 weeks went to cut some wood I told them in Cree ---- make sure you put bows down before you put the wood down, I watched them just throwing it in the snow. If you can't chop it, pile it up don't leave it laying around. I watched them, they didn't understand me in Cree. So I told them in English you're disrespecting the wood that gives you heat and also for cooking. How will you balance Cree culture and modern society? When you're 40 will you still go out on the land? The keepers are getting smaller and smaller."

"I don't want us to lose our language. You see it happening here on island, all we hear is kids talking to each other in English."

4.4. Safety

Several participants spoke about safety concerns in the Bay. People shared concerns that the changes to the lands and waters make travel in the marine area more dangerous.

"With shipping there's always danger of accidents contaminating coastal areas especially if they are transporting dangerous goods."

"It's harder to find the channels now. I used to travel to Chisasibi, Eastmain, Moose Factory. Now I have to tilt motor in places used to go full throttle because of isostatic rebound elders call it "the land is growing," the uplift."

"The water channels are changing rapidly. When we hunt if you don't remember the channels you could hit a rock."

Wemindji Cree also shared concerns that some people may be travelling in the area without adequate knowledge of the reefs and weather conditions.

"Hazards that's one thing the young people don't know about the areas to avoid and get to know the reefs. Young people rarely go with an elder when they go out in the bay in my time would go with father or elders today, they just go out there. Even the spring. They still do the same thing. Just go out there don't even look at the weather how it is. Young people chased wolves in the fog could have gotten lost if they continued could have easily ended up in the bay lots of dangerous places in the bay some places frozen"

some are not during winters don't see jagged ice that come now a days barely see the ice coming the colour of the ice is different."

"When you look at the water, you don't see the plants that grew. When you go along the bay, there's certain places that have reefs. Unless you're very knowledgeable, you will bang reefs. That has changed, you are starting to have small sections coming up."

Community representatives explained that there are some existing strategies to deal with emergencies the community does not have a formal emergency management plan for safety incidents that occur in the marine area.

"We don't have a protocol for emergency response. I don't think the fire department has equipment that could travel in severe conditions. we need a coast guard or search and rescue. Even if they have the equipment, I don't think they practice."

"One winter we hired some guys to mark the channels and warn people of bad spots not to go across, one of the bad spots where we were warning people not to go across there were tracks going across. Turns out it was one of our guys. He was from Eastmain and didn't know."

5. Vision

During the consultations, the community members were asked to share how they envisioned the future of the marine area. To help community members answer this question, it was often worded as, "what would you to see in the marine area in 20-25 years?" The following section provides a summary of the visions for the marine area that Wemindji Cree shared during the consultations.

5.1. Preserving and Passing Down the Cree Way of Life

Preserving and passing down the Cree way of life was important to Wemindji Cree. Many people spoke about their desire to see the Cree people continuing to speak Cree and practice the Cree way of life in the marine region in the future.

"I want to continue to speak my language and for this way of life to go-on on the islands. I want to see people continuing to pursue traditional way of life, setting fish nets."

"Some young ones like to hunt and trap and being out on the lands. I love the freedom of being out on the land. I want the Cree language be maintained in 25 years."

"I have to encourage my kids to keep practicing the passing our traditions down even if it's not practiced as much."

"I would like to see my grandchildren practicing what I was able to, I don't want to see people not caring for the coast and marine land."

"It would be great to have complete access and not be denied access to do what we've been taught to do."

5.2. Environmental protection

Wemindji Cree also want to see the marine area protected and well maintained. To achieve this, there was desire to create protected areas especially around migration and nesting areas and the places where Wemindji Cree go to harvest. One community member shared that they believe that there should be a bird sanctuary created.

"I want to see lots of game, lots of geese. I want to see it stay like it is now."

"Most tallymen have ideas of which areas to protect with birds migrating. A lot of those areas are affected with climate change and the vegetation growing very fast. Certain areas, geese don't land anymore."

"Now a day's young people are eager to take birds down. But we should have a limit to where we can hunt, maybe have a sanctuary for birds, geese and ducks in the long run. I don't know if all will agree. That should be part of our culture. Only take what you need."

Community members also shared their desire to see the marine area protected from large environmental disruptions, contamination, and cormorants.

“Don’t want to see major spills and I don’t want to see garbage on the islands.”

“Once upon a time the engineers were looking at damming whole James Bay and pumping salt water out. They called it the GRAND canal. They did lots of studies about it. I don’t want to see that.”

“No one wants to see any of the islands destroyed by companies that want to impact the territory. It would have a big effect on the marine life.”

“I don’t want to see any companies that will disregard the protection of the land that will destroy it and not care about the protection of the wildlife.”

“In 25 years, I don’t want to see that bird (cormorant).”



5.3. Restore areas

Wemindji Cree spoke about their desires to see eelgrass beds return to their past levels because of their importance to geese and other waterfowl. People spoke about the Niskamoon Eelgrass Monitoring study that is being undertaken and the work of a biologist from New Hampshire University¹. This biologist has suggested that it may be possible to transplant eelgrass.

“There is a biologist from New Hampshire studying the eelgrass, they say it can be transplanted.”

“I want to see eelgrass, birds and bears come back.”

“Want a project to bring back eelgrass, it’s important for geese and other waterfowl.”

“We need to hire people to go out there and clean up and plant trees.”

¹ For more information see <http://jamesbayeelgrass.org/>

5.4. Tourism

Several Wemindji community members spoke about their interest in developing tourism in the marine area. In particular, people spoke about the idea of developing tours to take tourists out by boat to see wildlife in the area including polar bear and whale. Wemindji has created a local tourism business that has started promoting ecotours and canoe and kayak excursions into James Bay.²

“COTA is working on tours to go see the white bear.”

“There’s potential for a major tourist attraction for tours we’re having right now. We will be purchasing a boat.”

“I want to see a bustling tourism industry, with polar bears as an attraction. People spend lots of money just to see a polar bear.”

“Right now, we have 2-3 tours. We have a tour guide who gives a history of Wemindji and Old Factory. I have been working with one of our community members to help him get Canadian and Quebec small vessel registration. He has insurance and an eight-seater boat. We are working with Arctic Kingdom to develop a business plan.”

“Tourism would be one thing to show people visiting what it’s like to fish or camp out there and go and tell legends and stories.”

Some community members shared concerns about potential tourism projects. One community member expressed that they do not want to see tourism in the area and that they have concerns about the safety of people going out into the area.

“I don’t like tourism there’s nothing to see here. All garbage outside. No good for tourism. I don’t like it at all. It’s very good in Mexico, it’s no good for here. I say I don’t need tourism here. Plus, the people who go out to the islands and just wear little shoes they don’t have hip waiters. It’s more damaging out there. If something happens, what will they do? That’s a thing I’m afraid of polar bears. It happened one-time, a person went to get pictures.”

Other community members were in support of tourism, under the right conditions. In particular, people spoke about a desire to not see boats crowding whales or tourists getting too close to polar bear. One community member shared that while many community members support tourism, they want to make sure that it does not disturb their harvesting.

² For more information see <https://www.wemindjiturism.ca/>

“At last year’s COTA conference, we talked about different policies. In the St. Lawrence River, they used to have boats crowding whales. Now boats have to be 100 meters from whales. I would like to see the same thing here. You also see videos of people getting too close to polar bears. I don’t want to see that.”

“I spoke to many tallymen, they were interested in tourism because it helps preserve the area. But there is hesitancy towards tourism by some people so we still have to be respectful of that.”

“Many tallymen want tourism but they don’t want it for winters and they don’t want it to disturb bird hunting. We were working on the Niskamoon Trans Eeyou Trail but not all tallymen wanted it in their area.”



5.5. Community Economic Development

Wemindji Eeyou shared a number of other ideas for economic development projects related to the marine area. People expressed interest in exploring the potential of commercializing marine resources including mussels, eider down, kelp and mushrooms. People wanted to ensure that any commercial harvesting is done sustainably to ensure that the resources are not permanently depleted.

“I’m interested to explore commercial harvesting of mussels. But if we commercialize any harvesting, I want to see a balance of economic development and protection so nothing becomes extinct.”

“We’re not taking initiative on certain things. Once upon a time I took part in a study. There’s a mushroom that grows out there on jack pine. They did a study and the DNA is the same as one they sell in china. We’re missing out, losing millions of dollars.”

“There’s still lots of stuff out there we could harvest. The mussels, they say it works to grow them and then we could commercialize and have jobs for people who love the marine areas. I’m a diver, we pick up mussels and have a shore lunch. It’s a totally different environment. There’s lots of kelp. People from McGill showed me a bag of seaweed from Japan and China. We have that here let’s pull our act together we can employ our people. I’m sure there’s tons of other stuff. Eider down is another idea, people play tons of money for that.”

“I had one idea to combat climate change. In the maritime provinces people collect seaweed to feed cows. When they feed cattle seaweed, they don’t emit as much methane. Coastal communities could collect seaweed and ship it to neighbouring communities in the Abitibi region.”

The participants also spoke about plans to develop a seaport. The community members shared that some discussions have occurred related to the development of a marina on an island near the community. The purpose of this marina would be to allow larger boats to dock and offload or onload. The community members shared that plans for the port have stalled recently because there is not a sufficient business case for the development at the moment. They also shared that not all community members were interested in seeing the development go forward. In particular, the tallyman responsible for the area where the development is proposed, was not interested in seeing the project go forward because of the potential impacts to the area.

“In the past, Tawich wanted to have a harbour/marina for boats. There was a plan to have a port on a specific island. That would be nice to see, for big boats to come in because waters are deep enough out there.”

“Tawich were in discussion about developing a seaport. The idea has stalled for now. There’s no big business at this time. We still have it in our plans though. Years ago, we asked about it and the local tallyman didn’t allow it because he would lose a lot of his trapline. There are so many families living off his area that don’t have a trapline to go to. He also said that, because of way water looks, he didn’t think water could take the weight of big ships. There may be too many sand bars.”

“I don’t want to see a marina. It would change the whole system. With big ships coming in, no one knows how it will affect the area. I would rather see it the way it is now than to have those things coming in like that. It would create a lot of environmental impacts and we’ve already seen so many. See the water, the way it is now?”

5.6. Safety

The community members also shared a number of recommendations related to safety in the marine area. One person shared that they do not want people using their cellphones while driving boats and another expressed an interest in seeing a coast guard auxiliary program in the community.

“People shouldn’t be carrying their cellphones while travelling in the marine area because people get distracted while they are boating especially water taxis, they have a responsibility for the safety of their customers.”

“We should have enforcement with coast guards. Maybe we could initiate a coast guard auxiliary. They were willing to work with us to create one for up north.”

6. Wemindji Cree Planning Terminology

During the community consultations, the EMRPC team held a workshop to identify Cree translations of some key land use planning terminology. The objective of this workshop was to try to find words in the coastal Cree dialects that can be used to help people better understand land use planning, the Eeyou Marine Region, and the Eeyou Marine Region Land Claims Agreement. Another goal of these workshops was to help non-Cree people begin to come to a better understanding of the Cree way of thinking about planning and land management. The workshops did not intend to identify the definitive and conclusive translations of these terms and should be considered part of a longer term conversation.



Figure 6. Image from Wemindji Terminology Workshop



Figure 7. Image from Wemindji Terminology Workshop

Table 1 provides a summary of the terminology translations that were recommended during the workshop. To assist non-Cree speakers to understand how these words are thought about in Cree, the table also includes a column that provides a direct translation of the Cree terms into English.

Table 1. Wemindji preliminary translation of key Eeyou Marine Region planning terms

English Planning Term	Cree Planning Term	Word for word translation of Cree term
Vision	Niikaanayaptimuuwin ᓃᓐᓕᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐ	Foretell the future
Goals	ah mishaach ah wii pikutaakaanuch chaakwaan ᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐ ᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐ ᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐ	Organizing an ultimate thing you want to do



Figure 8. Image of Wemindji meeting dotmocracy exercise

The top issues identified through the dotmocracy process in Wemindji were:

- Environmental protection:
 - Create new protected areas
- Cree governance:
 - Respect and support Cree knowledge, governance, and land management practices in the marine area
- Access:
 - Maintain and enhance access to the marine area for hunting fishing trapping

It is worth noting that although only one person selected **restoration** in the general sessions, the youth who attended the youth specific session selected this theme most frequently.

Table 2. Results of Wemindji Dotmocracy Exercise

Planning Themes Identified from Past Studies	Community Member	Youth	Total

Environmental protection: Create new protected areas	12	7	19
Cree governance: Respect and support Cree knowledge, governance, and land management practices in the marine area	11	7	18
Access: Maintain and enhance access to the marine area for hunting fishing trapping	6	9	15
Restoration: Work to clean up coastal areas	1	10	11
Environmental monitoring and management: Better information on what is happening on the islands and marine area	8	2	10
Cree led development: Promote economic development that is compatible with Cree way of life	5	3	8
Safety: Support safe navigation in the marine area	4	4	8
Climate change: Understand and reduce the impacts of climate change	1	5	6
Total Responses	48	47	95

8. Questions and recommendations for the EMR and EMRPC

The following section provides a summary of questions and recommendations that were raised by Wemindji community members during the community consultations.

8.1. Questions raised by Wemindji community members

During the community consultations, community members raised a number of questions related to the Eeyou Marine Region. These questions will be compiled with questions from the other communities and the EMRPC will develop a frequently asked questions document to respond to as many of the questions as possible. The questions raised by Wemindji Cree are listed below.

- We’re doing mineral exploration what happens if they do find it?
- Are we allowed to use the islands owned by Canada?
- North Twin Island only part Cree owned?
- Canada owns the seabed?

8.2. Recommendations for EMR and EMRPC planning process

The community members also shared a number of recommendations related to EMR and the EMRPC the planning process. This included recommendations related to the types of research that they would like to see conducted.

“I want to see them bring back the monitoring programs to determine if fish stock is depleting, there used to be five camps to do this.”

“The fish need to be checked out. How much mercury is in them. The geese, beaver, whales, polar bears, seals, loons, otter and fish they all have mercury. What about us? How much do we have?”

“I would like to see research on why the berries have disappeared.”

“That’s one thing that that has to be really studied the water itself.”

“Polar bear research through COTA was only one day. It should have been done through the whole season. It would be nice to have more research on belugas so we would know where to bring our tours.”

“Do they know what's in there? Are there shrimp?”

9. Conclusion

A number of main themes emerged from a review of comments shared during the community consultation sessions held in Wemindji. These topics and related descriptions, as seen below, broadly describe some of the main goals and considerations raised by Wemindji Cree during the consultations. The EMRPC land use plan may not be able to address all of the issues and goals listed below however, the EMRPC will collaborate with other jurisdictions to ensure that these key issues are appropriately considered and, where possible, incorporated into in the land use planning process.

Topic	Description
Cree harvesting	Protect areas of importance to Cree harvesting including waterfowl habitat.
Cree knowledge, culture and way of life	Ensure that Cree knowledge, culture and way of life is passed on to the next generation through programs and teachings. Support Cree teachings such as sharing and respect for the land and elders’ knowledge.
Economic development	Consider how development in the marine region could create employment for Cree people. Consider developments such as

	commercial fishing, harvesting of mushrooms, kelp, eider down, tourism. Ensure that any development that occurs respects Cree way of life.
Environmental protection	Protect ecologically sensitive areas especially habitat for geese. Consider creating waterfowl sanctuaries.
Plan for future developments	Plan for community infrastructure developments such a seaport. Ensure that plans respect the Cree way of life.
Research	Support research projects and approaches requested by Wemindji people.
Restoration	Support efforts to restore waterfowl habitat, eelgrass, and salinity levels.
Safety	Support initiatives for safety surveillance and emergency responses in the marine region.
Tourism	Support tourism when there is consent from tallymen. Ensure that tourism activities respect Cree way of life and are carried out safely. Ensure that tourist activities respect safe setbacks from animals such as polar bear and whales.
Waste management	Integrate sound waste management practices into Cree life on the land and the activities of proponents.

Appendix A: Poster Used to Promote Consultations



The poster features a background image of a beach with waves and a white bird in flight. The title 'Eeyou Marine Region' is prominently displayed in white and blue, with 'Eeyou' in white and 'Marine Region' in blue. Below the title is the name in Cree syllabics and 'REGION MARINE D'EEYOU'. The main heading 'Planning Commission' is in white. Three circular images show a plant, a forest, and two geese. The bottom section is split into a dark blue left side for 'Community Consultations' and a light blue right side for 'Help Shape the Future of the Islands and Marine Area'. The right side lists three questions: 'Where have we been?', 'Where are we now?', and 'Where do we want to go?'. The bottom of the poster includes contact information and a Facebook link.

Eeyou Marine Region

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Planning Commission

Community Consultations

Tuesday, July 31
4:00 PM - Cree Language Workshop at OFV

Wednesday, August 1
10:30 AM - women and youth at OFV
1:00 PM - tallymen, land users and elders at OFV

Thursday, August 2
1:00 PM – meet with elders, tallymen and landusers at MSDC
5:30 PM – women and youth at council chambers

Help Shape the Future of the Islands and Marine Area

Come and help us answer:

Where have we been?
Where are we now?
Where do we want to go?

Questions?: Contact your local Eeyou Planning Commission Commissioner or the Eeyou Marine Region at 819-895-2202
<https://www.eeyoumarineregion.ca/planning-commission/>

 EYYOU MARINE REGION PLANNING COMMISSION
COMMISSION D'AMÉNAGEMENT
DE LA RÉGION MARINE D'EEYOU
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 Find us on
facebook

10. Appendix B: List of past consultation and study reports reviewed

Year	Consultation Process or Study	Led by
2002	Cree Use, Management & Occupancy of the Offshore Region in Eastern James Bay & Southeastern Hudson Bay	Kreg Ettenger
2009	Eeyou Indoh-Hoh Weeshou-Wehwun Traditional Eeyou Hunting Law	Cree Trappers Association
2010	Goose Hunting and Cree Ecological Knowledge in Waskaganish and Wemindji	Cree Regional Authority And Cree Trappers Association
2011	Cree Vision of Plan Nord	Cree Nation Government
2012	Review of wildlife management issues and the environmental factors that influence them in coastal and offshore area of Eeyou Istchee, Northern Quebec	Jessica Labrecque
2014	Integrated Land and Sea Conservation Community Consultations	Deputy Grand Chief Rodney Mark
2015	Cree Regional Conservation Strategy	Cree Nation Government
2016-2017	Eeyou Istchee Tourism Association Annual Report	Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association
2017	A Conversation to Set Goals for Land Use Planning	Eeyou Planning Commission