

A new relationship
between the
Québec government
and the
Crees of Québec

“The Peace of the Brave”



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Québec 



Grand Council
of the Cree



The Crees of Québec (Eeyouch)

"Once again, Québec and the Cree Nation will be showing the rest of the world a new way to broach relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples."

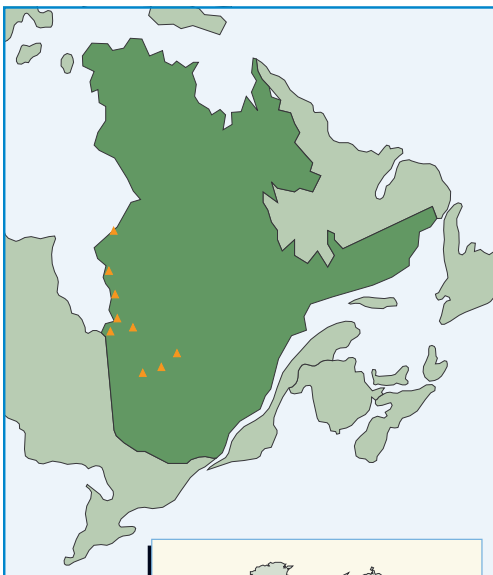
(Ted Moses, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees)

"Aboriginal peoples must play their rightful role in resource development and access, and in realizing the potential that Québec's territory offers. We owe it to both our past and our future."

(Bernard Landry, Premier of Québec)

The Cree Nation is one of eleven aboriginal nations in Québec. The Crees have inhabited the territory of northwestern Québec - called Eeyou Istchee in the Cree language - for over 5 000 years. Their first contacts with European tradesmen date back to the early 17th century. Beginning in the second half of the 20th century, the Cree way of life underwent a gradual change, and most Crees have since adopted a sedentary lifestyle.

The Cree population is distributed among nine villages that are situated between the 49th and the 55th parallels. The Crees account for 13 000 of the 78 000 indigenous people living in Québec, making them one of the largest aboriginal nations. Their population growth is strong and over half of all Crees are under 25. Cree is still the language most commonly used, although many Crees also speak English and French. Though only a minority still earn their livelihood by hunting, trapping and fishing, traditional activities remain at the heart of the Cree culture and identity. The Cree communities have a sufficient number of schools, medical facilities and community resources, but there is a pressing need for more jobs and better housing.



▲ Cree village

Grand Conseil des Cris



The first agreement

In the early 1970s, a court of first instance recognized Cree and Inuit rights to territory that had been designated for hydroelectric development. The governments of Québec and Canada subsequently entered into negotiations with these two nations, which led, in 1975, to the signing of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA), the first agreement in modern history to be brokered with Canada's aboriginal peoples.

Under this agreement, the Crees received 5 300 km² of land for their exclusive use, as well as hunting, fishing and trapping rights to part of the territory covered by the JBNQA. In addition, they received close to \$134 million from the governments of Canada and Québec, and several agencies were created by Québec legislation, including the Cree Regional Authority, the Cree Board

In subsequent years, disagreement over the interpretation and application of the JBNQA, and the Crees' opposition to a hydroelectric development project on the Great Whale River strained relations between the Québec government and the Cree Nation.



of Health and Social Services, the Cree School Board, and the Cree Hunters and Trappers Income Security Board.

Caribou are hunted by the Cree.



Matthew Coon Come, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and Grand Chief of the Cree from 1987 to 1999, Québec Prime Minister Bernard Landry and Ted Moses, Grand Chief of the Cree.

The “peace of the brave”

Seeking to improve relations, elected officials of the Québec government and the Grand Council of the Crees decided to settle their differences through negotiation and, on February 7, 2002, they signed a 50-year nation-to-nation agreement, which Grand Chief Ted Moses called the “peace of the brave.”

This agreement aims to renew the relationship between Québec and the Crees, promote the Cree Nation’s economic and social development, and develop northern Québec’s natural resources. Consulted by their leaders via referendums held in their nine villages, the Cree population voted almost 70% in support of the agreement.

The “peace of the brave” is innovative in more ways than one: negotiated and signed by two nations, it establishes a resource-management partnership and broadens the responsibilities assigned to the Cree communities.

“This is an historic moment, a turning point and a truly revolutionary vision, both for the Crees and aboriginal peoples in general and for Québec and the rest of the world.”

(Ted Moses, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees)

A new relationship

By signing this new nation-to-nation agreement, the Québec government gives tangible form to the motion to

recognize aboriginal nations and their rights, adopted by the National Assembly in 1985 under the René Lévesque government.

This renewed relationship, founded on mutual respect, will become the basis for ongoing dialogue between the Québec government and the Cree Nation, thanks to the implementation of permanent consultation and partnership mechanisms.

In February 2002, the representative of the Grand Council of the Crees spoke to the *Working Group on the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, saying, “*The agreement is a great step forward in the development of relations between a government and a First Nation [...]. Québec recognizes that aboriginal rights over land and resources are perfectly compatible with the national interest. This attitude should encourage governments in other countries to understand that our interests and needs, as First Nations, should no longer be seen as a threat.*”

Economic and social development

The “peace of the brave” heralds greater autonomy for the Crees and allows them to take charge of their own development. To this end, several economic and social responsibilities that were formerly assumed by the Québec government will be transferred to them. These responsibilities are in the areas of trapping, tourism, arts and crafts, business development, training and the construction of community centres.





The Cree Development Corporation

The agreement provides for the creation by the National Assembly of a new autonomous corporation, the Cree Development Corporation. This body, to be headed by a board of directors appointed mainly by the Crees, will be dedicated to economic and social development, and will help make the Cree people active partners in the development of the James Bay territory as a whole.

The Québec government will continue to support the development of the Cree communities by providing funding of \$70 million per year for the next 50 years, thereby enabling the Crees to discharge their new responsibilities. Additional funding may be granted depending on the profits earned from hydroelectricity development and forestry and mining activities on the territory covered by the agreement. Through this financial contribution and various other measures designed to bolster economic development, the agreement aims to distribute resources and the attendant spin-offs more equitably between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

"We can become the masters of our destiny and this new relationship with Québec – nation to nation – gives us an unprecedented opportunity. [...] We now have a chance to build a secure future for our greatest resource – our people."

(Billy Diamond, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees from 1974 to 1984)

The development of natural resources

The agreement recognizes that the Cree Nation has an essential role to play in the territory's economic development, and sets out a number of measures to ensure that resources are developed in a way that is both respectful of aboriginal traditions and environmentally responsible, for the greater good of Québec society as a whole.

As concerns hydroelectricity, the parties have agreed to carry out two projects that will result in the partial diversion of the Rupert River. One of these projects has already been approved, and the second will undergo an environmental impact assessment in which the Crees will be directly involved. Furthermore, separate agreements with Hydro-Québec, the state-owned energy corporation, guarantee jobs for the Crees and contracts for their enterprises.

In the forestry sector, Québec has adapted its regime to ensure greater integration of concerns relating to sustainable development and better take into account the Crees' traditional way of life. The Québec government thus pledged to protect Cree sites of interest (burial sites, portages, camps), review its forest harvesting policies for territories where wildlife is abundant and maintain a certain level of forest cover for each trapline.

Lastly, as concerns prospecting and mining development, the Québec government will encourage and facilitate the signing of agreements between proponents and the Cree people to create jobs, award contracts to Cree communities, and implement environmental mitigation measures.



The agreement in brief

Economic and social development

- Annual funding of \$70 million for 50 years (in constant dollars) from the Québec government.

Forestry

- Adaptation of the Québec forestry regime to the Crees' traditional way of life, with a view to ensuring sustainable development and participation by the Crees.
- Allocation to Cree enterprises of a yearly volume of 350 000 m³ of timber, mainly in the form of forest management contracts.
- Creation of the Cree-Québec Forestry Board.
- Creation of joint working groups in the communities.

Mining

- Creation of the Mineral Exploration Board, designed to encourage Cree participation in prospecting activities. The Board is made up of representatives of the Cree Nation and of the Québec government.

Hydroelectric development

- Completion of two hydroelectric projects: Eastmain-1 and Eastmain-1A/Rupert.
- Total investment of \$4 billion.
- Creation of 10 500 direct jobs (person-years) over nine years, a portion of which will go to the Crees.

For more information



On the agreement between the Québec government and the Crees:

Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones
www.saa.gouv.qc.ca

On the Cree Nation of Québec:

Grand Council of the Crees
www.gcc.ca

On Québec's forests, mines, energy production and lands:

Ministère des Ressources naturelles
www.mrn.gouv.qc.ca

On hydroelectric development projects in Québec:

Hydro-Québec
www.hydroquebec.com

Québec 



Grand Council
of the Crees