



Eeyou Eenou

NEWSLETTER

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

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ISSUE 2

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CASEY POLSON

Interview with Patrol Officer
Casey Polson from the
Eeyou Eenou Police Force



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MAY ISSUE | GOOSE BREAK

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Event Highlights

Learn more about the Cree Regional Climate Forum, UNPFII and the Eeyou Istchee Research Institute Session that were held last month.

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Eeyou Istchee Land Keeper

Learn about the Eeyou Istchee Land Keepers and their message to everyone who will be heading out on the land during this Goose Break and summer months.

02

Goose Break Message

Goose Break has finally arrived! On behalf of the Grand Council of the Crees/ Cree Nation Government we wish you a happy and safe Goose Break.

05

Protecting your Camp this Summer

With warmer weather comes an increase risk of forest fires in Eeyou Istchee. Learn how you can prepare and take precautions that reduce risk to your camp during the fire season.

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First Snowshoe Walk

Nelson Wapachee from Nemaska, Eeyou Istchee shared with us his perspective on the First Snowshoe walk and the importance of this rite of passage.

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Youth Profile: Casey Polson

This newsletter features Casey Polson, a 22-year-old patrol officer working for the Eeyou Eenou Police Force in Chisasibi. Learn more about his career and what it means to him to work to keep our communities safe.

COVER:

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

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LATEST ISSUES



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Reclaiming Indigenous Rights at the UN



The twenty-third session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues took place from April 15-26, 2024 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City where representatives of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) attended part of the session.

The theme of the session was “Enhancing Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: emphasizing the voices of Indigenous youth.”

The Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) hosted a side-event at the forum entitled “Paving the Way for Future Generations: Reclaiming Indigenous Rights and Collaborating with State Governments for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Relations.”

The panelists included Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty, Grand Chief Constant Awashish from the Council of the

Atikamekw Nation, Grand Chief Savanna McGregor from the Algonquin-Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council, and Regional Chief Ghislain Picard from the Assembly of First Nation Quebec-Labrador. The discussion was moderated by Donald Nicholls, our Director of Justice (International Relations).

The topics of discussion tapped into the Grand Chiefs’ knowledge and experience covering important themes on Indigenous rights, collaboration, enhanced participation, climate change in a sustainable development while discussing best ways forward for future generations.

“The freedom and strength we have as Nations is in our collaboration. It is important we share the stage and speak about our Nations with different governing systems and know that we have a common approach in what we are seeking, protection of our identity, land and language. Although we come from different histories and different approaches, we are united in the position that we take. That is really the key message for all nations across Canada.”

Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty

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PAST AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Regional Climate Forum

The 2024 Cree Regional Climate Forum (CRCF24), hosted by the Cree Nation Government's Climate Change Unit, was held in Ouje-Bougoumou from April 9 to 11, 2024, and brought together over 150 stakeholders from ten Cree First Nations, external partners and guests including academics, federal and provincial government representatives.

The key themes of community engagement, adaptation planning, and climate leadership dominated discussions, yielding tangible results such as a forthcoming climate declaration for the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee), a call for a permanent regional advisory committee, and invaluable information for developing a regional climate adaptation plan. The program started with a panel on forest fires, and quickly moved into action through adaptation workshops.

The event also included a tour of the upcoming Ouje-Bougoumou Eco-Center, the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute, and an evening talent show. Inspired by Cree culture, the CRCF24 three-day climate action event emphasized resilience and collaboration in the face of climate change. All presentations and recordings are available on the Cree Nation Government's website, allowing for greater access to essential information.

Thank you to all participants, panelists, and volunteers, particularly keynote speakers Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty, Deputy Grand Chief Norman A. Wapachee, and Chief Gaston Cooper, for their contributions to this important discussion.

Congratulations to the talent show winners Jossée Bernier, Walter Jolly, and Hunter Anjo-Le, as well as Ouje-Bougoumou's Deputy Chief Angel Louisa Mianscum, who won the solar kit lottery prize (courtesy of the Cree Trappers' Association).



Forum on the Creation of a Cree Nation Research Institute

Deputy Grand Chief Norman A. Wapachee and the Cree Nation Research Institute Working Group hosted a forum on March 19-20, 2024 at the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute in Ouje-Bougoumou with other Cree community representatives to discuss the creation of the Cree Nation Research Institute.

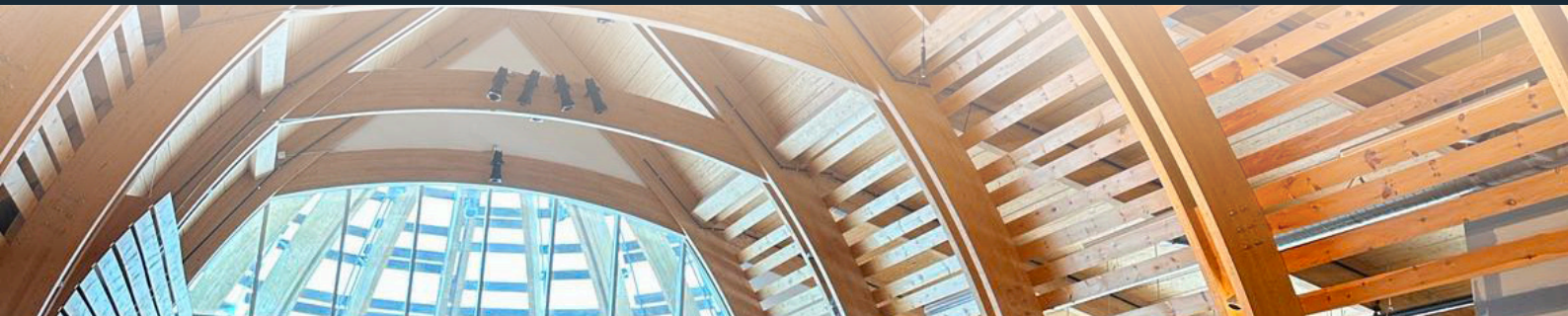


The Cree Nation Research Institute (CNRI) project was conceived as a tool for self-determination to help us make better informed decisions on development projects in Eeyou Istchee. Where historically, research in Eeyou territory was conducted by forces outside of Eeyou Istchee without Cree consent, the CNRI will help to reappropriate the management of research and development strategies with the benefits of Eeyouch in mind while addressing the concerns and needs of Cree communities and Cree organizations.

The CNRI working group was created by Deputy Grand Chief Norman A. Wapachee to plan the creation of the Institute and currently consists of Cree Nation Government directors and Cree Health Board representatives. As part of its functions, the working group is to consult with communities to define the institute's core objectives and mandates.

The CNRI forum provided a unique opportunity to assemble representatives from Cree communities and organizations to collectively plan the next steps towards the establishment of the Institute.

For more information about the creation to the Cree Nation Research Institute, contact CNRI Project Coordinator Vincent Gautier-Doucet (v.gautier-doucet@cngov.ca).



UPCOMING EVENTS

Stay connected through www.cngov.ca



BOARD COUNCIL NEMASKA

MAY 29-30, 2024

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



EYYOU ISTCHEE SUMMER GAMES

JULY 14-21, 2024

Meeting of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government in Chibougamau, Quebec. You can join us online through our Vimeo stream, or listen online through the James Bay Cree Communication Society.

<https://www.creegames.ca/>



CAMP MOLLY TRAINING

JULY 25-28, 2024

Capital Works & Services will be hosting a Camp Molly – An Indigenous Firefighting camp for Indigenous girls ages 15-18.

Are you an Indigenous girl or non-binary who would like to try firefighting? Are you between the ages of 15-18?

[Learn More: https://www.campmolly.ca/about/#schedule](https://www.campmolly.ca/about/#schedule)

CELEBRATING EEYOU CULTURE THE FIRST SNOWSHOE WALK

In Eeyou Istchee the snowshoe walk has been a rite of passage practiced by Cree families looking to connect children and families to their past while keeping our time-honoured traditions alive. Nelson Wapachee is from Nemaska and his son Aidan Wapachee recently participated in a snowshoe walk in Nemaska.

At a young age, Nelson's parents wanted him to experience a traditional lifestyle so he was often sent in the bush to live with his grandparents, the late Andrew Moar and his kuuhkum Winnie Moar who is still with us. There he was taught the way Crees lived off the land historically and how to hunt and take care of himself in the bush. It was something he really enjoyed and it resulted in a life-long love of the land for Nelson.

"It is something I love to share with my children. The knowledge that was taught to me by my grandparents, my parents, aunts, uncles and friends. It is important to pass that knowledge along so we may keep our way of life for generations to come. Someone once told me, "it is important to reconnect or stay connected to your culture because it is where you will find peace."

Nelson believes in this teaching whole-heartedly as practicing his culture has given him that sense of peace.

"I can't say that I know everything about our way life because there's always something new to learn when it comes to the way our Elders have lived."



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GOVERNANCE

CABIN FIRE SAFETY AND PREPARING FOR THE FOREST FIRE SEASON



Lee-Roy Blacksmith, Fire Marshal and George Cox, Fire Prevention Administrator



Spring is here and as people are getting ready to go back to their camps, there are some things to know ahead of time in preparation for the upcoming summer and fire season.

The first thing people need to know is that this year's fire season forecast is not positive and we are calling for everyone to be prepared. What we all need to ask ourselves is: 'Are we ready? Have we taken all the necessary precautions? What have we learned from last year?'

Last summer was one of the worst fire seasons on record which saw many of our communities evacuated due to smoke. Evacuations started with the elderly, babies and patients but quickly escalated. The air quality meters installed in each community were of great help to indicate to Cree Board of Health officials when air levels are unsafe so they can recommend people to stay indoors.

As the fires raged throughout the Cree Nation, an emergency request came from the Grand Chief's Office for Cree firefighters to join forces with SOPFEU Quebec in battling the blazes. Unfortunately, this was not immediately possible as Cree firefighters did not possess the same training required to work alongside SOPFEU firefighters. Immediate training efforts were undertaken and Crees received the proper training by SOPFEU personnel. Additional firefighting equipment was also purchased with the help of federal funds to make each community forest fire ready.

As Eeyouch, there are steps we can take to get our camps fire safety ready. Simple steps like clearing all dead wood and other possible fire fuel around your camp can go a long way in preventing forest fire damage. Clearing trees around your camp is also a good idea, cutting off ways fire can travel. It is not necessary to cut down all the trees around your cabin but reducing the density can protect your cabin from 'radial heat' which comes from the combination of a group of trees

burning and damaging your cabin by causing extreme heat.

We should also be aware of possible nearby water sources in case of emergency like a river, stream or lake. Small portable water pumps and a hose can be purchased for approximately \$500 to be kept on handy at camp in case of an emergency. If there is no close water source a 45-gallon drum or 1000-gallon container can be used to collect rainwater.

Inside the cabin there should always be an accessible second exit and working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are suggested.

More SOPFEU community training will begin in June with the goal of having 25 trained individuals in each community and the communities that received training last year will receive refresher courses.

One way we can all become fire safe is through the online FireSmart program. Developed by Alberta and Quebec forest firefighters, FireSmart is a free one-hour course that can be taken by anyone who would like to receive the certification.

We would like to wish everyone in the Cree Nation a safe summer and remind them to keep open fires small, while respecting guidelines and fire warnings and always keep a bucket of water on hand to put out bonfires.

Learn more at:

<https://firesmartcanada.ca/programs/firesmart-101/>





PEOPLE

BEING A PATROL OFFICER IN EYYOU ISTCHEE

Interview with Casey Polson



The Eeyou Eenuu Police Force (EPPF) was established in 2011, operating in Cree communities and patrolling hundreds of kilometers of roads and highways throughout Eeyou Istchee. We sat with Casey to learn more what it is like to serve the Cree territory and keep our highways and roads safe.

Casey Polson is working as a patrol officer with the Eeyou Eenuu Police Force (EPPF) in Chisasibi. He is 22 years old from the community of Waswanipi. The Cree Nation Government sat down with Casey to talk about his decision to become a police officer, his training experience and how it is now working in his dream job.

01 How did you become a police officer with the EPPF?

I went to school in Rouyn at the CEGEP de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue in the Police Technology for Indigenous Forces program. It is an intensive training program exclusively for Indigenous people. Most students were Cree but there were other nations there also. We did one semester which was 15 weeks in Rouyn then had a summer break. After the summer break we were sent off to Nicolette for 12 weeks where we learned the basics of policing. It gave us proper training for us to qualify to become special constables for the EPPF.



JOINING THE EYYOU EENOU POLICE FORCE

The EEPF is currently accepting new applicants from now until June 4, 2024. You can apply at: <https://www.eepf.ca/apply/>

02 Did you have a choice of which community you were deployed to?

Yes. After our training we got sworn in and were given the choice to work in our home communities or a different community for a total of 3 to 6 months. I worked here in Chisasibi as a special constable for three months then headed back to Rouyn to complete the last two semesters of my training.

03 What made you want to become a police officer?

I have always wanted to help people, that is the main reason I chose policing, but I also grew up around police officers, so I always wanted to be one ever since I was a kid. I was surrounded by positive role models in my family and I always told myself that's what I wanted to do when I grow up. I have been with emergency services since I was 17 years old. Before policing I was a firefighter and the lieutenant of my fire department back home.

04 Did you find the training difficult?

The training was challenging but it was fun. I really enjoyed the experience learning self-defense, how to defend yourself against attacks from other individuals, learning the law, learning how to maneuver a pistol and emergency driving with a vehicle. I really enjoyed it however it was difficult at the same time being away from family, but it was rewarding in the end.

05 How is policing and would you recommend it as a career path for other Cree youth?

This job is a dream come true. Something I really worked hard for and there were a lot of struggles but in the end it was all worth it. Now I have a job that I always wanted and the opportunity to give back to the community feels great.

The best advice I have for other youth is, give it a shot you never know until you try. I gave it a try and I succeeded. It can be tough but as long as you're dedicated and you're committed to finishing what you started, you'll get through it and there is a lot of opportunities once you are a police officer, there are so many more trainings you can do, so many more job titles out there for you.

06 How do you see your future now?

Now that I am a full-time patrol officer in Chisasibi, I am thinking of just staying here for my whole career. I like Chisasibi. The people here are great, I have had a girlfriend here for a long time now and it feels like home to me.





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NEXT ISSUE: JULY 2024



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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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