



Cree Nation Government

# **Consultations on the Cree Nation Research Institute Project**

November 2023 – April 2024

Report prepared by the Cree Nation Research Institute  
Working Group and Staff

# Table of Contents

<b>ACRONYMS</b>	4
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	5
<b>THE APPROACH</b>	6
<b>THE CONSULTATION METHODS</b>	7
Pre-Consultations	7
Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee	8
<b>CURRENT RESEARCH LANDSCAPE IN EEYOU ISTCHEE</b>	11
Actors in the Eeyou Istchee Research Landscape	11
Cree Stakeholders	11
Non-Cree Stakeholders	13
Research Regulations and Review Processes in Eeyou Istchee : A Brief Overview	15
Research Regulations	15
Research Reviews	15
<b>PRE-CONSULTATION RESULTS</b>	20
Pre-Consultation Highlights	21
<b>THREE PROPOSED MANDATES FOR THE CNRI</b>	27
Mandate 1	28
Mandate 2	29
Mandate 3	30
<b>INPUT FROM THE FORUM ON RESEARCH IN EEYOU ISTCHEE</b>	32
Key Messages from Keynote Speeches	32
Input Collected on Proposed Mandates	35
Input Collected on the Proposed Next Steps	44
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	46
Creation of both an Advisory Committee and a Steering Committee	47
Creation of the First Implementation Committee	48
Establishment of the CNRI	49
Communication Strategy with the Cree Nation	50
<b>APPENDIX</b>	52
A. Letter from the Deputy Grand Chief to Research Stakeholders	52

B.	Pre-consultation Questionnaire	52
C.	Invitation and Agenda of the Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee	52
D.	The CBHSSJB's Miyupimaatsiun Research Principles	52
E.	Results from the Pre-consultation	52
F.	Letter to the Participants of the Forum on Research	52

## ACRONYMS

<b>ACCI</b>	Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute
<b>CBHSSJB</b>	Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay
<b>CNRI</b>	Cree Nation Research Institute
<b>CNG/GCC</b>	Cree Nation Government / The Grand Council of the Crees
<b>CSB</b>	Cree School Board
<b>CTA</b>	Cree Trappers Association
<b>CWS</b>	Canadian Wildlife Services
<b>DFO</b>	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
<b>EMR</b>	Eeyou Marine Region
<b>EMRWB</b>	Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board
<b>EMRIRB</b>	Eeyou Marine Region Impact Review Board
<b>EMRPC</b>	Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission
<b>ESIA</b>	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
<b>HFTCC</b>	Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee
<b>MELCCFF</b>	Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte aux Changements Climatique, de la Faune et de la Forêt
<b>WG</b>	Working Group

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research stands as a powerful tool for the self-governance and the self-determination of the Cree Nation, contributing to better decision-making, cultural preservation and economic development. However, historically, research initiatives in Eeyou Istchee have lacked Cree oversight. Recognising this gap, Deputy Grand Chief Norman Chief formed a Working Group in Summer 2022 to lay the groundwork for the Cree Nation Research Institute (CNRI), the aim of which is to empower the Cree Nation through research.

### **CNRI Working Group**

Between November 2023 and April 2024, the Working Group, with Cree Nation Government support, led consultations across Eeyou Istchee to shape collaboratively the CNRI's mission and objectives. These consultations prioritised Cree control over research, protection of Cree knowledge and maximum research benefits for Eeyouch.

### **Consultation Process**

Engaging Cree communities and organisations, the consultations sought to define the CNRI's mandates organically. By fostering open dialogue, the project team aimed to ensure that the CNRI's objectives reflect Cree aspirations and needs. The insights gathered will inform the formalisation of the CNRI's goals and support mechanisms as well as the next steps towards establishing the organisation that will implement them.

### **Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee**

A pivotal moment in the consultation process was the Forum on Research, which was held on March 19-20, 2024, at the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute in Ouje-Bougoumou. This forum convened Cree representatives to collectively shape the CNRI's future direction.

### **Consultation Report**

The consultations and the forum were essential steps toward establishing the CNRI as an institution which is aligned with the needs of Cree communities. This inclusive and collaborative approach ensured that the CNRI will emerge as an institution which is deeply aligned with the needs and aspirations of the Cree communities and organisations it is intended to serve. The following report presents the results of both consultation processes and represents a significant milestone in charting a collective path forward for the CNRI's creation.





## THE CONSULTATION METHODS

### Key Statistics



The consultation process was designed with the objective of gathering input into building a collective Cree vision for research in Eeyou Istchee. This was planned through two complementary strategies: 1) pre-consultations, individually carried out with Cree First Nations and organisations, and 2) an in-person forum to validate the input gathered during the pre-consultation and to foster a discussion on Cree needs and aspirations for research.

The CNRI Working Group identified 27 Cree stakeholders to consult about research in Eeyou Istchee and Cree research management. These included 11 Cree First Nations, 12 Cree regional organisations or institutional departments, 3 public institutions with significant Cree membership and 1 local organisation. Table 1 presents these stakeholders and their participation in both parts of the consultation process.

### Pre-Consultations

The 27 identified stakeholders were invited to participate in a pre-consultation meeting with the CNRI Project Coordinator through a letter from the Deputy Grand Chief (Appendix A). A questionnaire was previously sent to all the participants and was used to guide the discussion (Appendix B). The interviews were not directed and the questionnaire contained mostly open-ended questions written to encourage the participants to share their personal and institutional experiences managing research reviews, engaging with researchers as well as any issues they might have experienced with research methodologies or what they envisioned as potential regional support to address them. Most participants did not complete the questionnaire prior to the interview as some preferred to share their experience and vision orally. Most pre-consultation interviews were recorded, with the consent of the participants, and destroyed once analysed by the Project Manager. If the questionnaire was not completed by the participant, their input was used to answer the applicable questions on the questionnaire. Any additional information, which did not directly answer any asked question, was noted at the end of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were then returned to the participants for validation.

The information shared by the participants underwent a thematic analysis to identify and interpret common themes and trends within the qualitative data. This analysis helped systematically organise and understand the data by identifying commonalities, differences and relationships between various pieces of information, whilst highlighting specific examples or situation shared by some organisations. The thematic analysis resulted in the identification of five main themes, each having multiple agreed upon ideas that will be presented in the following pages.

## Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee

Following the pre-consultation interviews and the thematic analysis, the collected information was presented at the Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee, which took place on March 19-20, 2024, at the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute. All the stakeholders identified for the first part of the consultation process were invited to this in-person two-day event in the Cree Nation of Ouje-Bougoumou. Additional individuals, who were not initially mobilised for the pre-consultations, were also invited to share their unique perspectives on research. Between 48 and 67 participants attended the event (depending on the day), including CNRI Working Group members. The invitation and the agenda for their event are available in Appendix C. All oral exchanges were recorded and all workshop notes were collected for later analysis.

The forum's agenda included keynote speeches from individuals with unique perspectives on research in Eeyou Istchee, including two Cree Elders and one Cree Ph.D. student. A representative from Attaniuvik, an Inuit research management initiative similar to the CNRI project, gave a speech on their path towards self-determination in research. Four Cree regional organisations also presented their own initiatives on research and research management, such as research policies, research review processes and research ability development. These speeches and presentations clearly showcased the diversity of approaches taken by Cree organisations to gain control over research on the territory and with their people.

This CNRI staff and working group used the forum to present the results from the pre-consultations. The agreed upon ideas were presented to show commonalities between the conducted interviews and to explain how three preliminary proposed mandates were formulated. Participants were offered the opportunity to comment on the results.

The following activities of the event then focused on consulting the participants on the three proposed mandates during three Cree Café workshops, one on each mandate. The mandates were presented individually and were followed by group discussions. Groups of 6 to 12 people were formed and a CNRI working member or staff sat with each group to stimulate the discussion and provide additional information on the mandates if needed. A series of questions were proposed to the groups to stimulate the discussions, but all comments and suggestions were encouraged. Following a 15 to 20-minute discussion, each group designated a spokesperson to present the group's discussion.

Lastly, one last workshop was held to gather comments and ideas on the next steps for the establishment of the CNRI, notably the idea of creating an Advisory Committee and a Steering Committee. The same Cree Café methods were used to this end.



All the input collected during the Forum in Ouje-Bougoumou was analysed and is presented in this document.

**Table 1 - Status of the Consultation with Cree First Nations and Entities Identified as Stakeholders**

<b>Communities/Entities</b>	<b>Participation in the pre-consultations (Nov. 2023 to April 2024)</b>	<b>Participation in the Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee (March 19-20, 2024)</b>
<b>Cree First Nations (11)</b>		
Whapmagoostui First Nation	Participated	Participated
Cree Nation of Chisasibi	Participated	Participated
Cree Nation of Wemindji	Did not participate	Participated
Cree Nation of Eastmain	Participated	Participated
Cree Nation of Waskaganish	Participated	Participated
Cree Nation of Nemaska	Participated	Participated
Cree First Nation of Waswanipi	Participated	Participated
Cree Nation of Ouje-Bougoumou	Did not participate	Participated
Cree Nation of Mistissini	Did not participate	Participated
Cree Nation of Washaw Sipi	Did not participate	Participated
MoCreebec Eeyoud Council	Participated	Participated
<b>Cree Regional Organisations</b>		
Cree Nation Youth Council	Participated	Participated
Niishiyuu Council of Elders	Participated	Did not participate
Cree School Board	Participated	Participated
Cree Trappers Association	Participated	Participated
Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute	Participated	Participated
Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay	Participated	Participated
Niskamoon Corporation	Participated	Participated
Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association	Participated	Participated
Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association	Participated	Participated
Cree Nation Government - Environment Department	Participated	Participated
Cree Language Commissioner	Participated	Did not participate
Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association	Did not participate	Did not participate
<b>Cree Local Organisation (1)</b>		
Chisasibi Eeyou Research and Resource Institute	Did not participate	Did not participate
<b>Public Entities (3)</b>		
Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board	Did not participate	Did not participate
Eeyou Marine Region Impact Review Board	Participated	Participated
Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission	Participated	Participated

**CURRENT RESEARCH  
LANDSCAPE IN EYYOU  
ISTCHEE**

## CURRENT RESEARCH LANDSCAPE IN EYYOU ISTCHEE

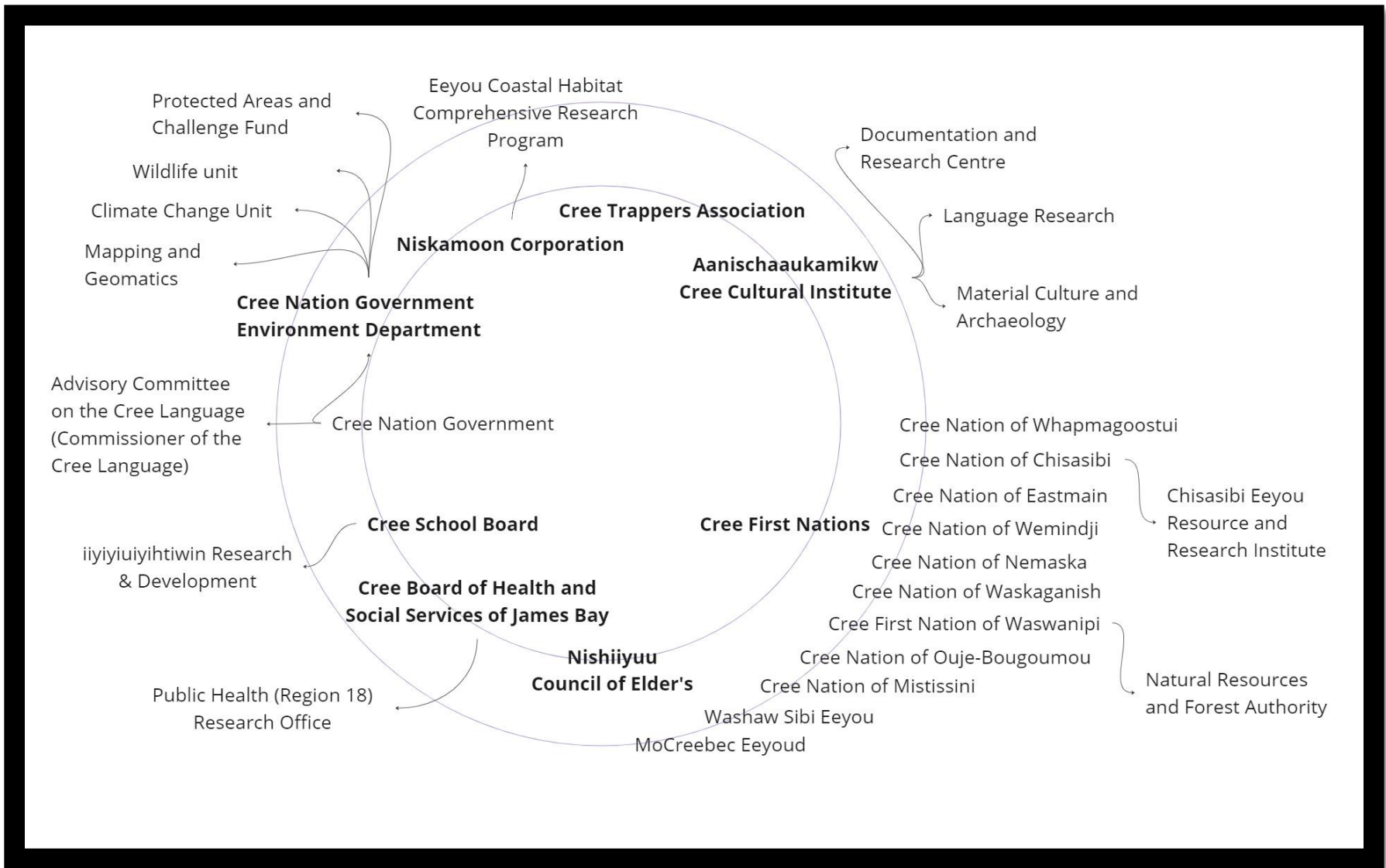
A complementary objective to the consultation process was to gather information on current research management practices and existing policies in Eeyou Istchee, from both Cree and non-Cree stakeholders in research. This section presents a general portrait of the actors in the research landscape, key research regulatory bodies and, finally, a general overview of current Cree initiatives and existing tools in research management.

### Actors in the Eeyou Istchee Research Landscape

Information from Cree communities and organisations was accessed directly from them prior, during or after the pre-consultation interviews. As non-Cree stakeholder engagement was not part of the consultation strategy, information on existing regulations and project review processes were acquired through public databases. This information gave a general portrait of the research landscape in Eeyou Istchee.

#### Cree Stakeholders

Cree actors in research include the same Cree stakeholders identified for the consultation process. Each of them plays roles in either initiating research projects on their own or engaging in research with outside collaborators (Figure 1). These include all Cree First Nations and, in the case of Chisasibi and Waswanipi, with their respective research-focused subsidiaries: the Chisasibi Eeyou Resource and Research Institute and the Forest Authority. It also includes some departments of the Cree Nation Government that collaborate on a regular basis with researchers.



**Figure 1 Cree Stakeholders in Research**

## Non-Cree Stakeholders

Non-Cree stakeholders in research are very diverse in nature. They include actors from the private sector, such as development proponents that mainly conduct environmental monitoring and ESIA's connected to their respective projects, through the hiring of consulting firms, but in some cases development proponents may also support the work of academics or sponsor research projects relevant to impact mitigation. These actors include mainly large development proponents which are active in the region, such as Hydro-Québec, forestry companies and mining companies. Mining exploration companies also actively conduct geological inventories both remotely and in the field, work which may qualify as research activities.

Academics are key stakeholders in research in the region and they are usually the most showcased research proponents. They engage in very diverse research interests, both independently and collaboratively, with Cree partners. Non-profit and charitable companies may also play a role in conducting or funding research projects, although usually in collaboration with Cree partners. Public sector research stakeholders include different federal and provincial agencies, most notably the Ministère des Transports du Québec, the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte aux Changements Climatique et de la Faune du Québec, the Ministère des Ressources Naturelles et des Forêts du Québec, the Department of Fisheries and Ocean (Canada) and Environment and Climate Change Canada. Eeyou Marine Region entities also play an important role in regulating and sponsoring research within the EMR jurisdiction.

It is important to note that these stakeholders collaborate on a regular basis on research activities, with or without Cree partnerships.

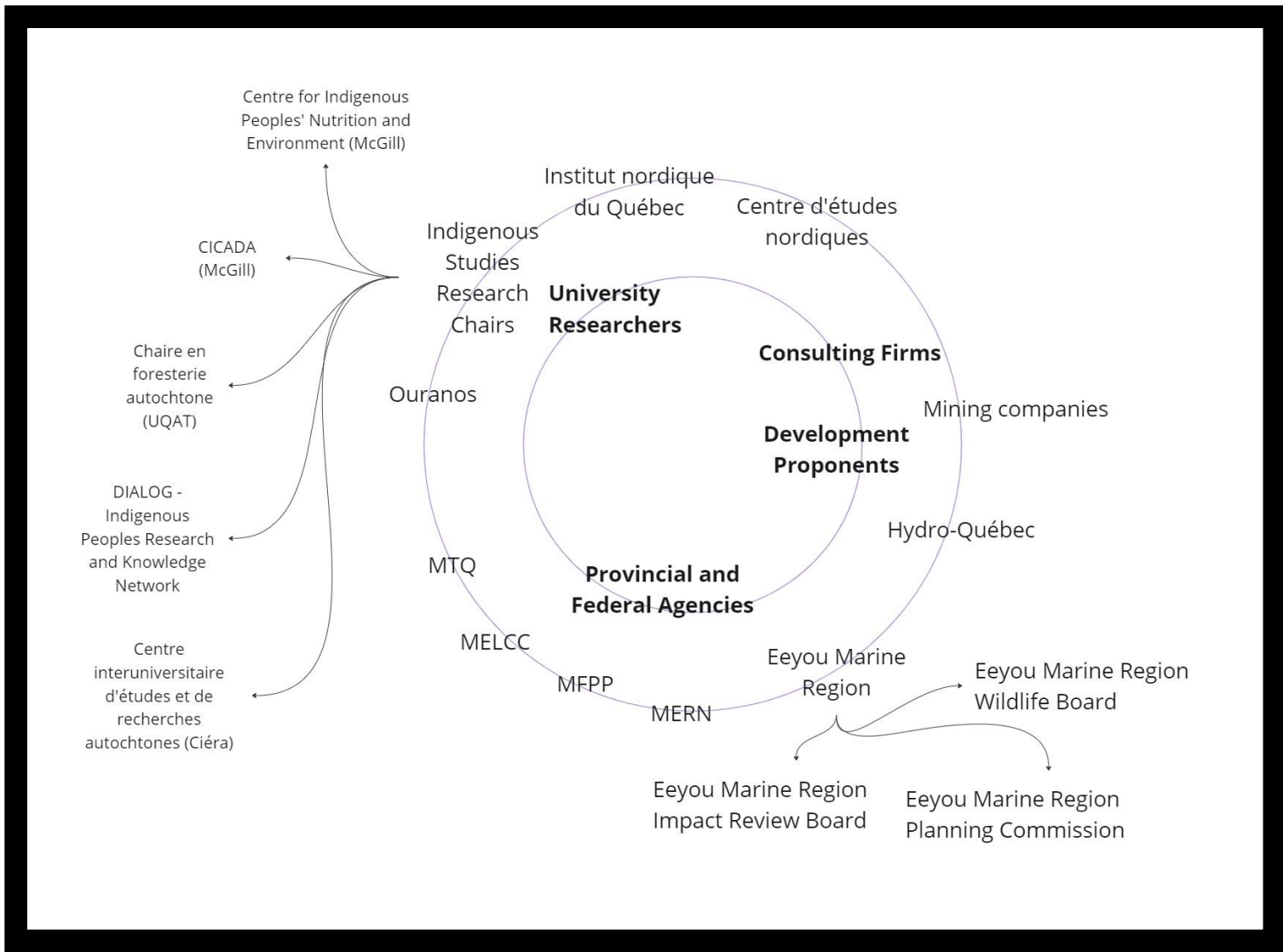


Figure 2 - Non-Cree stakeholders in Eeyou Istchee research

## Research Regulations and Review Processes in Eeyou Istchee : A Brief Overview

To fully understand the current research landscape in Eeyou Istchee, the differences between *research regulation* and *research reviews* should be explained.

**Research regulations** refer to the process by which researchers obtain a permit, license or formal permission to conduct their research project. Regulation does have legal implications and there are usually strict guidelines, issued and overseen by a regulating organisation or body, for approval.

**Research reviews** refer to the process by which proposed research projects are evaluated and then recommended (rather than formally and legally “approved”.)

### Research Regulations

In Eeyou Istchee, much of the research conducted occurs without any formal regulation as there are limited organisations authorised to grant permits, licenses or permission for research activities. This is primarily due to the scarcity of institutional bodies with said authority or mandates to regulate research. Despite this, both Cree and non-Cree entities do all the same oversee and make decisions on research projects conducted under their auspices or in collaboration with them. Certain types of research, such as mining exploration and wildlife research impacting specific species, do undergo more stringent regulation. Provincial and federal agencies, such as the MELCCFF, DFO and CWS, issue sampling and transportation permits for researchers studying specific species. The HFFTC, which is composed of representatives of different provincial ministries as well as representatives of the CNG is, at times, asked to approve or reject scientific research permit applications issued by the MELCCFF, but only on wildlife research concerning beaver populations.

In contrast to the terrestrial portion of Eeyou Istchee, in the Eeyou Marine Region, the EMR Impact Review Board works in conjunction with the other EMR entities to serve as the regulatory authority for all research endeavours. The EMR entities, which are public entities under a federal charter, possess a comprehensive and detailed screening and review process allowing them to approve or reject research projects. It is important to note that the review process includes public consultations and, in practice, the EMRIRB will not award a research permit if a Cree First Nation rejects the project.

On Category 1 Lands, Cree First Nations play a direct role in regulating research, typically by approving or rejecting the research projects submitted to them. Chiefs and Councils manage the entire process, especially given that there are usually no specialised resources dedicated to this task. While no permits or licenses are issued for research, researchers often rely on support letters and council resolutions as evidence of community endorsement for their projects. Seeking approval from Cree First Nations has become part of a system of best practices and is often done in the spirit of collaboration, although no local, federal or provincial laws mandate this practice.

### Research Reviews

In contrast to research regulations, the research landscape in Eeyou Istchee is dotted with various research policies and formal research review processes which have been mainly driven under the

initiatives of Cree organisations. Many organisations have been proactive in determining how they manage their relationship with external researchers. Table 2 presents a list of the main research management initiatives and current practices in Eeyou Istchee. While the Cree Nation of Chisasibi and the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi possess robust internal research abilities, with the former currently developing research review protocols, no Cree First Nation systematically evaluates research projects according to predefined criteria. Chiefs and Councils evaluate projects based on the anticipated benefits and impacts as well as its adherence to community values.

Organisational or institutional research policies in Eeyou Istchee are recent initiatives and are often geared to addressing specific types of research (health, Cree heritage, education, etc.). In most cases, these policies are perceived as Eeyou empowerment tools towards research on themselves, their lands and their waters. In the interviews conducted, these policies are often described as an answer to challenging and impactful situations that, in the past, were derived from engaging with researchers. Current research policies typically impose a strict protocol by which research projects are evaluated and they specify the individuals who play a role in evaluating the research. Among the research policies and practices analysed for this report, the CBHSSJB's policies and practices are the most comprehensive. The Cree Health Board relies on different committees to conduct different screening processes on proposed research projects. Other research policies indicate a specific, single research committee which carries out this task. The CBHSSJB's policy also presents a list of research principles (the *Miyupimaatisiun Research Principles*, see *Appendix D*) that enumerates basic expectations of partners engaging in research under the CBHSSJB's auspices and to which researchers must adhere at the beginning of the relationship building process.





**Table 2 - Eeyou Istchee Entities and Current Research Management Practices**

<b>Entities Involved in Research</b>	<b>Current Policies or Practices</b>	<b>Conduct, Collaborate or Sponsor Research?</b>
<b>Cree Nation of Chisasibi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Currently developing two separate research review protocols;</li> <li>○ Conducts and supports community-based research projects directly through the Chisasibi Eeyou Resource and Research Institute;</li> <li>○ Council decides whether to approve or reject projects through support letters or council resolutions, assessing the community benefits and adherence to community values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conduct</li> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> <li>✓ Sponsor</li> </ul>
<b>Cree Nation of Waswanipi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No formal policy on research;</li> <li>○ Conducts and supports community-based research projects directly through the Forest Authority (Natural Resources Department);</li> <li>○ Council decides whether to approve or reject projects through support letters or council resolutions, assessing the community benefits and adherence to community values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conduct</li> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> <li>✓ Sponsor</li> </ul>
<b>Other Cree First Nations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No formal policies on research;</li> <li>○ Councils decide whether to approve or reject projects through support letters or council resolutions, assessing the community benefits and adherence to community values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> <li>✓ Sponsor</li> </ul>
<b>Cree Board of Health and Social Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal research policy on <i>research under its auspices</i> (updated March, 2024);</li> <li>○ Research project lifecycle outlined, formal project reviews and support from an in-house research committee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> <li>✓ Sponsor</li> </ul>
<b>Cree School Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal research policy (since 2022);</li> <li>○ Formal review process supported by an in-house research committee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> <li>✓ Sponsor</li> </ul>
<b>Niskamoon Corporation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal research policy (since 2023);</li> <li>○ No formal review process; decision supported by the board and staff;</li> <li>○ Project co-design process well outlined and developed;</li> <li>○ Strong internal research ability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conduct</li> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> <li>✓ Sponsor</li> </ul>

<b>Aanishchaaukamikw Cree Cultural Entity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Two formal research policies and review processes (Internal and External);</li> <li>○ Clear outline of expectations, responsibilities and data ownership;</li> <li>○ Have a research mandate on topics related to Cree heritage, but currently too understaffed to carry it out (except for archaeology).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conduct</li> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> </ul>
<b>Nishiiyuu Council of Elders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No formal research policy;</li> <li>○ Research collaborations are evaluated based on expected benefits and alignment with the values by NCE members;</li> <li>○ Conducts research internally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conduct</li> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> </ul>
<b>Cree Trappers Association</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No formal research policy or review process;</li> <li>○ Best practices in research management derive from the staff's long-standing experiences in the organisation;</li> <li>○ Currently developing internal research capacity to address the specific needs of their members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conduct</li> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> <li>✓ Sponsor</li> </ul>
<b>Eeyou Marine Region Entities</b> - EMR Planning Commission - EMR Impact Review Board - EMR Wildlife Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal research policy and land use plan conformity analysis (EMRPC);</li> <li>○ Formal project screening process including public consultations (EMRIRB);</li> <li>○ Public registry of research projects in the Eeyou Marine Region;</li> <li>○ Internal research capacity and financial support to researchers (EMRWB).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conduct</li> <li>✓ Collaborate</li> <li>✓ Sponsor</li> </ul>

# **PRE-CONSULTATION RESULTS**

## PRE-CONSULTATION RESULTS

The thematic analysis of the 19 pre-consultation meetings, whether complete or partial, highlighted five primary topics of interest for the participants. Within each theme, numerous ideas were identified as points of agreement between the various interviewees. These points are presented as highlights in the following pages.

A detailed report on the pre-consultation is available in Appendix E. This report presents consensus-based ideas as well as pertinent remarks addressing specific concerns or perspectives relevant to the exercise.

1

Past experiences with research and the future of research in Eeyou Istchee

2

Regulating and reviewing research in Eeyou Istchee

3

Current Cree research initiatives and Cree ambitions for research

4

Data usefulness, data governance and data management

5

Recommendations and ideas for the CNRI



## Pre-Consultation Highlights

1

Past experiences with research and the future of research in Eeyou Istchee

**- The expectations of the Cree Nation should be explicitly explained to researchers.**

**- Research reports and data leave the region and do not benefit Eeyouch.**

**The Cree Nation needs to monitor past and ongoing projects to avoid duplication of research.**

**Cree communities and organisations see research as a tool and want to see more of it benefitting them.**

**Project design must include Cree participation, integrate Cree knowledge and provide access to research products for Cree beneficiaries and institutions.**

**Cree organisations are over solicited by researchers and do not have the resources to implement any oversight.**

**- Most Cree communities do not have a process for reviewing research.**

**- We need guidelines for data management and governance that communities and organisations can use when engaging with researchers.**

Research is regulated in a variety of ways depending on the organisations/communities or on the type of research, yet some projects escape review. There is a need to standardise and coordinate processes.

**There should be a standardised grid for research compensation and honoraria in Eeyou Istchee (guides, knowledge holders/Elders, coresearchers, etc.).**

**3**

Current Cree research initiatives and Cree ambitions for research

**- Eeyouch need their own ethics board or ethics review process.**

**- Funding local research initiatives can be challenging.**

**We need to further explore the notions of Cree copyright and intellectual property to further the protection of Cree knowledge.**

- Data are necessary for the leaders of Cree Nations and the executives of Cree organisations to make informed decisions, but it is hard to access.

- **Communities and organisations need their own guidelines on data management and governance.**

- Data and research product (reports, publications, etc.) repatriation would benefit future generations of Cree researchers.

- **We need a central repository or directory that communities and organisations can access. It should have strong accessibility and governance rules to protect Cree data and Cree knowledge.**



**- Avoid the duplication of competencies and mandates that exist in other Cree organisations.**

**- Respect the right of each organisation and community to decide its own processes.**

Seek administrative support from the CNG (HR, accounting, etc.) so that the CNRI can focus on its mandate.

Support and train local resources in communities for research reviews.

Ensure representation from the major organisations involved in research and communities

**The CNRI should not be governed solely by the CNG given the possibility for conflicts of interest.**

**The CNRI should be run at "arm's length" from the CNG, with a flexible and efficient decision-making structure (small board).**

**PROPOSED MANDATES  
FOR THE CREE NATION  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

## THREE PROPOSED MANDATES FOR THE CNRI

The input gathered during the pre-consultation allowed the CNRI working group to formulate three initial mandates for the CNRI (Figure 3) and a blueprint for instituting the new entity. These mandate suggestions are geared towards tackling prevailing challenges in research and data management as well as ensuring that research endeavours in Eeyou Istchee serve the interests of the Cree Nation. The CNRI working group proposed a gradual implementation of these mandates over a three-year span (Figure 4), assisted by ad hoc Implementation Committees composed of the concerned Cree stakeholders and external observers. Each mandate is accompanied by a set of defined objectives.

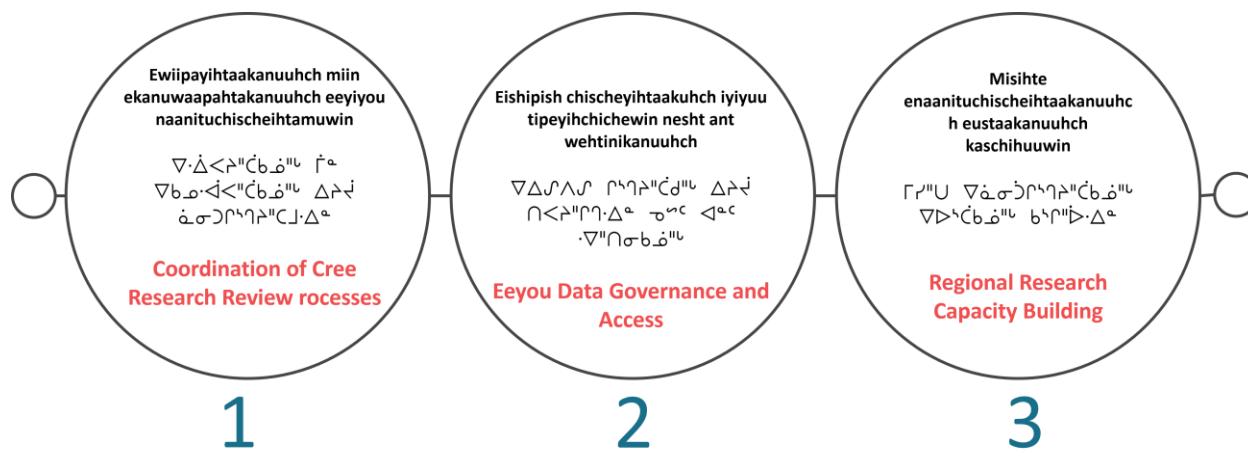


Figure 3 Three preliminary proposed mandates for the CNRI presented at the Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee

The preliminary mandates formulated by the Working Group were presented to the participants at the Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee in Uje-Bougoumou on March 19 and 20, 2024, for comment and validation.

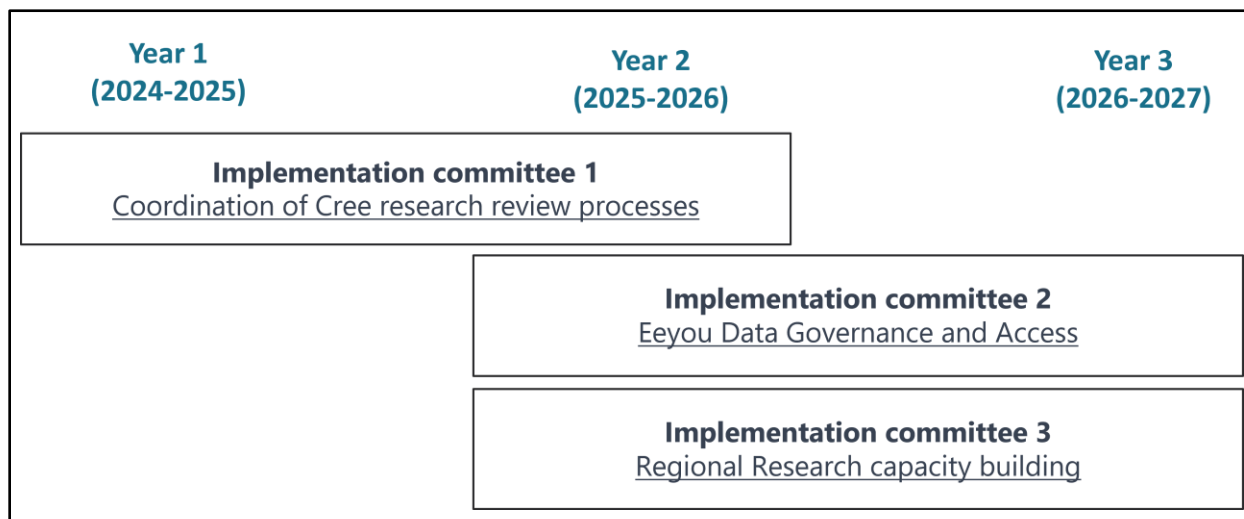


Figure 4 Proposed timeframe for the implementation of each mandate



## Mandate 2

**Eishipish chischeyihtaakuhch iyiyuu  
tipeyihchichewin nesht ant  
wehtinikanuuhch**

ᐅᐃᓂᐱᓂ ᐱᓴᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂ ᐃᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂ  
ᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂ ᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂ  
ᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂᐱᓂ

**Eeyou Data Governance and  
Access**

### Specific Objectives for Mandate 2

Draft data governance guidelines for different types of data (Cree heritage, environmental data, health data, etc.).

\*

Create a directory/portal of new research publications and data sets.

\*

Promote access and preservation of research data and manuscripts through a network of regional databases.

\*

Support data and research product repatriation/repatriation to Cree research databases.



**INPUT FROM THE  
FORUM ON RESEARCH  
IN EY YOU ISTCHEE**

## INPUT FROM THE FORUM ON RESEARCH IN EYYOU ISTCHEE

Following the pre-consultation phase during which Cree stakeholders were given the opportunity to share their experiences with research and their needs for future support, an in-person two-day Forum was organised to foster the development of a collective Cree vision for the Cree Nation Research Institute and to obtain validation for the three proposed mandates. It was also an opportunity for other Cree organisations, those already involved in research, to share their own endeavours in reviewing and managing research. The level of participation in the event was close to optimal: all Cree First Nations were represented and 12 of the 16 organisations identified as important stakeholders in research also participated in the event. Following the event, a letter was sent to the participants, which summarised the information shared during the event. It also set out a plan for the next steps (see Appendix F).

The following paragraphs offer a summary of the input gathered during the forum.

### Key Messages from Keynote Speeches

#### Research plays an important role in Eeyou Istchee and Eeyouch must play an important role in research

*Cree are natural stakeholders in research in Eeyou Istchee and must affirm control over how and what is done.*

(Deputy Grand Chief Norman Wapachee)

*Research is a bit like history. It becomes the narrative by which we base our knowledge of a certain people, location and culture.*

(Jedidat Matoush)

We need to conduct research by us, about us, for us and based in our values and ideas. It is essential that we have control over this research. The same can be said about methodologies. Historically, the methods of research, especially in anthropology, were rooted in imperialistic ideologies that place indigenous people as “the other” and in need of progress because of their so-called primitivism.

(Jedidat Matoush)



## We must learn from previous experiences with research to find ways to make better research happen in Eeyou Istchee

*Research is nothing new to Eeyouch. Eeyouch were conducting research in precolonial times. Eeyouch have their own research methods to observe and make sense of the world (climate, wildlife, waters, etc.).*

(Deputy Grand Chief Norman Wapachee)

*Memories of past experiences with external researchers are often very negative, but hopefully these stories can offer lessons to learn from today.*

(Janie Pachano)

*Positive experiences with researchers are from projects where Cree knowledge and Cree worldviews are well integrated and Cree contribute to the design and the objectives of the projects.*

(James Bobbish)

*[On Inuit culture] People come here and take a glimpse at our culture, or at our animals and land. A glimpse gives an impression, but not the truth. The truth only comes after a long relationship. It is just the same as between people. The trouble begins when scientists take a glimpse of our land and animals and then start to make decisions. No one stays long enough to see if it is correct information. Unfortunately, the way things are now, their impressions become facts.*

(Late-Daniel Weetaluktuk quoted by Lucy Grey)

*We have to be conscious of the methodologies that we use when working with Eeyou Eenu people. We must place indigenous culture at the centre of these methodologies like storytelling methods in interviews which acknowledge that within stories lies important information and meanings.*

(Jedidat Matoush)

## Good data governance and data sovereignty are key for the Eeyouch to fully benefit from the outcomes of research

*There is a substantial body of literature, primarily from academia, that needs to be brought back to the territory so it can benefit the Eeyouch. The management of that data, and of any Cree knowledge we collect or generate, is challenging and we need regional support to do this.*

(James Bobbish)

*We have come to the realisation that our research, like our politics and our education, is very Western and that we need to bring it closer to our own traditional beliefs and values. We do this by taking control of our own governance and our own research. The CNRI and this forum is an important endeavour towards this.*

(Jedidat Matoush)

## The Cree Nation should support the development of its own research capacity

*We need to facilitate the research process for Cree students. Getting access to information from Eeyou Eenou institutions is very difficult. Students have great ideas, but often hit a wall, which is frustrating and impacts our aspirations. Cree students should receive the support necessary to research Cree history, institutions, programs or others.*

(Jedidat Matoush)

*The CNRI can be a vehicle to influence policy change. Through research we can contribute evidence that affects Cree rights.*

(Deputy Grand Chief Norman Wapachee)

## Input Collected on Proposed Mandates

As detailed in the methods section, the proposed mandates were presented to participants at three Cree Café workshops designed to gather comments and input. Guiding questions facilitated discussions on each mandate. The feedback from these workshops provided a solid foundation for the three mandates of the Cree Nation Research Institute (CNRI). As demonstrated in the following paragraphs, the mandates formulated by the Working Group indeed reflect the Cree Nation's vision for research and research governance. Additional suggestions from the workshop participants would help refine the specific objectives of the mandates and offer guidance towards their implementation.

### **Input on Mandate 1 : Coordination of Cree Research Review Processes**

*"...let's say a researcher wants to work on a specific subject, before they start the work, they would know what is expected of them, what the guidelines to follow are. It would be beneficial to have something in place like that."*

**Arden Visitor, Cree Trappers Association**

The three questions presented to the participants were the following:

1. "How can communities and organisations play a role in shaping regional research review and regulation processes?"
2. "What format of review committee would be most useful to assist you in evaluating research projects?"
3. "In what ways can we make sure that research respects Cree values and benefits Eeyouch?"

The input gathered is summarised in the following themes.

### ***Community and Organisational Engagement***

Participants stressed the importance of community and organisational involvement in shaping regional research review and regulation processes. Key input included:

- **Collaboration and Coordination:** Local and regional collaboration was emphasised as essential for effective research review processes. Participants suggested creating local and regional research review tables to facilitate collaboration and decision-making.

- **Sharing of Information and Communication:** Participants stressed the need for transparent and accessible communication channels to ensure that communities and organisations are informed about research activities. Suggestions included the development of a Regional Research Database and a Research Library.
- **Consent and Community Engagement:** Community consent before research starts was deemed crucial, along with codesigning research projects based on Cree knowledge.
- **Building on Existing Resources:** Forum participants suggested taking stock of existing research review processes (ex: *EMRIRB review protocols*) and building on them to avoid the overregulation of research. The CNRI could act as a clearing house for researchers coming to the region.

### ***Format of Review Committee***

Participants provided insights into the most useful structure for a regional Cree research review committee to evaluate research projects effectively:

- **Diverse Representation:** It was recommended to include experts, leaders, Elders and youth representatives on the review committee to ensure diverse perspectives and subject expertise.
- **Clarity in Governance:** Clear governance structures and model research agreements/templates were suggested to provide clarity on approval and permission processes. Participants suggested that communities deliver the final approval or rejection of research projects on their territory.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Different streams of research were acknowledged to require different review processes, highlighting the need for flexibility and adaptability in committee structures.
- **Bird's-eye View on Research in Eeyou Istchee:** Participants stressed the need for Eeyouch to be informed about research activities on the territory: what projects are happening, where are they carried out and how are Eeyouch involved. This was perceived as a tool to avoid the duplication of research projects.
- **Guidance for Researchers:** Participants suggested that the CNRI could help researchers navigate research review processes and establish meaningful partnerships in the region to maximise the benefits of research for Eeyouch.


### ***Respecting Cree Values and Benefiting the Eeyouch***

Ensuring that research respects Cree values and benefits the Eeyou community was a central concern for participants:

- **Elder Involvement:** The participation of Elders in the review process was suggested to ensure alignment with Cree values.

- Promotion of Face-to-Face Relationships: Building face-to-face relationships between researchers and community members was seen as crucial for fostering mutual understanding and respect.
- Cree Pathways in Research: Developing Cree pathways in research and creating guidelines on Cree values were proposed to ensure that research reflects the priorities and aspirations of the Cree Nation.
- Cree Priorities for Research: Participants suggested that the CNRI could build a Cree agenda for research, including a list of Cree research priorities, as a tool for identifying relevant research collaborations.
- Developing a Cree Code of Ethics in Research: Participants suggested that the CNRI could develop a code of ethics aligned with Cree expectations for research and Cree values
- Transparency and Communication: To foster engagement and collaboration, participants suggested that research proposals and results be presented in layman's terms, without inaccessible specialised jargon.





## **Input on Mandate 2 : Eeyou Data Governance and Access**

*“Data is key and sometimes can be shared between Cree communities. We also forget about Cree knowledge. To us, it is science, fact. Sometimes it isn’t taken as seriously today as it was in the past. [...] It is like “Science” feels the need to “validate” Cree knowledge. Sometimes Cree knowledge would need to validate Science.”*

**Steven Blacksmith, Cree First Nation of Waswanipi**

Three questions were proposed to the workshop participants to guide their discussions on the second proposed mandate:

1. “What tools, principles or best practices should the CNRI prioritise to promote Cree data ownership, security and effective management?”
2. "In what ways can the CNRI facilitate and promote broader access to research findings for Cree communities and organisations? How might this process be inclusive and responsive to community needs?"
3. What are your thoughts on the CNRI's proposal to establish a regional portal for research data and manuscripts? How might such a directory be structured to best serve the needs and interests of the Cree Nation?"

The participants’ input on the second proposed mandates for the Cree Nation Research Institute was summarised as follows.

### ***Tools, Principles or Best Practices for Data Governance***

Participants highlighted several key areas that the CNRI should prioritise to promote Cree data ownership, security and effective management.

- Ownership Clarification: There was a consensus on the importance of clarifying ownership of research data to determine usage rights. This would enhance transparency and accountability regarding data use within Cree communities.
- Support for Interpretation: Participants emphasised the need for support in interpreting research findings, including the provision of clear and engaging materials in both English and Cree languages. This approach ensures accessibility and inclusivity.

- Community Engagement: Suggestions were made to explore multiple communication options, such as the JBCCS Research Hour, to engage Cree communities effectively in the research process. Such initiatives foster collaboration and an exchange of knowledge.
- Data Governance Guidelines: Participants stressed the need to develop comprehensive data governance guidelines, distinguishing between data ownership and stewardship. This would provide clarity on responsibilities and facilitate effective data management practices.

### ***Facilitating Broader Access to the Products of Research***

Participants offered the CNRI diverse strategies to promote broader access to research findings for Cree communities and organisations.

- Membership Model: Recommendations included the development of a CNRI membership model with clear terms and conditions. This would foster a sense of belonging and ensure adherence to established principles.
- Coordination of Research Data Management: Supporting the coordination of data management between existing Cree research databases was identified as crucial for informed decision-making in Cree communities. This would enhance data accessibility and facilitate community-driven initiatives.
- Community Involvement: Participants emphasised the importance of involving all stakeholders in discussions on data governance. Local data governance initiatives should be recognised and integrated into the CNRI's framework.
- Terms of Reference and Sharing Frameworks: Developing terms of reference for data sharing and sharing frameworks, such as interactive maps and vulgarised documents, were suggested to ensure transparency and to facilitate knowledge dissemination.
- Decolonisation of Legal Frameworks: The CNRI was encouraged to contribute to the decolonisation of legal frameworks on Cree heritage, emphasising the need for culturally sensitive guidelines on privacy and data protection.

### ***Proposal for a Regional Portal for Research Data and Manuscripts***

As for the CNRI's proposal to establish a regional portal for research data and manuscripts, participants provided specific recommendations:

- Access Facilitation: The portal should prioritise facilitating access to data rather than hosting it. Levels of access should be determined locally, ensuring that data governance aligns with community needs and preferences.
- User-Friendly Interface: Promoting easy access for Cree users and ensuring robust data management and IT security were highlighted as essential features of the portal.
- Project Tracking and Data Labelling: Participants recommended developing a web-based platform to track ongoing research projects, publish updates and facilitate communication

among stakeholders. Additionally, a system for labelling public vs. private data would enhance transparency and access control.





## Input on Mandate 3 : Regional Research Capacity Development

*"[...] we have to remember that there are a lot of Cree youth in schools and universities right now, and they wish to pursue careers in research. We should give them the opportunity to do it and have a place for them to work."*

**Anonymous**

Three questions were proposed to the workshop's participants to guide their discussions on the third proposed mandates for the CNRI:

1. "What are your thoughts on the CNRI creating a hub for Cree research and connecting potential partners? "
2. "What resources, training programs or opportunities would be most valuable to support communities and organisations in reviewing research projects that come their way? "
3. "What are the challenges for Cree-led research initiatives and how could the CNRI help address them? "

The input collected during the third workshop is summarised as follows:

### ***Thoughts on the CNRI Creating a Hub for Cree Research and Connecting Potential Partners***

Participants expressed diverse perspectives on the CNRI's role in creating a hub for Cree research and facilitating partnerships:

- Cree Voice in Academia: There was enthusiasm for the CNRI to serve as a Cree voice within academia, promoting Cree-driven research priorities and methodologies.
- Self-Governance and Self-Determination: Participants highlighted the importance of the CNRI demonstrating a sense of urgency towards self-governance and self-determination, positioning itself as a relevant tool.
- Oversight and Coordination: The CNRI could serve as an oversight organisation to prevent the duplication of research projects and create synergy among initiatives.
- Partnerships: The CNRI was encouraged to foster partnerships with Cree and non-Cree institutions to support capacity building and knowledge exchange, including seeking funding to support Cree research.

- Communication and Networking: Suggestions included promoting the benefits of research, creating networks for Cree researchers to connect and developing toolkits to engage communities and present research projects effectively.
- Promoting Citizen Science: Participants emphasised the value of promoting citizen science to enhance interest and participation in research.
- Training Programs: Providing training on subjects such as the scientific method and finding ways to connect traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge were recommended to build research capacity.

## ***Resources, Training Programs or Opportunities to Support Research Project Reviews***

Participants highlighted a range of potential resources, training programs and opportunities to support communities and organisations in reviewing research projects that the CNRI could develop:

- Community Contact Person: Establishing a contact person for research in each community, including youth representatives, was suggested to ensure stability and accessibility.
- Job Opportunities and Partnerships: The CNRI could promote research-related job opportunities, develop partnerships with post-secondary institutions and facilitate STEM programs as well as community outreach initiatives.
- Ethics Training and Research Reviews: Training on ethics and ethics reviews, as well as developing a model for an Eeyou/Eenou ethics review, were recommended to ensure ethical conduct in research.
- Community Engagement and Prioritisation: The CNRI could support communities in defining their research priorities, provide training for research reviewing and develop guidelines for engaging with external researchers.
- Data Portal Usage: Training on how to use the proposed data portal and providing support for local resources in communities were suggested to enhance data accessibility and use.

## ***Challenges for Cree-Led Research Initiatives and the CNRI's Role in Addressing Them***

Participants identified challenges for Cree-led research initiatives and proposed ways the CNRI could help address them:

- Support for Graduate Students: The CNRI could facilitate access to research funding and provide mentorship for Cree graduate students to support their development.
- Promotion of Eeyou Research Methods: The CNRI could promote Eeyou research methods and support the definition of Cree research priorities through the development of a Cree research agenda.

- Support for Cree Research Initiatives: The CNRI could support Cree research initiatives, such as language research, oral history and community-driven projects, without relying solely on external academics.
- Language Barrier: Ensuring that language is not a barrier for Eeyou participation, nor for research reviews, was highlighted as an important consideration.
- Ethical Considerations: Participants emphasised the importance of promoting ethical research practices, including the appropriate use of traditional knowledge and resources for follow-up studies.



## Input Collected on the Proposed Next Steps

The last workshop of the forum concentrated on the next steps for the establishment of the CNRI and included discussions on different aspects of the start-up phase, such as the governance structure and how communication channels should be maintained with the Cree Nation throughout the first years of the project. Five guiding questions were proposed to the workshop participants to guide their discussions:

1. “Is a steering committee a good structure to plan the next steps towards implementing the CNRI’s mandates?”
2. “Who (communities/organisations) wishes to be part of the steering committee and what would their role be?”
3. “How often should the steering committee and executive committee meet every year?”
4. “What do you think of also creating a smaller executive committee to supervise more closely the work of the CNRI staff?”
5. “How should the steering committee update and consult the Cree Nation about the developments of the CNRI?”

### Structure and Nomenclature of Committees

It was suggested that the two committees created to govern the start-up phase of the CNRI be named the " Advisory Committee" and the " Steering Committee" to enhance clarity. It was also suggested that the smaller "Steering Committee" be formed to closely supervise CNRI staff and it aims to ensure effective governance and efficient oversight. The establishment of both committees should allow for dynamic adjustments based on initial experiences and feedback.

#### Advisory Committee (AC)

Composition and Role: Participants agreed that all regional Cree organisations interested in research and Cree First Nations should be represented on the AC, thus ensuring broad representation. Potential non-regional members may include the Chisasibi Eeyou Resource and Research Institute and the Forest Authority.

Role and Responsibilities: Participants envision the primary role of the AC to be one that would provide strategic guidance and formally adopt the initial CNRI mandates.

Frequency of Meetings: The Advisory Committee should meet 1-2 times a year initially, with flexibility to adjust frequency as needed.

#### Steering Committee (SC)

Composition: There was a consensus among the participants that the SC should be a rather small committee. It was proposed that it could consist of 7 to 9 members, striking a balance between being sufficiently representative and operationally effective.

**Membership:** Membership should include organisations with strong research mandates and communities with significant interest and experience in research. The suggested criteria for selection include profound knowledge about protecting Cree knowledge and identity as well as substantial research experience.

**Role:** The participants agreed with the suggestion that the SC's primary roles should be to oversee the CNRI staff, ensuring alignment with the CNRI's strategic objectives and day-to-day operations.

**Frequency of Meetings:** The Steering Committee should meet monthly to maintain close supervision and provide regular guidance.

**Overlap and Rotation:** There is a need for overlap between the AC and the SC to ensure seamless communication and coordination. Electing community representatives or implementing a rotation system - to ensure that diverse community perspectives are represented on the SC over time - should be considered.

## **Communication and Reporting**

**Reporting to Cree First Nations:** Reporting back to Cree Nations should be managed through respective representatives who can relay information to their communities. Establishing a public presence through a website is recommended so as to share information transparently and to engage the broader community. Regular updates to the CNG/GCC council board and other governance structures within the Cree Nation will foster transparency and accountability. A comprehensive communication strategy should include a combination of digital (website, newsletters) and traditional (radio, community meetings) methods to ensure maximum reach and engagement.

**Community Engagement:** Regular updates via a newsletter and periodic communications through radio broadcasts were suggested. Presentations at the Annual General Assembly (AGA) and community consultations should be conducted to keep the Cree Nation informed and involved in the CNRI's progress.

**External Consultation:** Engaging with non-Cree organisations involved in research and research governance was strongly suggested to ensure collaborative opportunities and avoid the duplication of bureaucracy.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The three CNRI proposed mandates and the suggested roadmap for establishing the CNRI were very well received by the participants in the Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee. The feedback collected will help refine the objectives for each mandate and provide valuable insight into the Cree Nation's expectations for research in Eeyou Istchee. The positive reception of the shared ideas and discussions during the forum indicates that the input gathered during the pre-consultation phase was well interpreted and aligns with a collective Cree vision for the future of research and research governance. The following paragraphs present some recommendations for implementing the mandates and creating a new Cree entity dedicated to research.

*“[...] a regional body could help by providing a framework and setting the parameters as what to watch for when we are embarking in a research project. [...] We will go beyond allowing research and go towards becoming full collaborators in research. I want to do away with being a fish in a fish tank for researchers to observe and monitor.”*

**Chief Irene Neeposh, Cree First Nation of Waswanipi**



## Creation of both an Advisory Committee and a Steering Committee

### **1. Form an Advisory Committee (AC) with full representation of research interests within Eeyou Istchee**

The CNRI Working Group could invite Cree stakeholders in research (Cree First Nations and organisations) to form an Advisory Committee.

Role of the AC: The AC would provide strategic guidance for the first steps in establishing the CNRI and supporting the implementation of its mandates.

Composition: Each Cree stakeholder could name a permanent representative to this committee. This person would also be the contact person for the CNRI within the organisation or community. The proposed members of the AC are:

- All Cree First Nations (11)
- Nishiiyuu Council of Elders
- Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay
- Cree School Board
- Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute
- Cree Nation Youth Council
- Regional Cree Trappers Association
- Cree Nation Government Environment Department
- Cree Nation Government Executive Team
- Grand Chief or Deputy Grand Chief
- Niskamoon Corporation
- Eeyou Marine Region entities (1 representative)

Role of the Members: The AC members would participate in AC meetings, contribute to high-level decision making and report to their respective organisations on the development of the CNRI. They would act as the permanent contact person for the CNRI in the community or organisation during the start-up phase (2024-2027).

Frequency of Meetings: The AC could have a first meeting in summer 2024 and, if funding permits, another meeting before the end of 2024-2025. The AC would then meet once or twice a year.

Initial Considerations: The AC could name members to a smaller steering committee during their first meeting and formally adopt the three proposed mandates.

### **2. Form a smaller, efficient Steering Committee to oversee the CNRI staff**

During the first AC meeting, a smaller Steering Committee could be created as an efficient decision-making structure.

Role of the SC: The management of the CNRI project could shift from the CNRI Working Group to the Steering Committee. With guidance from the AC, the SC would oversee the work of the CNRI staff and provide regular input.

Composition: The SC members could be representatives of organisations heavily invested in research which either carry out research or have developed research policies and research review processes. Community representation is also essential. Members could be chosen based on interest and consensus, reached during the AC meeting. The number of members could be limited to 7 or 9.

- Two community representatives (2)
- Nishiiyuu Council of Elders
- Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay
- Cree School Board
- Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute
- Cree Nation Government Environment Department
- Cree Nation Government Executive Team
- Niskamoon Corporation

Role of the Members: The members could contribute to the establishment of the CNRI by reviewing deliverables prepared by the CNRI staff and provide input based on the interests and experiences of their respective organisations. Members could also be expected to support the CNRI staff's work by connecting them with relevant resources within their respective organisations.

Frequency of Meetings: The SC could meet monthly to ensure continuous oversight of the CNRI staff's work.

Initial Considerations: The first two matters of business for the SC should be to form the 1<sup>st</sup> Mandate Implementation Committee and hire the necessary staff for the CNRI.

### **3. Request support for the establishment of the CNRI from the CNG/GCC**

The AC and SC could formally request that the Cree Nation Government pursue supporting the start-up phase of the CNRI, both financially and administratively, and within an agreed upon time frame whilst continuously seeking additional external financial support.

## **Creation of the First Implementation Committee**

### **4. Form the 1st Mandate Implementation Committee**

The AC and SC could invite relevant regional stakeholders in research, both Cree and non-Cree, to form an Implementation Committee. This committee would consist of organisations with research mandates, research policies and research licensing responsibilities. Cree organisations would serve as permanent members of the committee, with the option to invite non-Cree organisations as permanent or temporary observers as needed. The primary objective of this committee would be to harmonise research review processes in Eeyou Istchee and to establish a regional research review committee.



## **5. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing research policies and research both review processes as well as permitting processes in Eeyou Istchee**

To support the efforts of the First Mandate Implementation Committee, CNRI staff could prepare a thorough assessment of the current landscape of research licensing and review in Eeyou Istchee, encompassing all stakeholders and jurisdictions. This report should include a gap analysis that details the extent of Cree involvement in each review process or permit evaluation and point out opportunities to enhance the participation of Eeyouch in decision-making processes. This assessment will be crucial for aiding the implementation committee in harmonising research review processes in Eeyou Istchee.

## **6. Propose a harmonised research project review process for Eeyou Istchee**

The primary deliverable from the 1st Implementation Committee could be a harmonised research project review process to present to the Grand Council of the Cree. This deliverable could include a project lifecycle, evaluation criteria and the framework for a regional research review committee.

## **Establishment of the CNRI**

### **7. Select a Cree name for the new organisation**

During the forum, participants were invited to propose a Cree name to replace the project title "Cree Nation Research Institute." Nine names were suggested. The Advisory Committee should establish a process for deciding on the final name. Multiple participants in the consultations expressed discomfort with the term "institute," as it may imply "institutionalisation" of Eeyouch and evoke memories of residential schools.

### **8. Incorporate the new entity in the 2024-2025 fiscal year**

As there is a sense of urgency with the creation of the CNRI, the incorporation of the new entity should be planned within the coming financial year. This would also mean that a membership structure would need to be designed by the AC and a board would need to be formed. The SC could plan for this with the help of the CNRI staff and present a proposal to the AC before the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

### **9. Seek funding partners within the Cree Nation**

To support the start-up and eventual operations of the CNRI, the involvement of institutional Cree organisations is essential. Including these organisations as members and

contributors will help shape the CNRI and align it with the collective Cree vision for research and research governance.

## **10. Ensure balanced involvement of non-Cree academics**

The consultation strategy for the CNRI project has been predominantly Cree-focused to foster a collective Cree vision. Feedback from participants during the pre-consultations and at the forum highlighted instances where joint research projects between Eeyouch and non-Cree academics were dominated by universities, which retained financial and operational control, providing limited benefits to the Cree communities. While collaboration with Indigenous groups has significantly benefited academics in recent years, it is essential that research be mutually beneficial. To support Cree self-determination, the involvement of non-Cree academics in the development of the CNRI should be carefully balanced and gradually increased, ensuring the primary objective remains the empowerment of Cree academics and communities.

## Communication Strategy with the Cree Nation

### **11. Raise awareness about research and research governance within Eeyou Istchee**

Consultation efforts have shown increasing awareness about the importance of research governance to support Cree self-determination in Eeyou Istchee, with significant progress having already been made to ensure the Eeyouch fully benefit from research. Large institutional organisations, often solicited by external researchers (academics, consulting firms, governments, etc.), have begun developing their own research policies and procedures. However, the concept of research governance remains unfamiliar to many. There was strong consensus during the forum that this topic needs further exploration. The CNRI could play a vital role in creating communication materials to educate both Cree individuals and organisations on the benefits of Cree-led research and Cree research governance. Efforts to promote the CNRI project's work in this area could include:

- Creating a website for the CNRI project to showcase various milestones
- Publishing a regular newsletter on the CNRI project and topics related to Indigenous research and research governance
- Presenting the CNRI project to individual Cree First Nation Councils and the GCC to gather their input and feedback

## **12. Promote the project beyond Eeyou Istchee and connect with potential partners**

The new entity envisioned by the CNRI project will require a robust network both within and outside of Eeyou Istchee. Early promotion can raise awareness of Cree efforts towards self-determination in research, foster meaningful partnerships with key stakeholders and attract funding for the CNRI's future operations. Prioritising promotion directly with governmental agencies could be especially beneficial, as they often fund research and would benefit from an established Cree authority with strong skills and abilities to review research projects before funding decisions are made.



## **APPENDIX**

- A. Letter from the Deputy Grand Chief to Research Stakeholders
- B. Pre-consultation Questionnaire
- C. Invitation and Agenda of the Forum on Research in Eeyou Istchee
- D. The CBHSSJB's Miyupimaatisiun Research Principles
- E. Results from the Pre-consultation
- F. Letter to the Participants of the Forum on Research

