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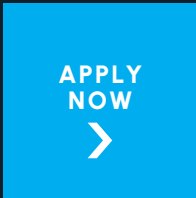
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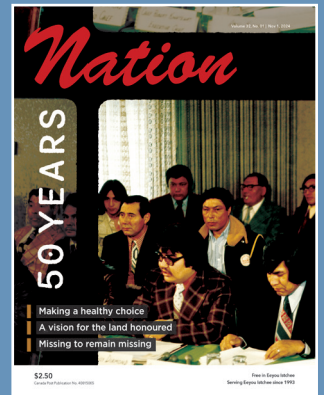
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## 50 years and counting

by Will Nicholls



### *One has to admire the ups and downs faced by the Grand Council over the past half century*

In the past, the Cree of Eeyou Istchee had no centralized government. Our system of tallymen to define and enforce our traplines was perhaps the only way we had some control over the territory beyond our communities.

The federal Indian Affairs Department did create local band councils, but they were simply that – local and politically unconnected to other Cree communities. Some of our smaller communities were absorbed into larger ones in order to simplify things – at least for the Canadian government.

So, what led to a centralized government for the Cree? Chiefs had been used to working together as needed, for instance in the creation of beaver preserves when non-Cree threatened to decimate beaver populations. However, the roots of a central Cree government are in Canada's 1898 and 1912 Quebec Boundaries Extension Acts.

A part of the law that made Eeyou Istchee part of Quebec stipulated that before the province could do anything there, they had to make treaties with the Indigenous Peoples living in the region. But no effort was made to negotiate treaties in the North.

Bounce ahead to the early 1970s. Newly elected Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa was having intense wet dreams about building the La Grande hydroelectric project, which would create vast inland seas due to the flat nature of the land along the La Grande River.

Crees were alarmed once they found out – by radio and newspapers. No one thought to tell us that huge parts of our traditional territory would be flooded. As

you can guess, there had been no surrender of rights of Eeyou Istchee by the Cree. The Cree as usual were ignored and discounted by the colonial powers that claimed ownership of the land.

After the landmark Malouf decision ruled that Quebec indeed had to respect the law and deal with the Cree, Hydro-Québec and the federal and provincial governments needed someone to negotiate with. In other words, the Cree needed a centralized body to represent them.

Thus, in 1974 the Grand Council of the Crees was created. The following year the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement would be signed. It was touted as the first modern treaty and was nothing like any of the non-Cree parties expected. It would take decades to be fulfilled and to this day still has some unfinished business.

One has to admire the ups and downs faced by the Grand Council over the past half century. The Cree started out with

nothing but have made their mark on the national and international stage.

Some say the Cree referendum in response to Quebec's sovereignty vote in 1995 is what killed it. A plan to harness the Great Whale River for another dam complex was stopped by a multitude of means. The most noticeable were the Cree going to the New England area of the US to plead their case to residents and to their state governments that made the difference. When a regional government was created for the James Bay region, the Cree made sure they were a part of that body.

In short, while there have been complaints, there are also reasons to cheer. In comparison to most governments in the world we are just youngsters and are continuing to grow. It'll be interesting to see what the next 50 years will hold for the Cree and the Cree Nation Government.

## A Visionary Grand Chief Gull-Masty honoured for conservation work

by Patrick Quinn

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On behalf of the many individuals who contributed to the Cree Regional Conservation Strategy, Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty was named the co-recipient of the Conservation Visionary Award October 17 by a prestigious international organization.

Alongside Rappahannock Chief Anne Richardson, who returned her tribe to their ancestral lands in Virginia, the International Land Conservation Network honoured Gull-Masty in Quebec City at the ILCN's Global Congress. The event is a flagship program of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, co-hosted by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), that is held every three years.

"It is tremendously important that conservationists around the world take note of the passion and skill that Indigenous leaders bring to the field of land and cultural conservation," stated ILCN director Jim Levitt.

With carbon-dense forests and key wildlife habitats, Eeyou Istchee is being increasingly recognized as globally significant for both its ecosystems and Indigenous self-determination. Grand Chief Gull-Masty was acknowledged for playing a key role in the Cree Nation's efforts to protect 39,000 square kilometres across the region.

"The protected areas file is the culmination of years of work," Gull-Masty told the Nation. "To have the recognition in an international congress was the highlight of the year, probably my career. This award is an international recognition of who we are as a nation."

Developed in 2014 with input from all communities and key entities, the Cree Regional Conservation Strategy's interconnected network of protected areas was implemented in partnership with the NCC and important funding support from the Metcalf Foundation and Canada's Challenge Fund.

The NCC integrated Cree values with leading-edge planning tools and scientific knowledge. What began with geographic information system management to measure species distribution and land-cover types evolved into extensive meetings to analyze scenarios based on each community's priorities.

"NCC visited nearly all communities alongside CNG staff to really understand their lens," said Christie Macdonald, who manages NCC's Indigenous conservation partnerships. "This collaboration was a true partnership with both organizations resourcing this work and growing together based on shared objectives."

Spatial prioritization tools were employed according to how intact or industrially disturbed was the selected area. More pristine northern areas enabled a greater emphasis on cultural significance, water proximity or resilience to climate change and fires.

These included "portages, historical areas where people hunt, spawning grounds, where we gather medicine, even areas attached to Cree legends," explained Gull-Masty. "So much data, it would drive the average person crazy."

From about 80,000 square-kilometres or 30% of Eeyou Istchee identified for potential conservation in 2018, negotiation with Quebec through the Grande Alliance resulted in 39,000 square-kilometres of newly protected areas announced two years later.

Having met its Plan Nord target of protecting 20% of the province north of the 49th parallel by 2020, Quebec's next target is 50% by 2035. The ultimate objective is to establish biodiversity reserves with some portions receiving the status of a national park.

"There's going to be different categories of protection throughout Eeyou Istchee," Gull-Masty explained. "We're

also exploring self-declared protected areas. We need the participation of our members to build this next step of the puzzle – up to 50% of Eeyou Istchee is going to be protected."

The day after Gull-Masty's ILCN award, the CNG demonstrated that these protections would extend to the region's coastal waters. A press conference with Parks Canada announced a formal agreement to establish a proposed Wiinipaakw (James Bay) Protected Area and national marine conservation area.

The Eeyou Marine Region is a unique environment where freshwater and salt-water fish mingle, migrating birds are plentiful and beluga whales spend their winters. Communities consulted during the feasibility study anticipate a tourism influx, infrastructure upgrades and job opportunities.

Discussions with the federal government stemmed from Wemindji's Tawich project launched in 2007 and may lead to a joint conservation table with the Mushkegowuk Council on western James Bay. Gull-Masty praised the "phenomenal" work of Deputy Grand Chief Norman A. Wapachee for leading the initiative's steering committee.

"I'm so proud of his leadership to continue building on our legacy of protected areas," said Gull-Masty. "Land users will forever have access to this territory that is untouched. You still have the ability to hunt, fish and trap in these areas."

Before her political career, Gull-Masty worked to protect the Broadback River Valley, one of the last havens of untouched forests in Quebec. She later campaigned with Greenpeace as Waswanipi Deputy Chief for Broadback protection, before managing the CNG's conservation file as Deputy Grand Chief.

"That drove me to go into politics," Gull-Masty revealed.

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## Unbreakable Unity

Celebrating **50 Years** of the Grand Council of the Crees

by Patrick Quinn  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

August 8 marked 50 years since the official establishment of the Grand Council of the Crees, emerging from the turmoil surrounding Quebec's James Bay hydroelectric project to become the driving force uniting the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee.

While expanding development of natural resources had already altered the Cree way of life by the 1960s, it was the provincial government's announcement of a mega-hydroelectric project within their territory in 1971 that forced an immediate response. Leaders from each Cree community gathered for a historic meeting and young Waskaganish Chief Billy Diamond was appointed Grand Chief.

"Billy Diamond came up with the idea that we needed a Grand Council and a Grand Chief who was not afraid to stand up to governments," recalled Ted Moses, a member of the delegation battling Quebec in court who translated between trappers and lawyers. "It created a position of power during negotiations."

Anticipating great impacts on their livelihood, the Cree and Inuit sought an injunction from the Superior Court of Quebec and six months later Judge Albert Malouf decided in their favour. Their primary argument was that Canada's transfer of Quebec's northern territories in 1898 and 1912 stated the obligation to settle Indigenous land claims, which Quebec had completely ignored as it had no interest in this region until the 1960s.

Although construction work resumed only a week later when the Quebec Court of Appeal suspended the injunction,

negotiations regarding La Grande hydroelectric complex began in early 1974.

While support was initially provided by the Indians of Quebec Association (IQA), whose stable funding enabled the engagement of lawyers Jacques Beaudoin and James O'Reilly, tension developed when the IQA took the position that Canada and Quebec should settle southern land claims before the James Bay issue.

"The Grand Council became necessary when the IQA decided that the concerns of the southern-based First Nations would take priority over the Crees' confrontation with the world's largest hydroelectric project," explained former executive director Bill Namagoose. "If we had agreed with that, we'd still be waiting."

Moses told the Nation in 2003 that the young Cree leaders borrowed the concept of a Grand Council from other parts of Canada, bringing together all the Chiefs to speak on behalf of the Cree Nation. Despite explaining that the GCC was created for the specific situation of the Crees, IQA executives felt they were breaking away and there was initial conflict with other First Nations.

The decision to incorporate the Grand Council under federal law in 1974 was also controversial, with some assuming that accepting the non-Native tax structure meant thinking like a White man. However, Quebec's negotiator John Ciacca was "ecstatic" because it created a position of accountability that immediately changed the tone and direction of discussions.

"That was one of the best big political moves that the Crees made, to form their own organization," said Moses. "It was the idea of unity that people liked. One people, one voice. Through the creation of the Grand Council, we were able to achieve recognition as a treaty so therefore the JBNQA received constitutional protection."

The GCC's formation marked a turning point in the Cree Nation's contemporary history, with its focus on unity and Cree rights earning it credibility in Eeyou Istchee from the beginning. Negotiations between the Cree and Inuit and provincial and federal governments in 1975 yielded the first comprehensive land claim to be settled in Canada, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA).

Recognizing the traditional way of life was becoming less economically viable, negotiators said there must be alternative employment in social services, education and healthcare. Whereas the IQA and other bands were reluctant to deal with provinces, Quebec was open to having Cree school and health boards if they were under Quebec law.

"We broke that mould," said Namagoose. "Today, Native people still believe the federal government should provide all these services for them. They don't have the legal framework to deal with Canada and Quebec. It's like travelling without a road map."

While the Grand Council is now synonymous with the Cree Nation Government, lawyers have advised never to dissolve it because it's the official signatory to the JBNQA. As Canada and Quebec long refused to use the words Cree Nation Government in legislation, it became known as the Cree Regional Authority until Quebec agreed for it to be changed to the CNG in 2012.

Managing the GCC's Montreal office in its early days, former Deputy Grand Chief Violet Pachanos recalled, "We had no money and we had no credit. We had to beg the National Indian

Brotherhood for the little funds we got. We eventually got a loan from Indian Affairs when they saw our negotiations were serious."

When Namagoose began his 35 years as executive director in 1988, Canada and Quebec treated the JBNQA as "just another contract" and weren't living up to their obligations. Through legal actions and grassroots activism, the Cree Nation focused on stopping the Great Whale hydro project, resulting in the famous Odeyak boat journey to New York in 1990.

Following that hugely successful endeavour, the Cree once again proved themselves a formidable political force during Quebec's referendum for independence in 1995. The GCC issued a legal paper titled Sovereign Injustice and organized its own referendum, with Crees overwhelmingly voting to stay in Canada.

"The Crees always stand on our rights," Namagoose asserted. "Once you understand your rights and know how to defend them, nobody can knock you off. If you take a twig, you can snap it, but if you put nine twigs together you can't break them."

As governments finally realized they must make peace with the Cree, the Paix des Braves agreement was signed with Quebec in 2002 followed by the federal New Relationship Agreement in 2008. With that latter agreement and others expiring in 2028, current GCC executive director Davey Bobbish is continuing the path toward self-determination while seeking opportunities for the Nation's young population.

"They were 20 years behind in the funding when we signed these agreements, so we were trying to get basic needs implemented like housing infrastructure," Bobbish said. "We have to start shifting into economic development projects where people get involved more in job creation."

The JBNQA remains the foundational document guiding the Cree Nation's growth and will be the subject of a communications campaign over the next year, celebrating its development and flourishing results. Namagoose suggested Cree progress wouldn't have been possible without the GCC.

"There's not much confrontation now, but you always must be cautious to see what's coming," advised Namagoose. "A good leader sees what's happening around them and knows how to resolve these issues, but the exceptional leader will see what's coming over the horizon and prepare the people."



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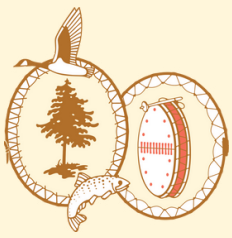
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### → Declaration of Death

Send the declaration of death to your local membership clerk.

## Are you moving?

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## AFN rejects child welfare reform settlement

First Nations chiefs are calling for new negotiations after voting down the landmark \$47.8 billion child welfare reform settlement reached with the Canadian government last July.

The Assembly of First Nations called for changes after a three-day meeting that wrapped up October 18. Following two days of presentations and a lengthy debate, the room erupted in applause when it was announced that a resolution to endorse the settlement was rejected by a vote of 267-147.

"This is a great opportunity now to reset," said First Nations Child and Family Caring Society executive director Cindy Blackstock, one of the original complainants to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal accusing Canada of underfunding the on-reserve child welfare system.

"The most inspiring thing is that children should know how many of the leaders love them enough to come here and spend these days having these difficult conversations and making a very difficult decision," Blackstock commented.

Khelsilem, spokesperson for the Squamish Nation in BC, argued there is a better way to "address the flaws identified by regions across the country and to create a fairer, more equitable, more open, transparent process."

Voting against the agreement was emotional, difficult and exhausting acknowledging Kebaowek Chief Lance

Haymond, who represents Quebec-Labrador. But he believes it's still possible to achieve a deal that all regions will accept.

Representative plaintiffs in the class action suit argued passionately for the agreement's acceptance. Ashley Bach said it was "a once in a lifetime childhood agreement because if we take too long, we're going to lose another generation."

Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu stated that Canada "remains steadfast in its commitment to reform the First Nations Child and Family Services Program so that children grow up knowing who they are and where they belong."

## Inuktitut available on Google Translate

Google Translate has added one of the most widely spoken Indigenous languages across the country: Inuktitut. This term refers to the Inuit languages Inuktitut, spoken largely in the Baffin Island regions of Nunavut, and Inuinnaqtun, generally spoken in the Western Arctic.

Google now offers translation in both, its first addition of an Indigenous language spoken in Canada. It's part



of the tech giant's initiative to develop a single artificial intelligence language model supporting 1,000 of the most spoken languages in the world.

Statistics Canada counts about 40,000 Inuktitut speakers in the country, but the number of speakers doesn't determine whether a language is included in Google Translate. There must also be enough of its text data online to produce a language model.

"We don't want to put anything on the product which just produces broken text or nonsense," said Isaac Caswell, a senior software engineer with the platform. "Inuktitut really stands out in that it has a lot of clean and a lot of well written data, because, I think, the community is increasingly online."

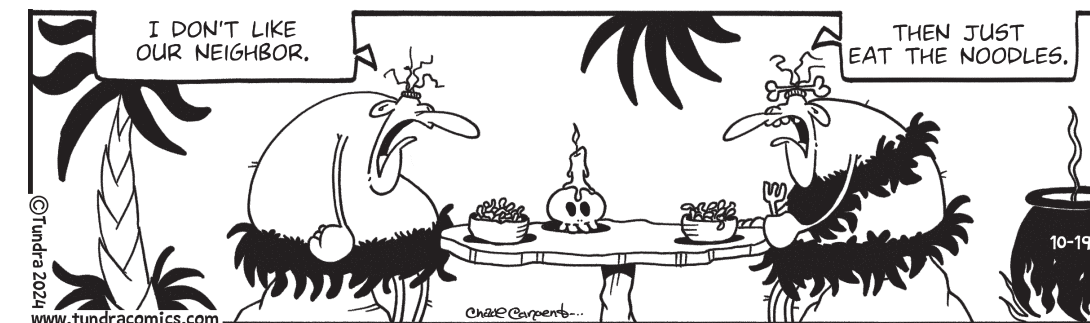
Engineers looked at adding Cree, spoken by more than 86,000 people in Canada, but there were fewer websites in the language to pull from. When considering adding a language, Google analyzes

demand from the community and technical feasibility.

The company consulted with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami to ensure the model's development was true to the Inuktitut language, including the ability to translate both of the language's writing systems: qaniujaaqpait, or syllabics, and qaliujaaqpait, based on the Roman alphabet.

"This is another way to make our language relevant, easily accessible and for those who don't know it at all, to be able to interact with it," said Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President Natan Obed. "This is reconciliation in action and I really appreciate those who've taken the time to work with us to keep our language strong."

Obed noted that it's not an official translation service and that the function will be refined over time to become more reliable.





# OTTAWA BACKTRACKS

Federal commitment to residential school investigations questioned after funding cuts

by Natalia Fedosieieva

A group of experts and Indigenous organizations are concerned about recent federal cuts to funding for investigations into former residential school burial sites.

After hundreds of unmarked graves were discovered at a Kamloops residential school site in 2022, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada set aside more than \$200 million to support initiatives to document deaths and commemorate the children who did not return home.

Kimberly Murray, the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, said this amount implied \$5 million per year for each community that applied. But as more communities were applying for funding, Ottawa reduced the amount to \$3 million.

*Photo: Patrick Ballay, Senior Negotiator in Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada: Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Funding.*

*Photos provided by Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor / Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada*



"Then this summer they cut it to \$500,000 a year," Murray said. "Survivors and communities through their advocacy fought against that, but Canada has said it renewed the funding cap."

As the government is trying "to optimize the use of the money," the communities cannot use it for commemoration, but only for the ground and archival research, Murray added.

"It's been upsetting to the communities that were in the middle of the investigation have to fight for funding, not knowing about the plan of investigation," she said.

Murray emphasized that Canada has an international legal obligation to support the investigations because "it is the government's fault that these kids disappeared and are missing."

According to Murray, expenses include community gatherings, survivor testimonies, archival research, hiring experts, ground searches, detection dogs, equipment, exhumation and DNA testing if necessary.

In addition, she thinks the three-year cycle for this work is insufficient.

"Analyzing the data is very time consuming, so that adds to the cost," Murray said. "Canada needs to stay with national legal obligations to support these investigations as long as they could."

Beside residential schools there are other institutions, such as hospitals and sanatoriums, where Indigenous children were held in deplorable conditions and frequently died. However, she noted,

"Canada won't support searches of those grounds, and that is very problematic."

Murray believes there should be more funding, more time and fewer restrictions from the federal government. "The government should not be controlling what communities choose to investigate. It should be Indigenous-led, and they should decide what sequence to do their investigation."

It's an important part of the healing process, she added, "where families who finally found their loved ones are able to do the ceremonies and lay the medicines on the burial."

In her "Sites of Truth, Sites of Conscience" report, Murray states that in the nine years since the Truth and Reconciliation Report issued Calls to Action 71–76, very little has been done by Canada and the churches to implement them.

"It will take years to complete the histories of these sites of truth and conscience and other cemeteries at institutions excluded from the IRSSA [the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement] and at other institutions where Indigenous children were sent."

Murray will announce recommendations during the final report event on October 29 in Gatineau.

Rebekah Jacques, a forensic pathologist from the National Advisory Committee for Residential Schools Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, believes reconciliation means taking action.

"For families who wish that their children, who died at residential schools, return home requires meaningful action through forensic work that is Indigenous-led and guided by survivors," she said.

This action aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 74, which calls upon the federal government to respond to families' wishes for reburial in home communities where requested, Jacques noted.

"In order to achieve reburial, it requires identification of the human remains and their attachment to linear descendants or belonging to their Indigenous communities," she explained. "It is important that ceremony, cultural practices, Indigenous ways of knowing, and wellness supports are part of the foundation for this work."

One of the myths about forensic work is a short timeframe, but "this is simply not true, and it will likely take years to complete," Jacques said.

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Executive Director Stephanie Scott believes funding is an essential part of the debt of justice owed to the families whose children were forcibly taken away.

"Funding must be determined by need, not by arbitrary formulas," Scott said. "That's the only way to meet Parliament's promise that every Indigenous community would have the means necessary to locate and commemorate the children who never came home."







**BS&RT  
CREE SOCIAL ECONOMY ROUND TABLE**



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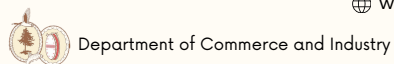
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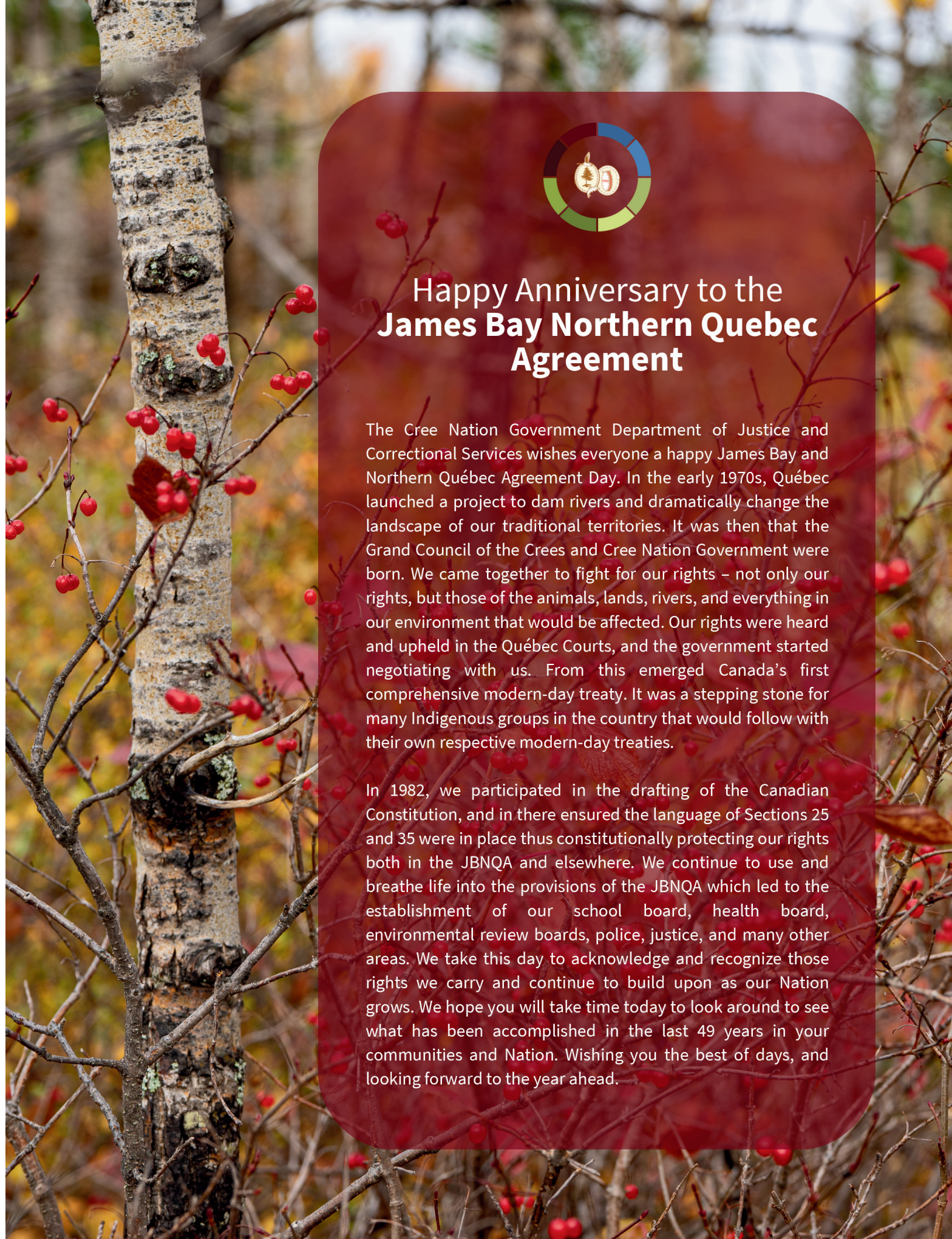
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## Happy Anniversary to the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement

The Cree Nation Government Department of Justice and Correctional Services wishes everyone a happy James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement Day. In the early 1970s, Québec launched a project to dam rivers and dramatically change the landscape of our traditional territories. It was then that the Grand Council of the Crees and Cree Nation Government were born. We came together to fight for our rights – not only our rights, but those of the animals, lands, rivers, and everything in our environment that would be affected. Our rights were heard and upheld in the Québec Courts, and the government started negotiating with us. From this emerged Canada's first comprehensive modern-day treaty. It was a stepping stone for many Indigenous groups in the country that would follow with their own respective modern-day treaties.

In 1982, we participated in the drafting of the Canadian Constitution, and in there ensured the language of Sections 25 and 35 were in place thus constitutionally protecting our rights both in the JBNQA and elsewhere. We continue to use and breathe life into the provisions of the JBNQA which led to the establishment of our school board, health board, environmental review boards, police, justice, and many other areas. We take this day to acknowledge and recognize those rights we carry and continue to build upon as our Nation grows. We hope you will take time today to look around to see what has been accomplished in the last 49 years in your communities and Nation. Wishing you the best of days, and looking forward to the year ahead.



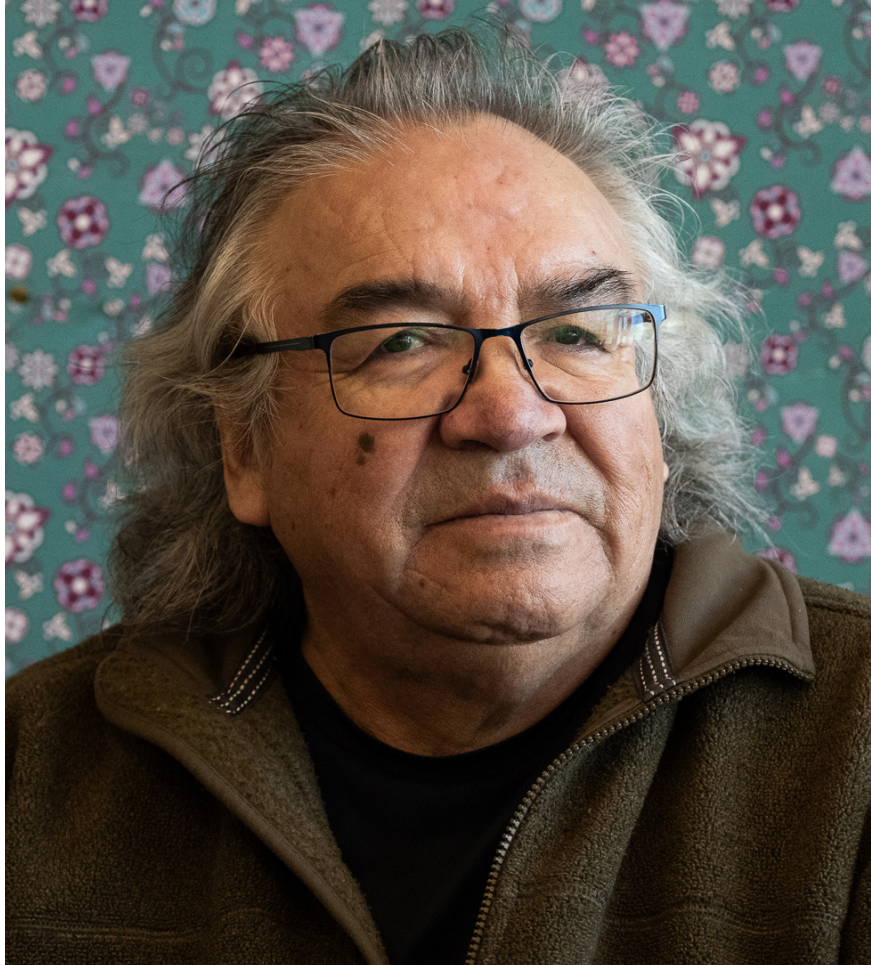
# Overseeing Cree Healthcare

Comparing the candidates  
for Cree Health Board  
chairperson

by Patrick Quinn

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Cree voters will choose between incumbent Bertie Wapachee and challenger George L. Diamond in the election for the office of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) chairperson election to be held on November 12. The Nation spoke with both candidates to give readers a more informed choice.



## Bertie Wapachee

Elected CBHSSJB chairperson at the height of the Covid pandemic in 2020, Wapachee's initial priorities were to ensure stability. Having previously served as chairperson from 1999 to 2003, Wapachee said he was able to quickly adapt to the role.

"Many projects were delayed," Wapachee explained. "As soon as we could open things up, forest fires happened. Quebec's [proposed health legislation] Bill 15 has been another challenge. We proposed an extended seven-year health agreement because we had close to \$2 billion in projects pending."

Wapachee met with Quebec Health Minister Christian Dubé earlier this year, who committed to a legislative review to modernize the Cree healthcare act, Chapter S-5, which it's operated under since 1971. Wapachee said the process is about half finished.

The CBHSSJB wants greater responsibility and flexibility to achieve its vision, reflecting Cree identity, language, culture and values. It proposes adopting Eeyou Miyupimaatisiun and Nishiiyu healing methods, adapting Cree Youth Protection and changing working conditions and training to reflect a Cree hiring priority.

"We've promoted during my term land-based retreats and programs," said Wapachee. "We purchased a large outfitting camp in the centre of Eeyou Istchee called Mirage. I call it our place where we deal with our trauma, a big issue that we haven't done enough to make a dent."

Wapachee was initially inspired to run for chairperson to break cycles of alcoholism, drug addiction and sexual abuse. While empowering communities to address these complex issues, Wapachee acknowledged that as long as there are users there will always be dealers.

"We've done our best to break not just the cycles but also the silos," explained Wapachee. "One of the biggest challenges we've seen is the violence that comes with alcohol and drug addiction. We're at the point of implementing harm reduction programs. The only way to resolve these issues is to work together."

Advocating for "shared responsibility" through expanded partnerships with communities, the Cree Nation Government and the Cree School Board,



## George L. Diamond

With the Cree Health Board since 2000, Diamond is currently working in violence prevention after previously managing an injury prevention program and spending 14 years with the CBHSSJB employees' union.

"It's all about the prevention of diseases and the promotion of healthy lifestyles," said Diamond. "It seems prevention education happens when we have an unfortunate incident. I would like to see more consistency with a special emphasis on educating the youth. I don't know if we have a health class in our schools, but we should."

Diamond insists that we should never normalize violence, emphasizing to our children that it's unacceptable. "Violence is a learned behaviour – we have the ability to unlearn it," Diamond said, adding that communities have the resources to address this behaviour.

Diamond advocates creating safer communities and empowering local health units, transforming them into community educators. He said an epidemic of mental illness is increasingly impacting young-

er people, thus the importance of suicide-prevention measures.

"I want to see young people go on land-based programming, a good place to heal yourself away from all the distractions in our communities," said Diamond. "I'm a firm believer in our traditional medicines. It shouldn't be second to western medicine – in some cases it's better."

Diamond said more opportunity should be given to Cree traditional healers, asserting the right to freedom of religion. He wants more health services in communities and to address the "systemic discrimination" of patients needing to travel south. He believes Cree people have longer wait times down south and even some Cree communities have unequal access to health services.

"Sometimes they're told they have to travel the day before the appointment, so they don't have money and right away they have additional stress," suggested Diamond. "I'm thankful for the work of Bella Petawabano in bringing birthing back to Eeyou Istchee – Cree midwifery is a big success story."

He'd like to see Cree parenting skills integrated into youth protection training

and address the rise of homelessness by discussing potential solutions with those impacted, learning why they left their communities in the first place.

Strengthening connections across CBHSSJB departments, Diamond proposes each unit put all their problems on the table to work together towards solutions. He wants to explore having local general assemblies to encourage input from community members and ideally have each community's board of directors elected at the same time so they can work together for four years.

Encouraging youth to pursue healthcare professions, he questioned why the project to translate health services into the Cree language seemed to stop. Compared to the Cree School Board, Diamond thinks the number of Cree health workers is far too low.

"Imagine if there was a doctor talking to you in Cree?" remarked Diamond. "I tell my grandchildren, your grandchildren are going to be doctors, dentists, psychologists – all the medical professionals will be taken by Cree. That should be the goal, that everyone has their own Cree family doctor."

the CBHSSJB signed a social solidarity agreement last year to support Community Miyupimaatisiun Committees mandated to identify and address grassroots-level health and social priorities.

Although the pandemic delayed progress, the Chisasibi regional hospital is expected to open in mid-2029. Construction has started for a birthing home in Waskaganish and an Elders' home in Chisasibi, with two other 32-bed facilities to be built in Waskaganish and Mistissini.

Eager for dialysis patients to come home, work was accelerated on the Waskaganish clinic, which will replace the Home Dialysis Training Centre and Respiratory Clinic when it's completed in 2026. With diabetes continuing to increase, Wapachee said they have no choice but to expand prevention measures.

"We're working towards a new partnership with youth to get into prevention programs," Wapachee shared. "There's plenty of partnerships still on the way. Our goal is to continue becoming one of the most progressive Indigenous health and social services organizations in the world."



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Waskaganish:	819-895-2126
Waswanipi:	819-753-2770
Wemindji:	819-978-3300
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If you have any additional questions, please contact the Correctional Services Regional Office in Val d'or **819-874-2600** or contact your local Reintegration Officer

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## MESSAGE DU MINISTRE RESPONSABLE DES RELATIONS AVEC LES PREMIÈRES NATIONS ET LES INUIT

Le gouvernement du Québec est fier de se joindre à la nation crie pour souligner le 50<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la création du Grand conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee), ainsi que le 49<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la Convention de la Baie-James et du Nord québécois. Ces deux événements ont marqué un tournant pour le développement socioéconomique et l'autonomie de la nation crie, nation qui a connu des avancées sans précédent au cours des cinq dernières décennies. Lors de notre récent passage dans la communauté de Nemaska, le premier ministre et moi avons pu souligner les grandes contributions des Cris à l'enrichissement du patrimoine culturel québécois.

Our government is committed to continuing the dialogue with the Cree Nation on all matters of common interest. Together, our nations have achieved great things, and we will continue to develop partnerships in line with our shared vision of enriching our nations and creating a better future for all!

Happy anniversary and long life to the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)!




**Cree Women Experiences RESEARCH INITIATIVE**

THE CREE WOMEN OF EYYOU ISTCHEE ASSOCIATION (CWEIA), IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC EN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE (UQAT), HAS LAUNCHED AN IMPORTANT NEW RESEARCH INITIATIVE FOCUSING ON THE EXPERIENCES OF CREE WOMEN OF EYYOU ISTCHEE

The primary goals and objectives of this research initiative include:

- Empowering Cree Women
- Assessing Needs and Strengths
- Gathering Comprehensive Data

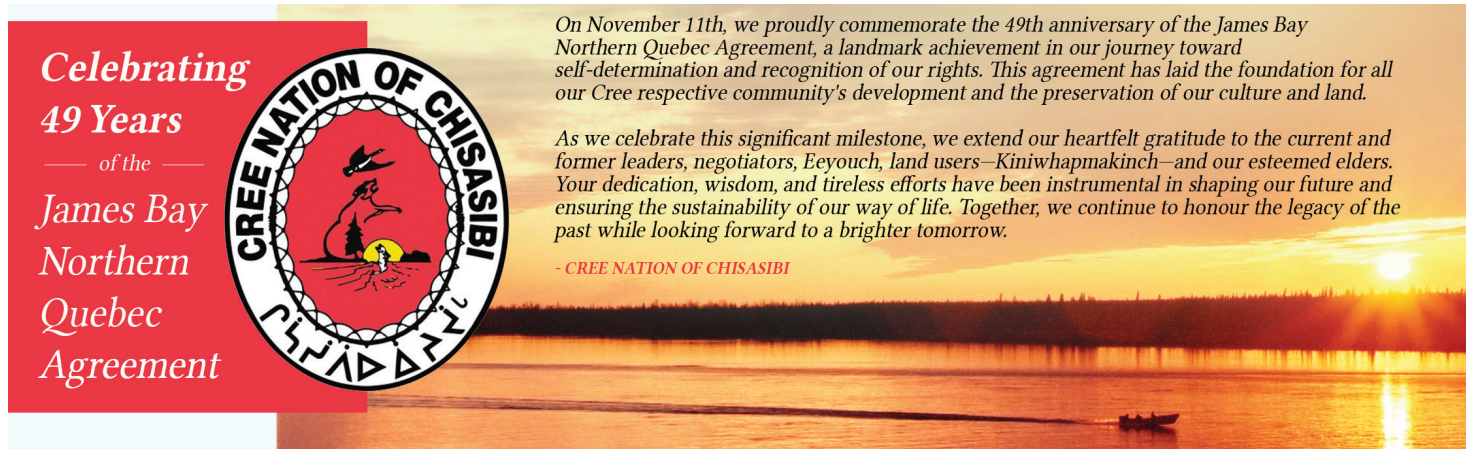
Results from this research will enable CWEIA in creating targeted programs and networks that support Cree women in Eeyou Istchee

**UQAT**

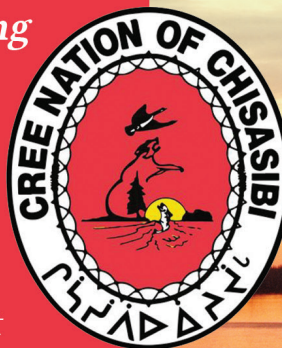
www.cweia.ca  
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**Celebrating 49 Years**  
of the  
**James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement**



On November 11th, we proudly commemorate the 49th anniversary of the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement, a landmark achievement in our journey toward self-determination and recognition of our rights. This agreement has laid the foundation for all our Cree respective community's development and the preservation of our culture and land.

As we celebrate this significant milestone, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the current and former leaders, negotiators, Eeyouch, land users—Kiniwhapmakinch—and our esteemed elders. Your dedication, wisdom, and tireless efforts have been instrumental in shaping our future and ensuring the sustainability of our way of life. Together, we continue to honour the legacy of the past while looking forward to a brighter tomorrow.

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Photos provided by Theresa Macleod Loon

# Eulogy for Juliette

by Juliet Sarah Rabbitskin Loon

**M**y name is Juliet Sarah Rabbitskin Loon, daughter of Kathleen Rabbitskin and Jacques Filion. I wanted to share the story about my late aunt Juliette Rabbitskin and the process of bringing her home to Mistissini.

Number 74 on the calls for action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission states: "We call upon the federal government to work with the churches and Aboriginal community leaders to inform the families of children who died at residential schools of the child's burial location, and to respond to families' wishes for appropriate commemoration ceremonies and markers, and reburial in home communities where requested."

The first time I went to La Tuque and saw her grave, I remember seeing my name written on the tombstone and realizing that she was just a little girl. I had always thought she was older because she was my aunt. Her grave was placed far away from the other graves, more in the bush. I remember feeling so sad because I had this overwhelming sense that she did not belong there.

Juliette Rabbitskin was only six years old when she was taken to resi-

dential school. Even though her parents did not want her to go because she was not able to speak, government officials still took her. They threatened to stop their family allowance and other incomes if her parents did not allow them to take her. It was heartbreaking; her parents felt they had no choice, knowing that they had younger children to care for.

What struck me is when I heard that Juliette loved helping her peers with their duties at residential school and extending her arms to hug those who may have needed a hug. Despite being away from her parents, and her limitations, she was always smiling. She was resilient.

Juliette got sick with a flu-like condition and Mary Coon and Caroline Rabbitskin took her to the nurse. The girls never saw her again and later learned that she had died that day. She was then buried in a cemetery at La Tuque two days later without her parents even knowing about her death. Her brothers, John and the late Paul Rabbitskin, were able to attend her funeral, but brother Matthew and cousins Emily and Caroline were quarantined and not allowed to attend.

When the residential school in La Tuque was demolished in February 2006, my grandfather William was invited to attend. He wanted to go see his daughter's gravesite, but was told the gravesite was closed during the winter

season. Just two days ago, I learned that William never had a chance to visit her grave during his lifetime.

This act of bringing Juliette home is a step toward our healing, not only for my family but also for our nation. Many Indigenous children across Canada left home and never came back. Juliette's story is not the only one that ends the way hers did – never returning home after being sent to residential school. But we are bringing her home now, on September 30, 2024, 58 years after she was buried in La Tuque.

We are all affected by residential schools and their legacy. My mother went, even though her older sister passed away there. Imagine the fear in her father's heart when he had to let another daughter go. My mother Kathleen was four years old when she attended. I cannot imagine letting my four-year-old go somewhere to go to school and being taken care of by God knows who.

We are all affected, maybe not directly but we are still affected. The pain is there, the hurt is there. This is where we hear of this concept we call intergenerational trauma, which means that we feel the pain of our ancestors. We are also hurting because of the pain they went through. That pain and hurt lives on in our blood, in our lives. We can see it and we can feel it. We see the hurting families in our nation, the broken relationships, and broken childhoods.

Bringing Juliette home is a step toward breaking this trauma and bringing healing, allowing her family to grieve their loss, and the community as well. Bringing Juliette home is an act of restoring a nation and trying to right a wrong that has been done. It is not perfect, but it is an act. Sometimes when people say they are sorry, we question if they really mean it. This is one way that the government is showing that they are sorry; and for us, it's a step toward forgiveness.

May forgiveness be abundant in our nation. Forgiving our parents for not giving us the emotional support we needed growing up because they never received it since they were taken away from their parents. Forgiving our parents or siblings for not being able to communicate with us because they were never allowed to express themselves while at residential school. Forgiving them for being violent with us because it was all they knew when they were children.

May we heal as a nation. May we understand that the hurt is deep. It is not just on the surface. Bringing Juliette home is a symbol of reuniting the family. Bringing them back together after years of conflict and grief. Healing begins in our homes and in our community through connection and relationship.

What is it you carry from your ancestors? What do you carry in this generation to give out and share your skill, your knowledge, your wisdom? Don't give up! Take your place, be who you were meant to be. Do not allow michmindou to ruin who you are meant to be. Find your healing and restoration chemindou Aydad. Only He can restore you and heal your innermost hurts.

I want to acknowledge the children that were with Juliette at the time of her passing: Emily, Mary and Caroline. On behalf of Juliette and her family, we love you and appreciate all you did for her and how much you cared for her. You were children and it was not your responsibility to care for a child who was very sick. Do not carry any guilt or shame with you, you are loved, you did everything you could do at the age that you were, and we love you for what you did. Please be at peace and let your inner child heal. We do not blame you for anything and it was not your fault that Juliette passed away while she was with you at residential school.



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**We extend our congratulations to the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee on the 49th anniversary of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement**

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## ENGAGING OUR YOUTH

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




### STOP NOW AND PLAN™

FOR AGES 5-12

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FOR AGES 12-17

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AND NORTHERN  
QUEBEC  
AGREEMENT  
(JBNQA)

This agreement stems from a fight to protect everything that makes us Cree: from the land that carries us, to the way we care for our fellow community members.

As we reflect on the many achievements made possible by the JBNQA, we also want to highlight section 14 of the agreement, which established the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) and gave the mandate for us to provide all health and social services to the Cree communities. Since our founding in 1978, the CBHSSJB has grown into an entity that not only provides comprehensive health and social services tailored to the unique needs of the Cree Nation, but also serves as a model for Indigenous-led healthcare governance.

The journey toward full self-determination is ongoing, and the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay remains committed to ensuring that the principles of the agreement continue to guide us. In celebrating this anniversary, we honour the visionaries who fought for this agreement, and we reaffirm our duty to help our communities achieve Miyupimâtisîun.



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CONSEIL CRI DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX DE LA BAIE JAMES  
CREE BOARD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES OF JAMES BAY

# George L. Diamond

for Chairman - Cree Board of Health & Social Services of James Bay

**Our Vision: "Cree helping Cree, Cree caring for Cree, and Cree people healing Cree people."**

- **Prioritizing Health Education and Prevention**
  - empowering our community with knowledge and tools for better health
- **Honoring Our Heritage While Addressing Modern Challenges**
  - integrating Cree traditional medicines
  - tackling youth health issues, including suicide prevention
  - combating obesity through physical activity programs
  - expanding land-based initiatives
- **Creating a Safer Community**
  - addressing all forms of violence
  - ensuring equality for all
- **Empowering Local Public Health Units**
  - transforming them into community educators
- **Fostering Teamwork and Communication**
  - strengthening connections across all departments

Building on the legacy of our past Chiefs and Leaders, we'll fulfill the promise of Section 14 (Health and Social Services) of the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement.

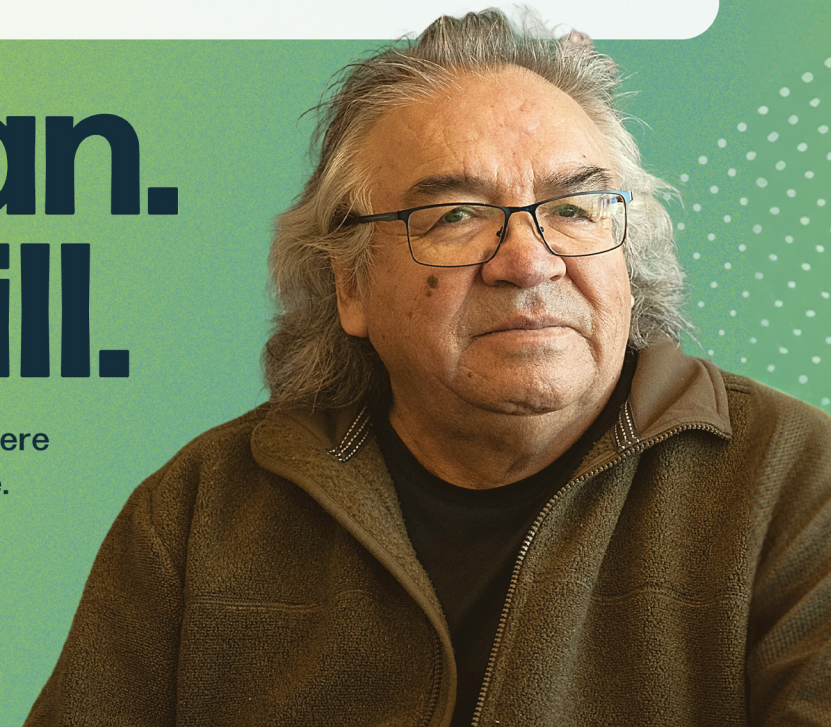
**Together, we will provide the best health services in Quebec.**

# We Can. We Will.

Join us in creating a community where we learn, live, play, and work as one.

Your vote for George L. Diamond is a vote for a healthier future.

 [GLDiamond2024@gmail.com](mailto:GLDiamond2024@gmail.com)



**H**ere's another edition of *the Nation's* puzzle page. Try your hand at Sudoku or Str8ts or our Crossword, or better yet, solve all three and send us a photo!\* As always, the answers from last issue are here for you to check your work. Happy hunting.

**PREVIOUS SOLUTION:**

M	A	C	A	W	F	E	M	A	A	G	E	S
A	T	O	N	E	I	T	E	M	B	E	L	T
N	O	M	D	E	P	L	U	M	E	D	E	L
E	M	M	A	L	E	D	E	R	H	O	S	E
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I	N	T	E	R	A	L	I	A	A	N	I	M
J	O	E	G	L	A	C	I	A	L	M	O	W
I	N	D	I	E	S	E	L	F	D	R	I	V
			D	A	S	H	R	I	O	T	E	R
I	N	T	E	N	T	A	C	A	C	I	A	
M	O	R	A	T	O	R	I	U	M	S	T	E
A	W	O	L	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	I	V
G	I	L	L	M	A	L	I	S	E	V	E	N
O	N	L	Y	S	L	E	D	T	R	E	N	D

**Crossword** by Margie E. Burke

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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62					63				64			
65					66				67			

- ACROSS
- 1 Perching places
  - 6 Tomb-raiding Croft
  - 10 "\_\_\_ that special?!"
  - 14 Parting word
  - 15 Versed in
  - 16 Have words (with)
  - 17 Diverse populace
  - 19 Volcano flow
  - 20 Good buddy
  - 21 Forum wear
  - 22 Far from fearless
  - 24 'Maggie May' singer Rod
  - 27 Common sprain site
  - 28 Cast a ballot
  - 30 Actor Depardieu
  - 32 Vitamin additive
  - 33 Mammal's coat
  - 34 Most "Esquire" readers
  - 37 Adam of "Hustle"
  - 39 Nazi police
  - 41 Ginger \_\_\_
  - 42 Goes away
  - 44 Battery fluid
  - 45 Did the tango
  - 46 Common sci-fi setting
  - 47 Pressing need?
  - 50 Made booties, maybe
  - 52 Plaid fabric
  - 54 Drop from the eye
  - 55 Goings-on
  - 58 Assist in wrongdoing
- DOWN
- 1 Tiffany product
  - 2 Creative spark
  - 3 Heavy burden
  - 4 Poker play
  - 5 Fit
  - 6 Samsonite stand
  - 7 Shirts and skirts
  - 8 Pooh pal
  - 9 Picnic crashers
  - 10 Cuba or Aruba
  - 11 Kindle
  - 12 Orange variety
  - 13 Kind of show
  - 18 Right this minute
  - 23 Worries
  - 25 Keep an eye on
  - 26 Lady Macbeth portrayer, e.g.
  - 28 Traveler's need, maybe
  - 29 Rev. Roberts
  - 31 Forever and a day
  - 33 Part of a hammerhead
  - 34 Nut from Australia
  - 35 Sweeping
  - 36 Focal point
  - 38 Camel's kin
  - 40 VCR insert
  - 43 Opposite of dorsal
  - 45 Made sudden moves
  - 46 Yo-yo need
  - 47 TV spy Maxwell
  - 48 Social no-no
  - 49 Plant malady
  - 51 Road-paving stuff
  - 53 Drive off
  - 56 It may be raw
  - 57 Bettor's concern
  - 60 Texter's "Holy moly!"
  - 61 \_\_\_ Zedong

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The inconveniences of **convenience**

by Sonny Orr

I've noticed that everyone seems to be in a good mood with high spirits at work lately. Was it because a snowflake showed its crystalline face for the first time this fall, or have we slipped into winter already? Was it perhaps the notion of turning on a furnace for the first time just to feel some warm air blowing around the house? Was it perhaps because the sun and the moon were just spectacular? Whatever the reason, it just felt good.

Then the power shut off and we all groaned: Why? Why? Why? The last bit of information I had just entered into my computer, lost. The email that I thought I had sent, lost in a server somewhere. The printed volumes of spreadsheets, lost. The communication network, lost. All the warmth from the heaters and furnaces, lost.

We stepped outside onto the now frozen grounds and wondered if this was a community wide problem, before noticing that some buildings had their emergency backup lights on. Just then, the skies pelted us with ice, which bounced off my Gore-Tex-covered jacket. Finally, after several attempts by the power rangers guys, the electricity came back on. Aaahhh, light and power just in time for supper. I finally finished that slow-cooked piece of meat and boiled some potatoes, before heading to bed. At least under the sheets everything was warm and cozy.

The following morning, a certain nip-piness in the air made the children bundle up in warm clothes just to arrive at school in time for another blackout. At work my colleagues wondered whether to pack up and head home to rustle up something cold to eat for lunch. But lo and behold, the power came back on just before lunch!

A miracle or just another planned outage scheduled to fit the needs of the masses? Who knows? This incident slipped away from our memories as just another way life gets messed up. For the newcomers in the community, it's something to write home about as email is replaced by snail mail. I was actually printing stuff and delivering it in person for a few hours, which allowed me to burn off a few calories in the process.

In fact, this column was lost in the hubris and confusion as everything was resetting and everything that wasn't saved was lost. Thank God for inventing the human brain as it still works the way it's supposed to, just not as efficiently and quickly as the supercomputer on my desk. Thinking about it today, I should just use laptops as they have batteries which only die from neglect.

So as real life unfolds in its natural way, I see glimpses of family coming out from the veil of the internet and the children resorting to pencils and crayons on actual paper. My grandson, after realizing

that the VR doesn't work, discovers that there are other boys in the neighbourhood dealing with the same dilemma. I told him that the real world exists without electricity and that the real world was the one I played in when I was a child. Amazed, he listened to my stories of what we did to keep ourselves occupied. Wow, he exclaims, the 20th century was pretty cool.

I told him that we walked to school or anywhere else for that matter. How did you survive without a four-wheeler? I said back in the day, we used dog teams to get around and paddled canoes and used snowshoes. Wow, it was like I was talking about how the great pyramids were built and he wondered how we were able to use so much energy to get simple things done.

I think back too, about how the changes we are going through in society are affecting us and how convenience affects our ability to get things done without it. So much so that we are helpless without electricity or running water or anything modern.

Maybe, we are just like the rest of society now, tied to convenience and immediacy and other nasty habits that made our lives easier. I guess it's time for some tough life to put everything back in perspective. Oh, and the power is now back on. Yay!

**STR8TS** No. 729 Medium Previous solution - Tough

												3
1		5										4
5		6										
				4				2				
												7
8	4	7		1								6
4					9							
			5	4								
												8

4	1	3	2	6	7			
3	1	2	4	9	6	7	8	
4	3			8	7	6	5	
9	2	4	1	3		5	6	
6	8	3	2	7	5	1	9	4
7	6	8		5	4	2	3	
8	9	7	6	2	5	4	3	
	5	7	6	4	3	1	2	
	7	6	1	3	4	2		

How to beat Str8ts - Like Sudoku, no single number can repeat in any row or column. But... rows and columns are divided by black squares into compartments. These need to be filled in with numbers that complete a 'straight'. A straight is a set of numbers with no gaps but can be in any order, eg [4,2,3,5]. Clues in black cells remove that number as an option in that row and column, and are not part of any straight. Glance at the solution to see how 'straights' are formed.

**SUDOKU** No. 729 Medium Previous solution - Easy

		4	2	3				9			
		6		8		2		3	5		
					7			2			
									5	1	
		5						6			
3	7										
		1		8							
8	5		1	6		9					
		9		3	1	6					

6	3	5	4	8	7	2	9	1
7	2	8	3	9	1	6	4	5
4	1	9	2	6	5	8	7	3
1	7	4	8	5	3	9	6	2
3	5	2	6	7	9	4	1	8
9	8	6	1	2	4	3	5	7
5	4	7	9	3	2	1	8	6
8	9	3	5	1	6	7	2	4
2	6	1	7	4	8	5	3	9

To complete Sudoku, fill the board by entering numbers 1 to 9 such that each row, column and 3x3 box contains every number uniquely. For many strategies, hints and tips, visit [www.sudokuwiki.org](http://www.sudokuwiki.org). If you like Str8ts check out our books, iPhone/iPad Apps and much more on our store.



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*Under the Northern Sky*

## Halloween is very scary this year

by Xavier Kataquapit



**M**y family and my home community of Attawapiskat takes great joy in celebrating Halloween. The traditions of scary stories, spirits, otherworldly beings and monsters work well with the legends that our parents and Elders taught us. The whole idea of Halloween celebrations being just a holiday for children and to have fun was also something that my parents and many of our Elders thoroughly enjoyed.

Halloween on the James Bay coast has only been around for a few generations, however. When I was a boy in the 1980s, most were still unfamiliar with what it meant or why it was even around. No one understood if it was religious, anti-religious, good or bad. All anyone realized was that children got to dress up, have a bit of fun and go to door to door to collect candy at people's homes at night.

Back then, there didn't seem to be an age restriction, either. It wasn't just small children that went door to door. Everyone seemed to join in, including teenagers of all ages and many adults. Most of the older people who went out didn't do it for the candy, they just wanted to dress up in disguises and costumes to surprise a grandparent, their relatives or an Elder in town.

My parents always enjoyed serving candy because they wanted to guess who was behind the mask of the person at their door. Often, an oversized giant would appear, refusing any candy and simply stand looming over people in a frightful way. Then, without going too far, one of our cousins would jump out of the costume and mom and dad would have a good laugh.

Halloween was important for us for many reasons and most of it had to do with being able to just forget for a brief time all the chaos, challenges and difficulties we lived as a result of colonization, residential school, racism and oppression in general. We got to disguise ourselves

and become someone or something else for a day.

In the 1980s, the community often hosted an unorganized Halloween dance but after a few years it evolved into a Halloween party and costume competition. In the 1990s, it became a major event for the community as it allowed everyone to join in for a bit of fun and games while dressing up to surprise and scare friends and relatives.

I was never that great at designing or creating a costume. I remember a few attempts that failed when I arrived at the dance, as everyone knew immediately who I was.

There were others in the community who were masters of disguise. My cousins from Uncle Leo Kataquapit's family were famous for making elaborate costumes that seemed to grow in size every year. Others constructed huge monsters or strange creatures that didn't seem to follow any theme. Half the time these huge monsters were known for intimidating everyone.

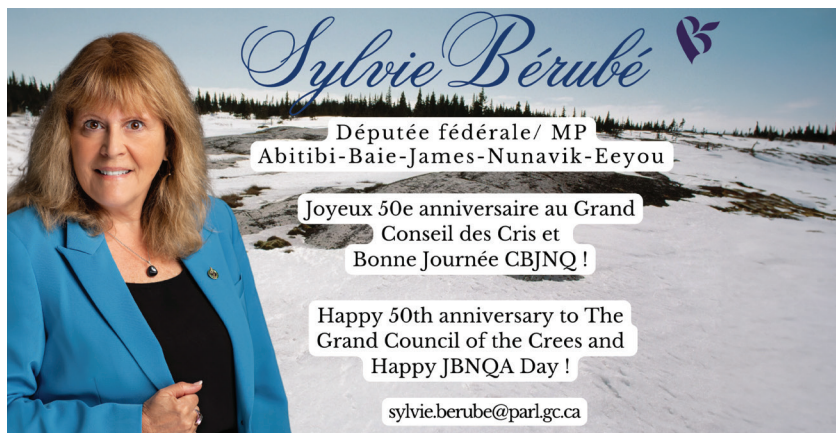
This Halloween is a genuinely scary one for our world. The pretend monsters, ghosts, witches and demons pale to the critical events happening in our world right now. Thousands of people are being killed and wounded with cities being destroyed in two wars raining in Ukraine

and the Middle East. Both these conflicts have the potential of escalating towards a wider conflict or even a nuclear exchange which would be devastating to everyone on the planet.

Another scary reality is the ongoing opioid epidemic. The fentanyl crisis is hitting our Indigenous communities in a big way. We are losing many people due to this tragic drug problem. Likewise, none of our make-believe Halloween monsters are as scary as the reality of global warming that is resulting in heat waves, destructive storms or droughts that are making life difficult for people all over Mother Earth.

As children make their way door to door and attend Halloween events, I am happy that they can have a lot of fun and forget about the difficulties they might face. I hope the adults also join in and celebrate this day.

I plan on giving out as much candy as I can and hope that we don't end up with a lot of leftover chocolate, chips and other munchies – that really does scare us. I will be dressing up and playing some spooky music and enjoying the excitement of colour and fantastic costumes running down my street. I will try not to think of the really scary things right now.





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**Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)**

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## Message on the 49th anniversary of the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed November 11, 1975. The year leading up to the historic signing consisted of some of the toughest negotiating in Cree history by some of our most revered leaders.

The signing of the Agreement-in-Principle on November 16, 1974, a year before the final signing of the JBNQA, effectively ended the dispute over the James Bay hydro-electric mega project which threatened our land and our traditional way of life. Defying all odds, an Indigenous group had successfully negotiated the recognition of Aboriginal rights leading to the first modern-day treaty in Canada. These negotiations were nothing short of historic, reshaping the future of our Nation and marking a turning point in the relationship between the Cree Nation and the governments of Canada and Quebec.

Demonstrating that we were not mere bystanders but rightful stewards and protectors of Eeyou Istchee, our leaders, with great vision and determination, worked tirelessly to ensure that our voices were heard and that our rights were recognized.

Marking this important milestone, we look back with pride on the strength and resilience of our past leaders, and we celebrate the enduring legacy of their efforts. This is a time for us to remember the path that brought us here and to honour their vision, fighting for our rightful place at the table and creating the partnerships and alliances we benefit from today.

Throughout the upcoming year, leading up to the 50th Anniversary of the JBNQA on November 11, 2025, the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government invites everyone across Eeyou Istchee and beyond to join us in commemorating these important dates in our history, celebrating our resilience as a strong Indigenous Nation.

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**Mandy Gull-Masty**  
 Grand Chief/Chairperson

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**Norman A. Wapachee**  
 Deputy Grand Chief/Vice-Chairperson



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