



FINAL WORDS

ΕΥΕΕΣΗΠΑΚΟΧΗ ΑΠΟΧΗ



THE PRESENT DAY

The Eeyouch are still motivated by the life in the bush. Many Cree people work in day jobs only to pay for the equipment they need to go hunting and fishing every opportunity that comes along. The traditional values still motivate the majority of the population. However, our people now also have interests and follow career paths that were not even dreamed of only a few years ago.

Today, approximately one-third of Eeyou families depend on the bush as their primary source of income. Life is not easy for these people, whose average annual income in 1999 was approximately \$12,000 (plus the value of the food they harvested). Most of this income is derived from the Income Security Program negotiated as part of the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. The rationale for the program is not unlike that given for programs offered to French farmers in France, to keep alive traditions important to the spirit of the nation.

In some ways, Eeyou society has a safety net of social programs that serves to help the ones with problems but also demotivates those who have not yet decided on their futures. As a result, there is a high rate of high school drop out, although there are also a large number who return to school after some years of indecision or perhaps of apprenticeship in living in the bush.

In the early 1970s, there were very few who went on to college or university. Today there are over 400 each year who are taking university and college programs. There are now Eeyou lawyers, accountants, geologists, pilots, economic development specialists, teachers, heavy equipment drivers, carpenters, secretaries, health workers, and more.

While the Eeyouch have taken control of their own communities and have continued to live in the bush, they have yet to reap long-term benefits from the development of Eeyou Istchee. Fewer than one percent of those employed in James Bay development

initiatives are Eeyouch. The 1975 Agreement promised a regime that would include the Eeyouch as participants in the benefits of development. Finally, that promise is close to being realized through the New Agreement with the Province of Quebec. For 28 years the Cree Nation fought to breathe life and spirit into an agreement that has become the subject of many legal challenges. In 2002, the Crees will be able to put that adversity behind them, and redirect their attention, their energy, and their imaginations to a common effort—to plan for a future that includes their involvement in the development of all their territorial lands.

The future of the Crees is in the wind. It is up to the Crees, Quebecers, and all other Canadians to ensure that the Eeyouch can catch the wind in their sails and take their boat into the seas of the new millennium.





PHOTO CREDITS

Special thanks to Fred Cattroll for the many photos he took during the summer of 2000 and for access to his extensive photo library.

The following images appear with permission. Below are the official captions provided with the images.

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- Page 8: The Indian women in the photograph were wearing beaded hoods the back of which very nearly touched the ground when they were standing. Fort Albany, James Bay (1865), National Archives of Canada, PA-68286.
- Page 9: Two Cree Indian women wearing apparel typical of their tribe. Chisasibi (Fort George), P.Q. (January 1946), National Archives of Canada, PA-161448; Photographer: Bud Glunz
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