

THE JAMES BAY CREES AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY



Commission
de la construction
du Québec



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INTRODUCTION

“I also got my CCQ card. With that card, there were more job opportunities, higher wages and better benefits... I still know what it’s like to wait for work [...] I know that in the communities, there’s still an emphasis on hiring people who charge less. And I believe that Cree construction companies can, and should, do more to make it easier for Cree workers to find employment.”

— **Keith Bearskin,**
Cree from Chisasibi and journeyman operator¹

Ensuring a high-quality labour force with a sufficient number of workers: this is one of the main responsibilities entrusted to the organization charged with providing the construction industry with a labour force corresponding to its needs: the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ).

The CCQ meets this challenge by working together with its employer and union partners, as well as the government of Québec, on the basis of competency as the key to accessing Québec’s construction sites. Competency is acquired through training in a vocational training centre where training programs for the construction trades are offered; on-site apprenticeships; and the upgrading of activities throughout the job-active years.

The Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ), cornerstone of this economic sector and designated site of cooperation for the industry, plays a decisive role in enabling the construction industry to face demographic, social, and economic issues in a market of constant movement, providing conditions that favour its competitiveness.

Mission of the Commission de la construction du Québec

In a context of cooperation with the employer and union associations of the construction industry covered by the *Act Respecting Labour Relations, Vocational Training and Manpower Management in the Construction Industry* (commonly called Act R-20) and with the government of Québec:

- To ensure respect for the sectorial collective agreements for the labour force in the construction industry, subjected to the Act and the related regulations
- To fight against undeclared work in order to encourage fair competition among the industry’s contractors
- To develop workers’ skills and maintain them at a high level
- To facilitate a match between worker supply and demand
- To administer the negotiated social benefits plans and ensure their development
- to administer the trust funds in such a way as to ensure the continuity of the programs that they support

¹ Grand Council of the Crees Eeyou Istchee, *Eeyou Eenou Nation The Voice of the People*, summer 2006, p. 30.

The (CCQ) is responsible for administering the *Act Respecting Labour Relations, Vocational Training, and Manpower Management in the Construction Industry* (Act R-20) and must ascertain the application of governmental agreements and measures taken with regard to the integration of the labour force into the construction industry.

Since the *Paix des Braves* was ratified and came into force, the CCQ has participated in a number of meetings, projects, and studies. It has also supported the integration of Cree workers and implemented guidance measures in order to maximize the chances for Cree workers to become qualified.

While responding to the short-term need for labour on the Eastmain-1 hydroelectric site, the CCQ has favoured integration of Crees into the construction industry's apprenticeship system. Finally, specific assistance has been

offered to support the creation of Cree and non-Aboriginal enterprises and to offer customized and adapted assistance to these enterprises with regard to the steps to be taken and obligations to fulfil in compliance with Québec regulations.

The present document was produced in order to give a general picture of the situation of the Crees, and to describe the measures and resources made available to them for integration into the Quebec construction industry. Therefore, below is a short description of some of the agreements between the Crees and the government of Québec and Hydro-Québec and details about the mandates given to the CCQ in this context. A description of the Cree labour force and contractors follows. Finally, an assessment is made of the actions that the CCQ has taken since the signature of the *Paix des Braves* to ensure implementation of these agreements.

1.

THE SPIRIT OF THE PAIX DES BRAVES

The James Bay territory was transformed by the first modern Canadian treaty concluded with the Cree First Nation and the Inuit people in 1975: the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* (JBNQA). This agreement remains the frame of reference for interventions by the federal and Québec governments affecting these nations.

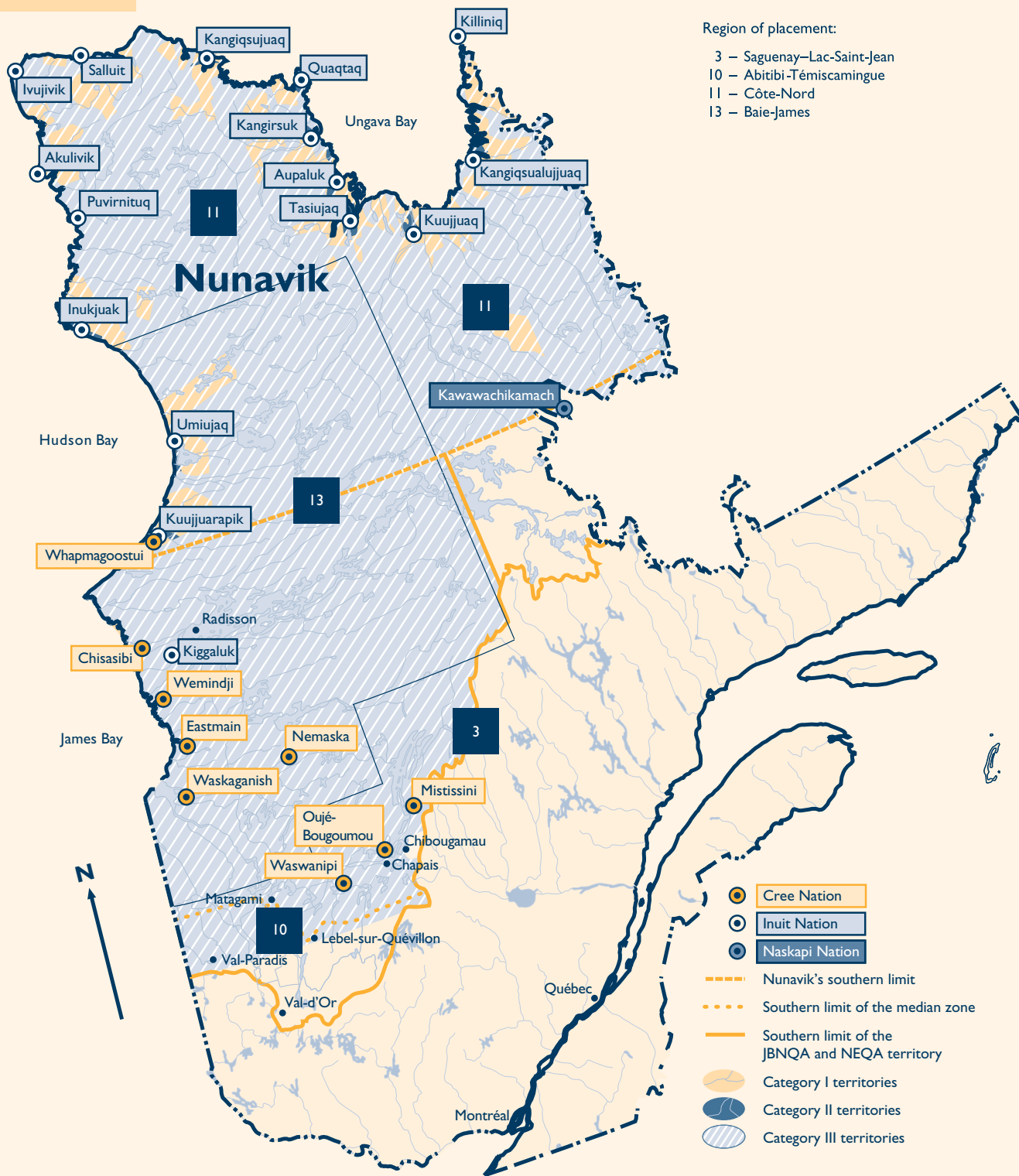
Under the JBNQA, category I lands are reserved for the exclusive use of the Cree or Inuit communities. Other lands, those in category II, constitute exclusive hunting territories that might eventually be developed for other purposes. The rest – that is, most of the territory – is considered public land, in category III (see figure 1).

The commitments of the Québec and Canadian governments primarily involve a series of services to support economic development and environmental protection. They also include a single lump-sum financial compensation of \$135 million. In addition, Hydro-Québec has made commitments regarding the parameters of construction and management of its hydroelectric projects and regarding the giving of priority to Crees for contracts and jobs. In exchange, the Crees have consented to the execution of the James Bay project.

This treaty is considered to have had a direct impact on the recognition of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and Québec and on the socio-economic development of Crees. Its implementation requires the cooperation of all parties concerned.

The signature in 2002 of the *Agreement Concerning a New Relationship between the Gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec* (“*Paix des Braves*”) established a new nation-to-nation relationship. The *Paix des Braves* ended a long conflict-resolution process between the James Bay Crees and the government of Québec and proposed an innovative mechanism for implementing the latter’s obligations contained in the JBNQA on community and economic development. One of the main themes of the agreement involves economic development.

Figure 1





1.1. The *Paix des Braves* and the CCQ

The CCQ is called upon in the *Paix des Braves* (section 4.5, section “Hydroelectricity, remedial works, employment and contracts”):

Québec will adopt administrative measures, notably in collaboration with the Commission de la Construction du Québec, in order to facilitate the access by Cree workers to employment opportunities resulting from hydroelectric development in the Territory.

In addition, the CCQ was cited as an example of an organization participating in the implementation of the agreement. There is no specific provision that sets out the exact role of the CCQ. One must refer to the *Convention concernant l’administration des ententes entre les Cris et Hydro-Québec et concernant la Société Niskamoon*, which includes the *Nadoshtin Agreement* (Eastmain-1 power plant), and the *Boumhounan Agreement* (Eastmain-1-A power plant) to grasp the scope of the CCQ’s contribution.

In the spirit of the *Paix des Braves*, the government of Québec has created a means of responding to its obligations resulting from the JBNQA. The government therefore retains an approach of negotiation rather than litigious relations with the Aboriginals.

1.2. The *Niskamoon Agreement* and the CCQ

The *Niskamoon Agreement*, signed on August 31, 2004, merged a series of agreements and accords, such as the *Nadoshtin Agreement* and the *Boumhounan Agreement*. Its goals were to simplify the mechanisms for managing the different agreements, facilitate their implementation, and ensure their coherence through a single entity, the Niskamoon Corporation.

The *Niskamoon Agreement* is an agreement that was signed with Hydro-Québec. Made aware of its measures only a few months before, the CCQ had the challenge of implementing the agreement within a tight deadline and before construction work began on the Eastmain-1 hydroelectric power plant, as well as undertaking the necessary steps: identifying Cree workers and employers, organizing measures favouring the Crees, coordinating activities, and assisting with the planning for Crees’ vocational training needs. Unfortunately, this created a negative perception of the CCQ among the Crees.

Although the CCQ is cited in the *Nadoshtin* and *Boumhounan agreements*, it is neither a signatory to nor an authorized agent of either agreement. In compliance with the orientations set by its board of directors, the CCQ sets up measures aiming to facilitate Crees’ access to and integration into not only the Eastmain-1 hydroelectric power plant site, but also to projects throughout the James Bay territory. These measures have been discussed with Cree authorities and are presented in section 3 of this report.

1.3. The *Nadoshtin Agreement* and the CCQ

The *Nadoshtin Agreement* supplemented the JBNQA, which foresaw, when it was signed in 1975, the implementation of preferential mechanisms for the Crees at the La Grande complex. Signed by the tribal council (Grand Council of the Crees), Cree band councils, Hydro-Québec, and the James Bay Energy Corporation (JBEC), the *Nadoshtin Agreement* granted Hydro-Québec the right to build and operate the Eastmain-1 project.

The *Nadoshtin Agreement* provided for the Crees' rights to be taken into account when the Eastmain-1 power plant construction project was built. It aims to encourage good relations and a common desire to pursue development of the Nord-du-Québec region while favouring the advancement of the Cree Nation. It prescribes measures that integrate and give priority to Cree workers and enterprises according to the provisions of section 2.1 of the agreement and section 4.10 of the *Paix des Braves*.

The construction industry is the subject of chapter 13 of the *Nadoshtin Agreement*, "Contracts, hiring, and training." First, the agreement provides a particular structure for awarding contracts and a preferential mechanism for Crees and Cree enterprises, forecasted in the agreement at a value of more than \$300 million. As of July 2005, 61 contracts had been awarded to Cree enterprises, including six using the

bidding process, for a total in contracts of \$353 million.² Of these contracts, more than 60% involved construction activities (buildings, road maintenance, general, lines, machinery, materials, and roads³).

In the chapter "Contracts, hiring, and training," the *Nadoshtin Agreement* targets the CCQ as follows:

13.1.3 Facilitation of Cree Employment

In order to facilitate the employment of Crees with respect to the Project, Hydro-Québec shall encourage the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ) to:

- a) provide the Crees with a contact person of the CCQ, who should among other activities assist Crees generally in the certification process and further review the employment history of individual Crees to recognize pertinent past employment in order to be certified;
- b) open the labour pool restrictions in the JBNQA territory for Native and Non-Native peoples provided however, that such restrictions should be lifted on a priority basis for the Cree. If the opening of the labour pool fails to meet Cree certification requirements then the CCQ should provide temporary cards to the Crees with apprentice logbooks to record pertinent hours which they must be allowed to transfer to other projects; and
- c) provide the Crees with all relevant materials, in English, to allow them to study for the various CCQ exams.

² Hydro-Québec, "Centrale de l'Eastmain-1-A et dérivation Rupert – Complément de l'étude d'impact sur l'environnement. Réponses aux demandes de renseignements additionnels de l'administrateur provincial de la CBJNQ et de la Commission fédérale d'examen," December 2005, Vol. 4, p. 88.

³ Ibid, p. 109.



Finally, chapter 13.6 of the *Nadoshtin Agreement* also contains measures favouring training of the Crees. This chapter sets out financial assistance for academic training (13.6.1) and on-the-job training (13.6.2) through a \$1.5 million training fund provided in the agreement's chapter 12.

13.6.1 Formal Training

Formal training shall apply to employment with Hydro-Québec, to employment on contracts during the construction of the Project and to studies in connection with the Project.

Upon receipt of a comprehensive recommendation from the concerned Cree Parties, Nadoshtin Companeé will accordingly select Cree candidates and approve the type of training recommended by an educational or officially recognized manpower training organization ...

Preference shall be given to those candidates who already possess some basic knowledge and skills in the trade to be trained for, and who appear to only require upgrading.

13.6.2 On-the-Job Training

Any contractor, including a Cree enterprise, awarded a contract during the construction phase of the Project, will be offered by Hydro-Québec upon the recommendation of Nadoshtin Companeé, incentives for the training of Crees in the form of a partial reimbursement of their wages ... for every hour of effective training received while being employed by such contractor ...

The CCQ is directly concerned with the application of these provisions and plays a role in the coordination of construction training activities provided by vocational training centres.

1.4. The *Boumhounan Agreement*

The major difference between the *Boumhounan Agreement* and the *Nadoshtin Agreement* is that the former concerns the creation of an implementation process and separate participation by Crees in the environmental study that must lead to execution of the project on the Eastmain-1A hydroelectric site – diversion of the Rupert River. But, like the *Nadoshtin Agreement*, the *Boumhounan Agreement* contains the same provisions (clause 13.1.3) as the *Nadoshtin Agreement* with regard to economic development of the Cree Nation.

2.

THE PRESENCE OF THE CREES IN CONSTRUCTION

The Crees are present in the construction sector mainly as workers. There is a new trend toward the creation of Cree enterprises, although as yet there are not many of them.

In this section is a description of the situation of the Cree First nation, the construction projects planned in the James Bay territory, and information regarding the period of integration and contact between Cree workers and contractors and the employer and union partners in the construction industry.

It must be noted that the reference year for the data presented is 2005, since this was the most active period with regard to construction in the James Bay territory due to development of the Eastmain-1 hydroelectric site.

2.1. General Portrait of the Crees

Québec includes 11 Aboriginal nations: 10 First Nations and one Inuit Nation, distributed over 54 communities. The Cree Nation, one of the 10 First Nations, has nine Cree communities. All of the Cree communities are within the JBNQA territory. However, only six Cree communities are located within the borders of the James Bay placement region as

circumscribed in the CCQ Regulations; the Saguaenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region has two (Waswanipi and Oujé-Bougoumou), and one (Mistissini; see figure 1) is in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region.

The Crees are represented politically by the Grand Council of the Crees Eeyou Istchee (GCCEI) and are managed by the Cree Regional Authority (CRA). These entities have acquired extraordinary experience since the signature of the JBNQA and have strengthened the links among the local Cree communities.

The GCCEI represents all Cree communities in the James Bay territory as defined by the JBNQA. The Grand Chief is assisted by a Vice-Grand Chief, an executive secretary, an executive assistant, and two administrative assistants. The GCCEI/CRA is the authorized agent for relations and negotiations with the federal and Québec governments and representations on the international level, especially at the United Nations, for protection and promotion of the autonomy of the Cree Nation. Under its responsibility are various departments: traditional pursuits, community services, youth, services to families and children, finance administration, and Cree human resources.



Also under the aegis of the *Indian Act*, the administration of communities is assumed by band councils. The significance and practice of the Cree local administration have evolved and been redefined in recent years. The Crees currently use their local administrations to meet their needs and exert their jurisdiction in the following areas:⁴

1. **Housing**
2. **Public works**
3. Membership
4. Elections and referenda
5. **Economic development and enterprises**
6. Traditional (hunting, fishing, and trapping) pursuits
7. Land administration and local land registry
8. Cultural development
9. Eeyou language development
10. Social development
11. Policing
12. Management and disbursement of Eeyou funds arising from Agreements
13. Resolution of disputes
14. Administration of band funds
15. Eeyou traditional law, values, and customs
16. Administration of justice
17. **Education**
18. Health and social services
19. Preservation and maintenance of culture
20. General welfare of members
21. Youth development
22. **Human resources development**
23. **Training and employment**

24. Remedial works (measures to remedy impacts of industrial development)
25. Intergovernmental affairs and relations
26. Provision and administration of programs and services
27. Community development
28. Environmental protection
29. Treaty-making
30. Protection of Eeyou rights and interests
31. Political representation
32. **Corporate affairs and relations**
33. Nation-to-Nation relations

2.2. Nation-to-Nation relations

Aside from its incontestable social importance, the Cree population, like the populations of other First Nations, has been growing quickly for the last 30 years, almost tripling (+189%).⁵ Because of this, the Cree Nation seems to be immune to the population decreases observed among non-Natives in this region and other regions in Québec. For example, the non-Native population in the James Bay region has declined by almost 11% since 1986.⁶ More than 52% of residents of the communities are under 25 years of age.

The James Bay placement region, as designated by the CCQ, targets a majority Cree population (86%) that includes six of the nine Cree communities. This region also includes two northern Inuit villages (10%). The other 12 Inuit villages are situated farther north, in the Nunavik territory; non-Natives, most of whom live in

⁴ Cree-Naskapi Commission, *2004 Report*, p. 20.

⁵ Hydro-Québec, “Centrale de l’Eastmain-1-A,” p. 37.

⁶ Conseil régional de développement de la Baie-James, 2001, “Plan stratégique de développement 2002-2007,” p. 22.

Radisson, represent 4% of the total of 9,520 residents in the James Bay region.⁷ Although the Crees are beneficiaries of the JBNQA, it must be noted that not all Cree beneficiaries live in a Cree community; about 7.3% live outside of a Cree community (for example, Chibougamau and Val-d'Or), fewer than 3% of whom live outside the JBNQA territory.⁸

Although the nine Cree communities are signatories to the *Paix des Braves* and the *Nadoshtin Agreement*, the three Cree communities located outside of the James Bay placement region do not benefit from the same measures as do the six James Bay communities. This difference arises from the fact that for the six James Bay communities, the work region is the same as the region of residence and, de facto, the competency certificates issued by the CCQ in order to work on construction sites are also valid for the work done in the Aboriginal communities. However, because a limited number of competency certificates are issued in the James Bay region, workers from the three Cree communities in the Saguenay–Lac-St-Jean and Abitibi–Témiscamingue regions do not have access to the construction sites located in their placement region, or even in their own communities.

This distinction does not, however, impede participation by the communities outside of James Bay at the Eastmain-1 site. Of the 219 Cree workers employed in 2005, 110, or a little more than 50% of all Cree workers, came from the three southern communities.

Looking at the participation rate⁹ of different Cree communities in the construction industry, Mistissini is ranked highest. The exceptional participation of Mistissini workers is explained in part by the presence within the community of the head office of the Cree Construction and Development Company, the main Aboriginal employer. Among the four Cree communities with the lowest participation rate in the construction industry, only one is in the south: Oujé-Bougoumou.

In recent years, the Cree communities have had to face numerous challenges. Those related to population increase have created important employment and infrastructure needs. In coming years, major investments will be made to build housing, schools, childcare centres, residential centres for the elderly, community centres, drinking-water and water-treatment systems, streets, and to expand existing structures, pave streets, and so on.

Thanks to the *Paix des Braves*, the Crees have the necessary financial resources available. This situation will also enable qualified resources in the communities to benefit from jobs related to the construction sector. However, the lack of qualification and relevant work experience among young people may limit their access to construction sites.

⁷ Règlement de placement (CCQ), 2001 Census, and Conseil régional de développement de la Baie-James.

⁸ Registry of Cree beneficiaries of the JBNQA, 2003, taken from Hydro-Québec, "Centrale de l'Eastmain 1-A," p. 39.

⁹ "Participation rate" is defined as the ratio between Cree labour-force participants and the total population of labour-force participants.



2.3. A notable increase in the Cree labour force

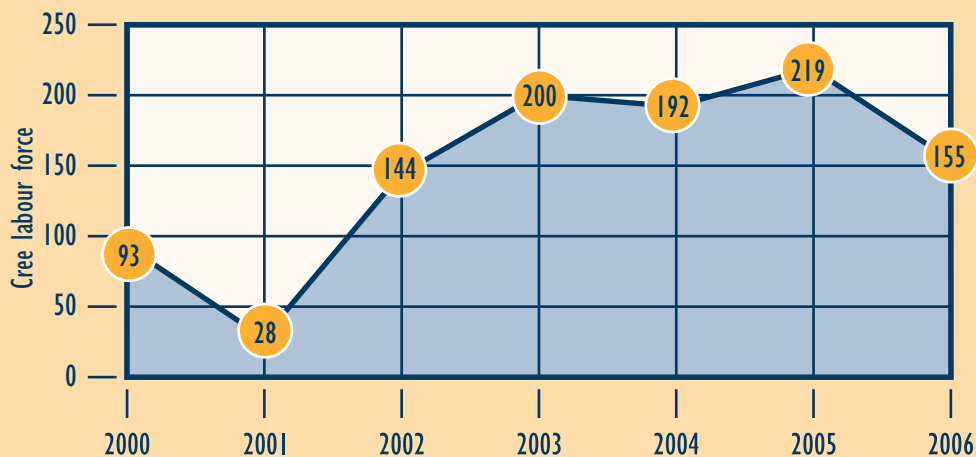
This section deals solely with the Cree First Nation. For our purposes, a Cree person is defined as a worker who has been identified as a Cree beneficiary of the JBNQA in the CCQ's Aboriginals databank. In some cases, the data is compared to those of the labour force participants in Québec as a whole.

In 2005, there were 219 Cree labour-force participants, 193 of whom held a competency or exemption certificate. For workers without a competency certificate, the situation remains to be normalized.

According to JBEC data, Eastmain-1 generated an average of 1,660 jobs per month (construction and other) between April 2002 and June 2005, (13%) of which 217 were filled by Crees, or 2.6% of the working-age Cree population of James Bay.¹⁰ Hydro-Québec estimates that, on average, 269 jobs per month will be filled by Crees on the Eastmain-1A site.

To respond to the expectations expressed in the agreements, Hydro-Québec is counting mainly on the return to the site of the Eastmain-1 workers. In effect, the Crown corporation conducted a survey among the 401 Crees who had worked on Eastmain-1 and concluded that 350 of them would be available to work on the Eastmain-1A site.

Figure 2
**Number of Cree participants in the
construction industry labour force, 2000–06**



Source: CCQ (July 2006 and May 2007)

¹⁰ Hydro-Québec, "Centrale de l'Eastmain 1-A," p. 82.

According to the CCQ's data, civil engineering and roadwork is the main sector in which Crees participate, with 72% of hours worked in 2005. In that year, Cree labour-force participants declared 187,960 hours worked in the construction industry; thus, 0.16% of the total labour force in the province of Québec performed 0.15% of the total hours worked. In the James Bay work region, Cree workers represent 6.8% of the labour force and 6.8% of hours worked. Since 2003, the activity has been more intense for the Cree labour force thanks to the beginning of work on the construction site for the Eastmain-1 hydroelectric power plant (see table 1).

In 2005, the average annual salary of Crees was almost \$26,000, compared to \$27,600 for the total labour force in the industry. The average of 858 hours worked by Crees was also equivalent to the average total of 946 hours for the labour force as a whole. In the James Bay work region, the average annual salary is \$33,600, and the average hours worked in 2005 was 855. It should be noted that the data is only for hours worked and income earned for work under Act R-20, such as those at the Eastmain-1 site.

A study commissioned by the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy Program (Services Canada) shows that in a single vocational category, Aboriginals generally earn less than those of non-Aboriginals.¹¹ This observation is no less true for the

construction industry in Québec, since working conditions are determined by application of the sector's collective agreements.

The fact that most sites in the James Bay territory fall within the civil engineering and roadwork sector and that the presence of Crees is recent, presents certain specificities with regard to vocational status. Here are some indicators of Cree integration into the construction industry in 2005:

Table 1
Number of Hours Worked

	Number of Cree workers	Average hours worked	Total hours worked
2000	93	632	58,760
2001	28	250	6,987
2002	144	531	76,439
2003	200	989	197,703
2004	192	785	150,629
2005	219	858	187,960
2006	155	790	122,472

Source: CCQ (July 2006 and May 2007)

¹¹ Service Canada, Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy, *Occupational and Skill Parity of Aboriginal Canadians*, study conducted by Costa Kapsalis, Data Probe Economic Consulting, http://srv119.services.gc.ca/AHRDSInternet/general/public/WhatsNew/WhatsNew14_e.asp



- The **occupations** account for the status¹² of 42% of Crees, compared to 46% for the labour force as a whole in the civil engineering and roadwork sector, and to 17% for the total labour force.
- Only 9% of Crees have the status of **journeyman**, while this proportion is 47% for the total labour force.
- The proportion of Crees who are **apprentices** is 49%, which is higher than the proportion of 36% for the total labour force.
- The trades of **carpenter-joiner** and **heavy equipment operator** are the most popular among Crees.
- Crees are present in only 8 of the 26 **trades** of the Québec construction industry. Many trades are not found in the civil engineering and roadwork sector.
- The most popular occupations are **labourer** and **truck driver**.

Compared to the 2000 data, there has been an increase in the number of holders of competency certificates, both for apprentices and for occupations. In fact, in 2000, no Cree held a competency certificate-apprentice and 60% had occupation status. The trend is showing progress on integration of Cree workers into the construction industry through the access provisions set out in the regulations.

2.3.1. The presence of Cree women in the construction industry

Similarly to the labour force as a whole, Cree women are underrepresented in the construction industry. A comparison between the presence of women and of Cree women in the industry indicates, however, that the latter are slightly better integrated than are the former. In fact, women represent 1.1% of all workers, whereas Cree women represent 4.1% of all Cree workers. This difference, however, is not very significant given the size of the Cree population. Cree women workers face a double challenge: that of leaving their traditional Cree environment and that of integrating into a traditionally male environment. Given the low representativeness of this population, these data are given for indicative purposes only.

In September 1995, the CCQ's board of directors formed a working committee on access by women to the construction industry. Some of this committee's recommendations led to changes in the regulations in effect, including one concerning the *Regulation Respecting the Hiring and Mobility of Employees in the Construction Industry*. This regulation provides that when the CCQ refers workers to an employer, women will be referred first.

¹² Status is determined as a function of the hours recorded in the worker's record book and includes both non-holders and holders of certificates.

Under section 36 of this regulation, hiring preference must be given to Aboriginals at James Bay, on territories north of James Bay, and on Aboriginal territories. With completion

of the project to identify Aboriginals in 2003, it is now possible to identify Cree workers on the reference lists given to employers, especially for the Eastmain 1-A site.

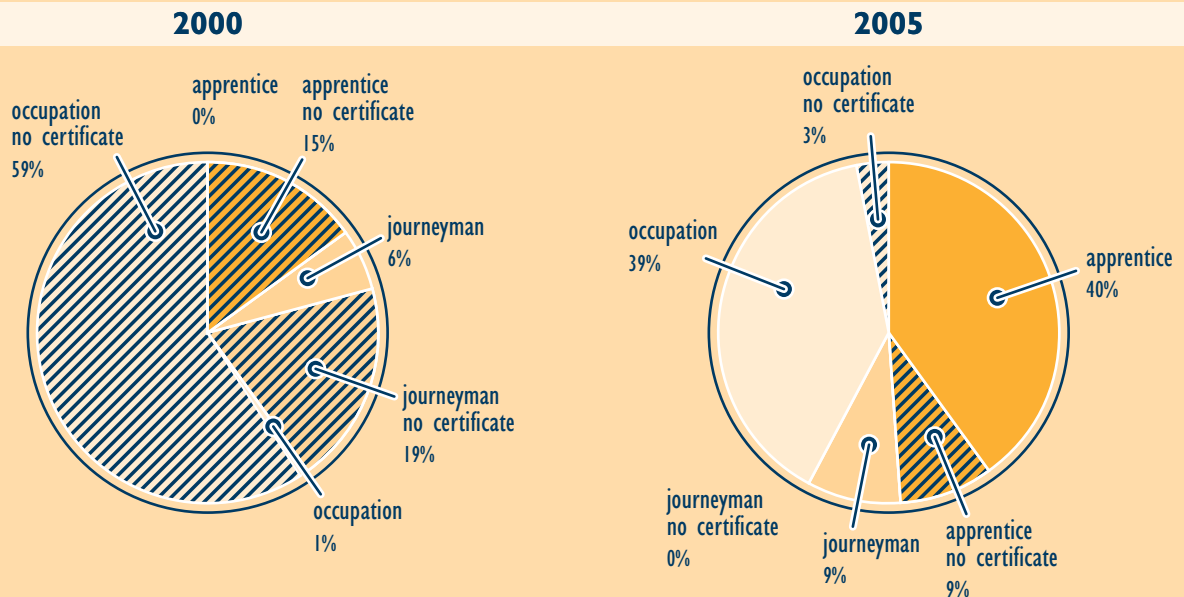
Table II
Number of Cree labour force participants according to trade and occupation by status, 2005

Trade / occupation	Apprentice	Journeyman	Occupation	Total
Carpenter-joiner	62	1	-	63
Heavy equipment operator	20	12	-	32
Electrician	10	-	-	10
Shovel operator	2	6	-	8
Painter	5	-	-	5
Pipe fitter	4	-	-	4
Heavy equipment	3	-	-	3
Roofer	1	-	-	1
Total, trades				126
Labourer	-	-	38	38
Truck driver	-	-	29	29
Lineman	-	-	12	12
Surveyor	-	-	8	8
Other occupations	-	-	6	6
Total, occupations				93
Total, workers	107	19	93	219

Source: CCQ (July 2006)



Figure 3
Proportion of Cree workers working in the construction industry by status, 2000 and 2005¹³



Source: CCQ (July 2006)

2.4. Projects in the James Bay region

2.4.1. Sites and contracts

Since 2000, 13 sites worth more than \$5 million each have been completed or are underway. Hydro-Québec and its subsidiary, JBEC, own the five largest sites (in terms of value), at \$2.5 billion (see table III). The Eastmain-1A-Rupert site alone would be worth \$5 billion. All of this work is in the civil engineering and roadwork sector.

Of the 13 sites, seven are located in the Cree communities of Nemaska (2), Eastmain, Waskaganish, and Waswanipi (2) and have a total value of \$71 million. These sites are under the control of Cree bands. Four are in the commercial sector, one in the institutional sector, and two in the civil engineering and roadwork sector.

¹³ Status is determined as a function of the hours recorded in the worker's record book and includes both non-holders and holders of certificates.

Table III
Sites worth more than \$5 million since 2000, James Bay region

Location	Owner	Type	Value (\$ million)	Description
Eastmain-I-A – Rupert	Hydro-Québec	Hydroelectric complex	5,000.0	Civ. Engin.
Eastmain	Hydro-Québec	Hydroelectric complex (EM-I)	2,300.0	Civ. Engin.
Eastmain-I/Nemaska	Hydro-Québec	Electric line	115.0	Civ. Engin.
Nemaska/Waskaganish	Hydro-Québec	Electric lines and substations	64.0	Civ. Engin.
Nemaska à Eastmain-I	JBEC	Road	34.3	Civ. Engin.
Waswanipi	Cree-Waswanipi First Nation	Office building	29.3	Commercial
Waswanipi	Cree-Waswanipi First Nation	Student residences	15.0	Institutional
Nemaska	Nemaska First Nation	Recreation centre	12.5	Commercial
Eastmain	Cree Nation of Eastmain	Streets, sidewalks	5.0	Civ. Engin.
Waskaganish	Waskaganish First Nation	Warehouse	5.0	Commercial
Nemaska	Nemaska First Nation	Municipal infrastructure	5.0	Civ. Engin.
Waskaganish	Waskaganish First Nation	Office building	7.0	Commercial
James Bay, Eleonor deposit	Goldcorp	Mining building	400.0	Industrial

Source: CCQ, Research and Organization Directorate (May 2007)

2.4.2. Cree enterprises and corporations

The Grand Council of the Crees and the different band councils of the nine Cree communities are the main managers of the Cree public organizations, corporations, and enterprises in

the James Bay territory (see figure 4). Most paid work results from programs administered by the Cree communities and organizations. Companies owned by Crees (Cree Construction and Development Company, Air Creebec, etc.) also provide jobs for both Crees and non-Crees.



Aside from the Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC), which is the largest employer of Cree construction workers, new Cree enterprises have executed different contracts or projects. The Cree communities with several local enterprises (owned, directly or indirectly, by the band council) have created construction companies mainly for the Eastmain-1 project. This major increase in the number of Cree enterprises and the consolidation of the main Cree construction company, the CCDC, have enabled the CCQ to make these enterprises into informed partners.

Most of these enterprises are under the aegis of the Cree Board of Compensation (CBC), which was created by the JBNQA, while some are owned by band councils or individuals (see figure 4).

In 1982, the Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company (CREECO) holding company was created as an umbrella for all Cree enterprises that had been set up with assistance from the CBC. These enterprises employ more than 500 people full time, one third of whom are Crees. The CCDC is one of these companies, as is Air Creebec (see figure 5). CREECO's head office is in Nemaska.

The initial mission of the CCDC, founded in 1978, was to build houses and infrastructures in Cree communities. Today, this mission has been changed: "As a company owned by, oriented toward, and led by Crees, to be a profitable construction and development company operating on the local, national, and international scales, with the commitment to follow superior quality standards and to offer excellent service to our customers."¹⁴ The community mission of the CCDC is different from that of other private companies. The CCDC has integrated regional employment and local economic development

policies in order to help the largest number possible of Cree workers develop skills that are recognized by the labour market and that meet the quality standards required by the construction sector.

On its own, the CCDC made remittances of more than \$11.5 million to the CCQ between 2001 and 2005. Over the same period, other Cree companies made remittances of close to \$12 million to the CCQ (see table 4). The CCDC is thus a major player and has been for a long time.

A number of local enterprises (many owned by band councils) were created with the start-up of the large hydroelectric sites in the James Bay territory. In the construction sector are Cree construction companies that, from time to time, will partner with the CCDC to execute construction contracts in Cree communities, but also outside of the James Bay territory, and with the same philosophy of hiring Crees first.

Under the *Paix des Braves*, some contracts have been identified as being potentially executable by Cree enterprises. These enterprises have a first right to bid on these projects, worth a total of \$300 million of work at Eastmain-1; for the Eastmain-1A site project, Cree enterprises have the first right to review \$240 million of contracts. Contracts are distributed by a new Cree consortium that the GCCEI and the CRA formed under the terms of the *Nadoshtin* and *Boumhounan* agreements.

The contracts negotiated with the Cree enterprises are awarded when their procedures and conditions respect Hydro-Québec's requirements for deadlines, costs, and quality and when the Cree enterprises are able to supply a letter of credit or irrevocable guarantees or to obtain a performance bond for executing the contracts.¹⁵ The Cree enterprises may bid when calls for tenders are made by the JBEC. They may do so alone or in a consortium with other enterprises, Cree or not.

¹⁴ http://www.ccdc.qc.ca/francais/notre_mission.htm

¹⁵ Hydro-Québec, "Centrale de l'Eastmain 1-A," p. 94.

Table IV

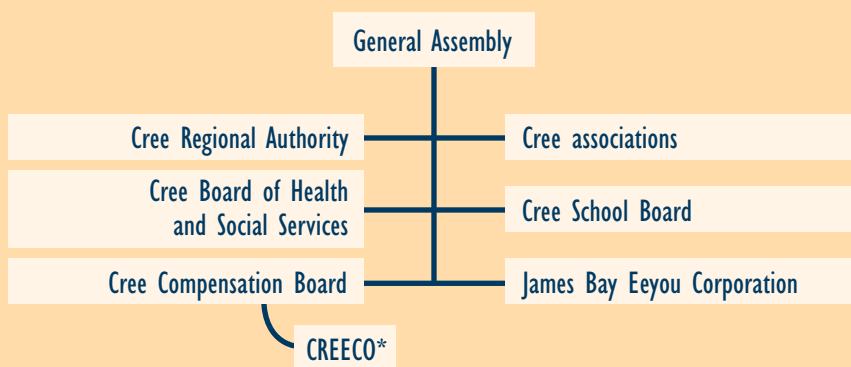
Cree enterprises in the James Bay territory, contributions 2001–05

Enterprise	Remittances made to the CCQ (\$)
Blackned Construction Reg'd	> 5,000
Blackned Construction & Development	> 20,000
Waskaganish First Nation	> 75,000
CBC	> 80,000
Chee-Bee Construction	> 250,000
CCDC	> 11,500,000

Source: CCQ (August 2006)

Figure 4

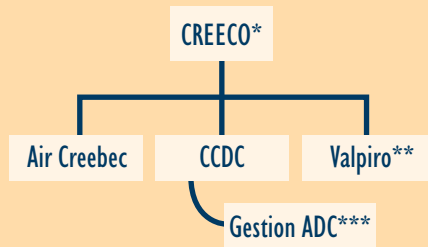
Coordination of Grand Council of the Crees programs and services: Organizational chart



* Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company



Figure 5
**Cree Structures –
economic development:
Organizational chart**



* Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company

** Food and lodging supply service

*** Supply services for the Val-d'Or airport

2.4.3. Non-Aboriginal enterprises in Cree territory: The case of Massenor

At present, a number of contracts in Cree communities are awarded to non-Aboriginal enterprises. Massenor inc. is a company based in Val d'Or that is known for its construction activities, mainly in the residential and institutional sectors, in Cree communities. The company participates in local development by hiring some of its labour force from within Cree communities.

Since mid-2004, Massenor has become actively involved in the process of normalizing its Cree labour force. Through close collaboration between the company and the CCQ's Val d'Or regional office, a number of Cree workers have obtained competency certificates, had their hours declared to the CCQ, and had access to benefits associated with the industry: vacations, social benefits, access to the training fund, union membership, and so on.

To date, more than 25 workers from the community of Wemindji have become holders of competency certificates, including 18 carpenter-joiners (six of them women), five painters, and two tractor operators. Wemindji is also the community in which Massenor is the most active. It is anticipated that this process of qualification of Cree workers will parallel the development of the company's activities in Cree territory.

In the fall of 2006, Massenor joined with the Cree School Board and the CCQ to implement a course on theory review in carpentry-joinery with a view to passing the qualification examination. This course, which began in January 2007, was given in Wemindji. Of the 12 candidates who took the course, nine were employees in good standing and eligible for the industry's training fund (FFIC)¹⁶, while the three others took the course thanks to the funding from the Cree School Board.

¹⁶ This is the Fonds de formation de l'industrie de la construction, which funds upgrading activities for workers in the industrial, institutional and commercial, and civil engineering and roadwork sectors.

2.4.4. Residential construction projects

The growth rate of Aboriginal populations has necessitated a response by the Cree authorities, especially with regard to residential construction. Since January 1, 1999, the construction of new residential buildings has required an obligatory guarantee plan. To benefit from the guarantee plan, the construction contract must be awarded to the general contractor accredited by one of the administrators of the guarantee plan and hold an appropriate licence from the Régie du bâtiment du Québec. It is therefore important for band councils to take this measure into account before awarding residential construction contracts, or before assuming this construction work themselves.

Since the signature of the *Paix des Braves* and the advent of the Eastmain-1 hydroelectric project, there has been some reorganization of the economic activity of band councils. The trend is for band councils to intervene less on the economic level, leaving more room for the development of local private enterprises. This trend has also been observed by Hydro-Québec in the communities of Waskaganish, Nemaska, and Mistissini.

2.5. A new phenomenon for Crees in the construction industry: unionization

“If getting a skilled trade was the best decision I ever made, certainly joining the union was the second best... Without a union card, I could not have worked on EM-1 or any other place where CCQ union cards are required. Now, I get to work on heavy equipment such as loaders, graders and shovels, I’ve made new friends, I’ve learned – or I should say, I’m learning – to speak French, and I’m learning new trades.”

— **Thomas Awachish,**
Cree from Mistissini and third-year apprentice heavy-equipment mechanic¹⁷

The presence of unions is a new phenomenon among Cree communities, as it is among the province’s other Aboriginal communities. Cree workers joining the construction industry are seeing, for the first time, their interests represented by a union association.

In Québec, the labour relations system in the construction industry, governed by the *Act Respecting Labour Relations, Vocational Training and Manpower Management in the Construction Industry* (Act R-20), sets out an obligatory union membership for every worker. This recognition of union pluralism means that when workers enter the industry, they are asked to choose to join one out of the five representative associations. They may change their membership every three years during a union election. The last union election took place in June 2006.

¹⁷ Grand Council of the Crees Eeyou Istchee, *Eeyou Eenou*, p. 31.

3.

THE CCQ'S APPROACH

3.1. Establishment of a relationship of trust

In the autumn of 2002, the CCQ created a committee for liaison with the Crees. The committee meets between two and six times per year in order to facilitate integration of Crees through administrative measures to support hydroelectric development of the territory, as stipulated in section 4.5 of the *Paix des Braves*. Relations between the Crees and the CCQ have remained cordial and the CCQ has observed progress in the integration of Crees into the industry. The annual reports of the Grand Council of the Crees Eeyou Istchee for the last five years indicate the presence of stable and increasingly harmonious relations with the CCQ.

During this committee's meetings, both sides have expressed demands. The Crees want changes to be made to the placement regions defined in the *Regulation Respecting the Hiring and Mobility of Workers*. In effect, three Cree communities are outside the James Bay region and benefit from exemption measures, whereas Crees in the James Bay region benefit from an administrative measure. The Cree members of the committee would like the administrative measures in force for Crees in the James Bay region to be applied to all Crees. This demand is under study.

It must be understood that the Cree members of the committee fear that Cree workers in the Nord-ouest (Abitibi) and Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean regions would be penalized in comparison to the Crees in James Bay. They give the example of the workers from Washaw Sibi (adjacent to the Algonquin community of Pikogan and outside the James Bay territory) who had been refused a competency certificate. It is important that Cree workers prove their status as Cree beneficiaries to have access to the administrative measures offered to them. To this end, the Cree members of the committee validated a list of all Cree workers that are beneficiaries of the JBNQA that the CCQ provided to them to accelerate identification of these workers.

3.2. Roundtable on Aboriginal Issues

In 2004, the CCQ created the Roundtable on Aboriginal Issues in the Construction Industry, the mandate of which is to facilitate interaction, networking, and partnership between Aboriginal societies and the construction industry and to include these societies in the industry. The roundtable has 19 members: six employer representatives, six union representatives, six Aboriginal representatives, and one representative of the CCQ's General Directorate.

One member of the roundtable is the Cree coordinator for the Nadoshtin Corporation, responsible for the Eastmain-1 and Eastmain-1A projects at James Bay.

Among the roundtable's mandates is networking. To this end, the CCQ invited the Secretariat to the Cree Nation Abitibi/Témiscamingue Economic Alliance to tell the members about the possibilities for partnership experiences between Crees and non-Aboriginal enterprises.

3.3. Relations with Cree communities and knowledge of the context and programs of the construction industry

With the goal of providing information on regulations and the worker qualification process, and to provide assistance in this area, the CCQ takes part in Cree activities and events in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region and in the James Bay territory, as well as touring Cree communities regularly. To this end, the CCQ:

- Participates in congresses and job fairs, where it reaches out to Aboriginals in the region
- Takes part in the activities of the Secretariat to the Cree Nation Abitibi/Témiscamingue Economic Alliance
- Takes part in industry activities that directly affect the Crees, such as the Rencontre du Consortium SEBJ/Hydro-Québec/ComaxNord/ComaxAT in October 2003 in Val-d'Or

- Had a speaker at the Bouhmouan conference in November 2006 in Montréal
- Advertises in the Cree newspaper *Nation*; a series of ads in French, English, and Cree have appeared for informational purposes.

Better knowledge of Act R-20 and the regulations governing the construction industry will be provided through continued exchanges and distribution of information.

In fact, according to the CHRD, the main obstacles encountered by the Crees are:

- Lack of information and awareness in Cree communities
- Lack of vision by the workers, who have a tendency to think only of today's paycheque
- The existence of a generation gap: older people do not want to be bothered with the process of obtaining a competency certificate
- Some workers do not want to integrate into the process since this means that they will be able to work only in a specific trade¹⁸.

In addition, Crees are not very aware of construction industry's social benefits plans. During a 2004 meeting dealing with the Nord-du-Québec region, the question of whether the Crees were receiving their pension cheques arose for the first time. The CCQ therefore offered several Aboriginal representatives, including the Cree coordinator of the Nadoshtin Corporation, responsible for Cree

¹⁸ Grand Council of the Crees Eeyou Istchee, *Eeyou Eenou*, p. 29.



workers at the Eastmain-1 site, a three-hour training session, with supporting documents, on the industry's pension plan.

The CCQ has proposed to offer a second training session on social benefits, this time in a Cree community; it is awaiting a response from the Crees on this subject. In addition, in order to better serve the Crees, the CCQ is currently making an inventory of all forms available in English, including specifically the documents related to this training.

3.4. **The presence of a resource person assigned to the Crees**

In section 13.1.3a of the *Nadoshtin Agreement*, it is stipulated that the CCQ will make available to the Crees a resource person responsible, among other things, for providing general assistance to the Crees in their qualification process and conducting a more in-depth assessment of the work history of each Cree with a view to recognizing pertinent work experiences for the purpose of accreditation. Therefore, the CCQ created the position of liaison officer to serve the Aboriginal communities of the James Bay region in order to favour integration of Aboriginal workers and employers into the construction industry. The work accomplished to date by the CCQ in Val-d'Or and by the liaison officer assigned to the Cree candidates and workers has been well received by the Cree communities.

3.5. **Vocational qualification of the labour force: A giant step forward**

3.5.1. **Administrative measures for Cree workers**

Section 13.1.3b of the *Nadoshtin Agreement* provides for issuance of competency certificates to Crees. For instance, under the provisions of the *Regulation Respecting Hiring and Mobility of Workers in the Construction Industry*, Crees living in the James Bay placement region may obtain competency certificates when less than 5% of the labour force is available in the region and, as a consequence, the apprentice labour pools are opened. The three Cree communities in the adjacent regions (Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean and Abitibi) benefit from exemption certificates. Under the *Paix des Braves* and implementation of the *Nadoshtin Agreement*, the CCQ provides guidance to Cree beneficiaries of the JBNQA to facilitate their integration into the industry.

3.5.2. **Identification of Crees**

Stimulated by ratification of the *Paix des Braves*, in 2003 the CCQ began to take steps to identify Aboriginals among the workers in the construction industry. This information will enable a database to be created on Aboriginal populations, and thus on the Cree beneficiaries of the JBNQA.

3.5.3. Prioritizing Cree files

Given the work underway at the Eastmain-1 site, the Cree files have been processed with a high priority for the issuance of competency and exemption certificates. All Cree files are processed at the Val-d'Or regional office and analyzed by the CCQ liaison officer before being routed to the head office for validation. If there is a problem, the liaison officer is able to communicate with the candidate, directly and quickly, to ask for further information.

3.5.4. Mobility of the Cree labour force (Nord-du-Québec region)

In April 2003, the Cree Regional Authority (CRA) asked that the statute and regulations applicable to construction be modified to comply with the JBNQA (sections 28.10.3 and 28.10.4). This means, among other things, that under the JBNQA the governments must take all reasonable measures to establish a priority for Crees with regard to jobs and contracts that result from the projects on the agreement territory; they must also take all reasonable measures, including but not limited to regulations, to establish a priority for local people and contractors available and duly qualified regarding contracts and jobs created by development of the territory.

The CRA is also asking that the prescriptions of Act R-20 be harmonized with the *Paix des Braves* (sections 2.4; 4.3; 4.4; 4.5). In doing this,

it is asking that the borders of the region be revised so that it encompasses the nine Cree communities, thus following the line of the 49th Parallel.

The CRA noted that “all Cree beneficiaries of the JBNQA are said to belong to the new region, without regard for their place of residence, unless the beneficiary renounces this right.”¹⁹ In addition, it asked that “all Cree beneficiaries of the JBNQA benefit from a priority in training and from hiring priority with regard to the projects executed in the James Bay territory.”²⁰

Following a number of meetings over a period of more than a year, the CCQ proposed a series of scenarios that take account of the Crees' demands. It should be noted that the *Nadoshtin Agreement* states explicitly, in section 13.1.3b, that if the labour-pool restrictions in the JBNQA territory are removed for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, priority for the Crees must be ensured. The brief is still under study.

3.5.5. Qualification examinations: Personalized administration and analyses

More than 20 Crees took qualification examinations for the trades of tractor, leveller, and shovel operator; the examinations were administered at the Eastmain-1 site or in a Cree community. The context of the Eastmain-1 site necessitated the organization of exam sessions on site in order to accommodate the Crees with

¹⁹ Grand Council of the Crees Eeyou Istchee and Cree Regional Administration, letter, April 1, op. cit., p. 5.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 5.



regard to availability of candidates, lodging, and transport for candidates from different communities. Although this was not the usual procedure, having sessions outside of the regional office for the examinations enabled the CCQ liaison officer to answer questions of general information and concerning qualification. The administration of the qualification examinations at Eastmain-1 was greatly appreciated by the candidates and by those involved in this dossier.

3.5.6. Analysis of pass rate for the qualification examinations and admission of applicants

On request of the Crees, the CCQ proceeded with a study on the low rate of success at qualification examinations for the trades by Crees. The finding was that there is a lack of basic skills. In addition, an analysis of all applications for the period 2002–04 indicate that 33 out of 39 Cree applicants had at least one application accepted, while six Crees had their application rejected. Of the 33 Crees whose application for admission had been accepted, only 20 registered for the exam. Of this number, 16 took at least one exam, with seven of them passing. The exams passed were for the trades of heavy equipment operator and shovel operator only. Failures were registered in the trades of carpenter-joiner, electrician, heavy equipment mechanic, painter, pipe fitter, and heavy equipment operator. Most Crees passed the exam after one attempt, while those who failed tried at least twice in almost all cases.

3.6. The challenge to be met: Vocational training



The Cree language is widely spoken and taught in the Eeyou Istchee territory.

During meetings of the liaison committee, the CCQ brought up the benefits and advantages, on both the community and individual levels, of training new workers who wish to accede to construction sites. The CCQ emphasized the value of vocational training and asked that representatives of the Cree School Board be made aware of the potential offered by these programs. The 2005 data on participating workers indicate that only 5.9% of Cree workers have a diploma, compared to 19% of all workers.

3.6.1. New training programs

On May 31, 2006, the CCQ was invited to the inauguration of the Sabruan Regional Vocational Training Centre, located in the Cree community of Waswanipi. This is the first Cree training centre, and its implementation represents a true success for the Cree School Board. This experience has also enabled the various Québec government ministries involved to improve the quality of their relationship with the Crees.

Training programs in the construction trades have been offered at the centre since the fall of 2006, notably in carpentry-joinery, pipe fitting, and painting. Fifty Cree students received this training in 2006.

The creation of a regional vocational training centre in Cree territory was, in itself, excellent news for future workers in Cree communities, but the problem of hiring Anglophone teachers has dampened the momentary joy. The Sabtuan training centre is, however, having some trouble recruiting Anglophone teachers for its training programs in the construction trades and is turning to teachers from outside of Québec, and sometimes to teachers whose English is not perfect.

3.6.2. Tour of Cree students in Montreal

As part of their study program, in 2004 five young Cree carpentry-joinery students at the Sabruan Regional Vocational Training Centre, a division of the Cree School Board, and one Cree Secondary 5 student from the Luke Mettaweskum Secondary School visited Montréal. They were invited to the CCQ offices, where, over lunch, representatives from the CCQ and a delegate from the CSST spoke to them about subjects that are of particular importance to them.

In addition, the CCQ helped with organizing this visit to Montréal by planning and facilitating visits to certain construction sites and trade schools, including the École de métiers de la construction de Montréal and the Centre de formation des métiers de l'acier. Among the sites visited were those at the Montreal airport, at the Laval metro station, and in the Mohawk territory of Kahnawake.



3.6.3. Coordination of vocational training activities and needs

The “Driving Equipment on Northern Sites” program was created in 2002. It was formulated with a concern for responding to the particular needs of northern regions, especially those of Crees and Inuit. This explains why recognition of this study program is conditional on a general restriction of right to exercise and exclusive permission to teach this program in the Cree and Kativik school boards.

In 2005 and 2007, the CCQ, through its plumbing and heating vocational subcommittee and its occupations vocational subcommittee, which includes the occupations of driller and shotfirer, certified the Cree School Board’s request for

authorization to create two temporary programs, “DEP Plumbing and Heating” and “DEP Forage et Dynamitage.” The CCQ thus issued a favourable endorsement to the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport.

The 2001 census data indicated that 60% of Crees in Québec had not completed a high-school leaving diploma, compared to 32% of all Québécois. However, Crees seem more inclined to pursue vocational training. Indeed, 11% of Crees have a diploma from a trade school, a proportion equivalent to that for all Québécois.

Since 1991, the catching up of Crees in vocational training has been remarkable: only 395 Crees (3% of the Cree population 15 years old and over) had completed a vocational training diploma in 1991, while there were 915 in 2001.



Cohort of carpentry-joinery students visiting Montréal, in 2004. The cohort was invited by the CCQ to visit the site of Pierre-Elliott Trudeau Airport. They are accompanied by Kanien`kehà:ka (Mohawk) journeymen workers.

3.6.4. The construction industry's training funds

To enable the construction industry to have available a labour force in sufficient quality and quantity to respond to its needs, the CCQ intervenes in four major ways:

- To encourage the development of a competent new generation
- To support the progress of apprentices
- To encourage the industry's labour force to pursue continuous training
- To maintain, and improve, the mechanisms that respond to the specific training needs of the labour force

These axes are developed in harmony with the industry's employer and union partners.

Almost 15 years ago, the construction industry created two training funds: the Plan de formation du secteur résidentiel and the Fonds de formation de la construction (FFIC) for the non-residential sectors. Thanks to employer contributions, these two funds assume all direct and indirect costs (travel, food, and lodging for workers in training), thus creating an additional incentive for construction workers to upgrade their skills.

In addition, as mentioned in the first section of this report, the *Nadoshtin Agreement* provides a \$1.5 million training fund (distinct from the construction industry's training funds); this fund must promote training for the Crees (academic training and on-the-job training). In its supplemental environmental impact study, Hydro-Québec explains that only one third of the funds available have been used, for lack



Cohort of Cree students from Whapmagoostui who have completed the course on operation of construction-site equipment, with their instructors.



of applications by Cree enterprises. Only three enterprises made applications for funding, all of which were approved.²¹

Under this program, \$367,050 was granted to the CCDC for training of employees in order to obtain CCQ competency certificates. Cree beneficiaries who want to work on the Eastmain-1 site may obtain a competency certificate-apprentice with a guarantee of 150 hours of work from an employer. After accumulating 400 hours in the construction sector, Cree workers becomes eligible for the FFIC. In this sense, the funding offered by Hydro-Québec through the on-the-job training fund becomes redundant when it is used for training activities covered by the FFIC. It must be noted, however, that the \$1.5 million training fund does not target the construction industry exclusively, and that it may be used to fund up to 40% of the salary of Crees in favour of their being hired.

3.6.5. Documentation in English

Section 13.1.3c of the *Nadoshtin Agreement* provides that the CCQ will make available to the Crees all necessary documents in English so that they can study for the different CCQ examinations.

The Crees have also asked that specifications for theory review courses be translated. The CCQ studied the possibility of translating certain specifications that have been deemed high priority by the Crees: those for the trades of plumber, painter, and electrician.

Another request by the Crees was translation of a basic module. The CCQ has translated the module “Chantier, équipement, organismes de la construction.” This was announced to the Crees in 2004 and they received an English copy of the module when it was published in 2005.

²¹ Hydro-Québec, “Centrale de l’Eastmain 1-A,” pp. 97–98.

CONCLUSION

An agreement such as the *Paix des Braves* has made it possible to accelerate the creation of incentive mechanisms and, especially, to create an ongoing dialogue between the Cree authorities and the CCQ and, beyond that, between Cree workers and the construction industry as a whole.

Cree workers now know that their interests are managed and assured by the CCQ. Cree construction companies now know that they have access to the same high-quality services to enterprises from which all other companies in the construction industry benefit. A climate of trust has been created.

In addition, it has been observed that Crees, once included in the qualification process, have become regular workers holding recognized competency certificates. A number have moved from occupation status to the status of apprentice in a construction trade. Although occupation jobs remain popular, on-site experience has enabled many to discover other trades that interest them.

Since 2002, the progress made and the dialogue conducted in a climate of trust have enabled the qualification measures for Crees to be modified in order to meet the requirements of the Cree authorities. For instance, it is recognized that all Cree communities are treated the same way. The workers in these communities now have the right to the same rules and benefits.

The leverage role of the Cree Regional Authority and the Grand Council of the Crees, which group together all the Cree communities in Québec, has created a relationship of strength, unique and practical at different levels – for example, for recognition of hours and establishment of training priorities. In addition, the Cree Regional Administration, convinced of the benefits of training and the importance of qualifications, now requires enterprises that hire Crees at James Bay to qualify and train them according to the rules within effect in the industry.

The coordination of human resources among CHRD, the Cree School Board, and the CCQ remains a crucial challenge and must be further developed and consolidated.

The links between the Crees and the partners in the construction industry have led to a solid bond, and the desire on both parts to communicate their common interests should be strengthened in coming years.

The process of vocational training must be seen as the path to the future. In coming years, young Crees with training will become journeymen and self-employed workers on construction sites.

Finally, the work accomplished by the Crees makes them leaders in construction among Aboriginals in Québec. They serve as models for all First Nations, and this is good news for the construction industry.

