



2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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CREE WOMEN OF EYYOU ISTCHEE ASSOCIATION



Message from the President

In the fiscal year 2016-2017, we found much reason to celebrate, especially as we moved forward boldly with our work towards being autonomous from the Cree Nation Government. The Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association (CWEIA) has a long history of responding to Eeyou Istchee's greatest needs of life, healing, reflection and empowerment, and identity. Much has changed over time.

Our efforts and initiatives have evolved from exclusively delivering lasting impacts through innovative projects that will not only empower people but also be imperative for Eeyou/Eenou people to return to our own customs, languages, and healing processes. This holds true especially for women and girls in allowing them to become agents of change within our communities. However, most of our work seeks long-term improvements in people's lives by discovering what connects us to our ancestors and their experiences.

CWEIA continues to strive for collective actions and a coordinated “voice” that advocates for active participation of women in the contemporary political life in Eeyou Istchee. CWEIA challenged the most fundamental law which was about to be adopted in Eeyou Istchee such as the Cree Governance Agreement and Constitution, which passed in May 30, 2017. We believed that the consultation process maintained the disempowerment of a women’s organization, where colonial impositions were embedded in the development. Before we can achieve self-government, our communities and nation need to be revitalized and our people have to be given an opportunity to grow and develop healthy lifestyles.

We are proud of the role CWEIA continues to hold. A role that engages and strives towards decolonization and find ways to be a good force such as the pursuit of gender inequity. In all, it continues to be driving the oppression and discrimination in many of our adopted structures and ways in Eeyou Istchee, which still holds back CWEIA of their full participation and contribution at the political decision making table. However, it is a tremendous accomplishment for us, as a grassroots organization, to set aside our fears and speak the “truth” that our elders/ancestors continue to remind us. In honoring the “truth”, it will set standards that are achievable for the improvements of the experiences and the well-being of all Eeyou/Eenou peoples.

As we did then, so must we act boldly now. Armed with ancestral knowledge and a new generation of supportive and nourishing choices that deliver results to many and are then replicated to transform the lives of our people in Eeyou Istchee. With your continued support, we will and continue to strive for collective actions and meaningful complimentary roles.

“The hurt of one is the hurt of all, the honour of one is the honour of all.” Meegwetch!

In Nishiiyuu Spirit,

Linda L. Shecapio, B.A.
President of CWEIA



Membership

For CWEIA's 9th Annual General Assembly (AGA), many women coming from all corners of Eeyou Istchee met at Nemaska's Old Post from August 26th to 28th, 2016. We had an engaging dialogue on issues and concerns surrounding the following theme:

"Walking together in the footsteps of our Kuukuumihniuch Maamuunitimawaataau Kuukuumihniuchumaaskinaawaa"

During the AGA, a few of our by-laws were amended:

Honorary Members: Addition of a new category for CWEIA's members

In order to promote affiliation and encourage CWEIA's affairs and advocacy, for better exposure, and to address important concerns about Eeyou/Eenou women at both the local and regional levels. An honorary member will be a Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee, at the discretion of the Board of Directors, with an exemplary role and/or position such as: Elder, Chief, Deputy Chief, Executive members within a Cree entity or a member of a professional order.

Change in the Board of Directors article

Local Women Associations

Each Local Women Association (LWA) shall elect one President that will become a Board of Director within the

Association. Each President must be elected by their local peers, under the terms set-out by each of the LWA. In the case where a LWA has no set terms and that there is a vacancy with no re-election taken by local members within 60 days, it is the responsibility of CWEIA to send a notice of election.

President/Chairperson

The President-Chairperson shall be elected automatically for two (2) consecutive terms of two years each. Concerning the election of the President-Chairperson, the rules and process recommended in the CWEIA Election By-Law shall apply. This document can only be amended by the members at the general assembly.

Note: CWEIA's election by-law is to be tabled before the 11th AGA. It is the wish of the members to have a regional election for the President position.

Cree Nation Youth Council

The Cree Nation Youth Council (CNYC) shall appoint one (1) female Youth representative. The appointment of the Youth representative shall be made according to the CNYC's terms. These changes aim to strengthen the inclusive and democratic representation of CWEIA's members. In doing so, we ensure that all voices be included and



that the interests of Cree women may be well heard in terms of governance at a local and regional level.

Membership Statistics Members as of March 31, 2017

101 Regular Members

16 Friend Members

1 Corporate Member

CWEIA's membership is valid from one annual general assembly to the next.

Governance

Concerning the different levels of governance within CWEIA, below are this year's developments and activities at a glance:

Certain **Local Women Associations (LWA)** held elections to appoint their representatives within CWEIA's Board of Directors. Out of the thirteen (13) LWA, four (4) local chapters elected their president: Nemaska, Wemindji, Eastmain, and Senneterre.

While the process remains strong within the communities themselves, the urban chapters still struggle in terms of presence. To this day, two (2) of the

three (3) urban seats remain vacant, leaving the positions in Val-d'Or and Chibougamou still available to be filled in the future.

The Board of Director (BOD) representatives had the opportunity to discuss together a total of six (6) times during the year.

While three (3) of those meetings were carried out in person, the other three (3) were done through teleconferencing. This is an example of how CWEIA's work adapts to both the geographical distances and the busy schedules of its representatives to carry out the necessary work done by the association for its members.

As for the **Executive Committee (EC)**, they met on six (6) occasions, five (5) of which were done through conference call.

Finally, the **Gookumnouch Advisory Council (GAC)** came together on five (5) separate occasions. Their first meeting was convened on May 7, 2016, following the 1st Kuukuuminuwich Gathering to evaluate the outcomes of the event. Afterward, the GAC met several times to discuss issues mostly surrounding Elder abuse.

Together, they drafted a position paper presented to the Government of Québec and began discussions for a project proposal.



Nemaska Local Women's Association



Eastmain Local Women's Association

Their function also included assuring representation in events such as Dialogue for Life and giving advice in regards to CWEIA's governance. Currently, they are also working on a re-appropriation project designed to transmit living culture and assure its continuity.

In terms of governance, CWEIA has been very active at every level of the association to better respond to the

needs of its members. Although there is still much to be done in regards to the urban setting, the presence of CWEIA still remains strong within the communities themselves.

In regards to the inclusion of the GAC in CWEIA's structure, it demonstrates the efforts made to carry out a form of governance that is culturally reflective of the Eeyou/Eenou people.

CWEIA BOARD MEMBERS				
Executive		Communities		Urban
Linda L. Shecapio President	Rita Masty Whapmagoostui	LeeAnn Neeposh Nemaska	Elizabeth Mianscum Senneterre	
Rita Masty Vice-President	Robin Pachanos (Int.) Chisasibi	Lynda G. Jolly (Int.) Vice-President	Vaccant Chibougamau	
Appointment made at next board meeting Secretary-Treasurer	Carmen Faries Wemindji	Luise E. Neeposh Ouje-Bougoumou	Vaccant Val-d'Or	
Irene Bearskin House Elder	Sheila Mark-Stewart Estmain	Louise B. Saganash Waswanipi		
Melanie Neeposh Youth	Emily Blackned Hester Waskaganish	Felicia Polson Washaw-Sibi		
STAFF		GOUKUMNOUCH COUNCIL		
Manon Richmond Regional Coordinator	Vacant Program Coordinator	Irene Bearskin House CWEIA Executive Elder	Maria Kawapit Coastal Representative	
Marlene I. Kitchen Special Project Coord. (project base)	Rachel Martinhunter Bookeeper (Contractual)	Nancy Danyluk NCOE Representative	Marlene I. Kitchen Inland Representative	



Wemndji Local Women's Association

Accomplishments

Over the last year, CWEIA developed and finalized two (2) strategic tools and produced two (2) position papers in regards to current concerns.

Strategic Tools

CWEIA's Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Orientation 1: Promote the reappropriation of a living tradition and culture for Cree Women.

- 1.1 Initiate gatherings to share traditional knowledge relevant to Cree women as widely as possible.
- 1.2 Develop healing programs incorporating women circles, ceremonies, and rites of passage.
- 1.3 Provide educational opportunities to transfer traditional knowledge on midwifery and early childhood education.

Orientation 2: Nourish the ground for Women's empowerment.

- 2.1 Ensure there is a safe space in each community where women can access support, information, and resources.
- 2.2 Provide guidance and support to local women's associations in each community.



- 2.3 Organize and implement conferences, retreats, and workshops to foster a sense of empowerment in Cree women.
- 2.4 Develop and support women's individual and collective entrepreneurship.

Orientation 3: Act as a leader and nourish leadership for Cree Women's rights and wellbeing

- 3.1 Be a visible and collaborative voice for women's rights and gender equality in Cree structures.
- 3.2 Encourage women to pursue leadership positions and non-traditional jobs.
- 3.3 Join forces with our allies to raise awareness and reduce violence against women.

Orientation 4: Build our organization in order to provide programs and services.

- 4.1 Promote and grow membership.
- 4.2 Diversify and increase core funding.
- 4.3 Develop and secure major projects and their associated funding.
- 4.4 Grow and develop the internal team.

CWEIA's Strategy to Impulse Women's Entrepreneurship 2017-2020

Strategy 1

Promote and Support Individual Women Entrepreneurs.

Strategy 2

Nurture the Birth of Women Collective Businesses.

Strategy 3

Develop Social Economy Initiatives for Community Development.

Position Papers to the Government of Québec

Identified Problems Related to Elder Abuse

In this paper, we identified some of the forms of elder abuse observed within our communities.

To understand where the issues stems from, we brought forth a few of the causes that create this problem.

This includes living conditions. It is a known fact that in our communities the access to proper housing is a general issue. To this we added the (mis)treatment of elders by health care, family, and other people.

The position of CWEIA regarding Elder abuse is one that promotes to strengthening of intergenerational bonds in hopes that there be a better respect of our elders and the decrease of loneliness they may feel.





Secretariat Condition Feminine (SCF)

Here, CWEIA's position is established by the consultation that was done on gender equality by SCF.

In this paper, CWEIA denounced the unequal and limited access to employment (opportunities, salary, etc) while denouncing the discriminatory nature of certain policies.

In conclusion, recommendations reflecting the Eeyou realities are proposed to further promote the inclusion of women while finding solutions to certain issues (intimidation, harassment, etc.).

This includes means that integrate the cultural values and aspects of the Eeyou such as the traditional roles and how they manifest themselves today.

Projects

CWEIA worked on three (3) special projects aiming to empower and identify opportunities for Cree women in the region of Eeyou Istchee.

Building Collective Business

Project "Social innovation in support of women's collective entrepreneurship

based on the traditional knowledge of Cree women" was an opportunity to empower Cree women through entrepreneurship

CWEIA, as a supporter of a social economy, has taken on this project, in collaboration with Niska and CIRADD, to empower women in entrepreneurship by supporting the birth of collective businesses controlled and managed by Cree women.

This project takes the form of an action research project to anchor CWEIA's strategies into reality. Through this research, supportive resources and opportunities will be identified and a coop will be set-up to encourage the women with their traditional crafts so that action and research can complement each other and lead to the results desired in terms of Cree women's economic empowerment.





Miss Eeyou Eenuo Nation



MISS EYYOU/EENOU NATION
1st Regional Pageant
 Ouje-Bougoumou Youth Center
 February 18, 2017



3:00pm Welcoming of guests, families and friends

Opening ceremony

- Honoring song by Washeskun
- Opening prayer
- Welcoming address
- Presentation of Judges & Miss Indian World

Eeyou Istchee Cultural Coordinators Network

Introduction of the Community Representatives

- Melissa Gilpin Waskaganish
- Kayleigh Spencer Mistissini
- Dinah-Marie Sam Chisasibi
- Destinee Hester Washaw-Sibi
- Destiny Blacksmith Oujé-Bougoumou
- Julia Gilpin Wemindji



Traditional Talent presentation
 Each participant will have three (3) minutes for a show and tell that is related to her culture and tradition. It can be singing, dancing, storytelling, explanation of art and craft work process and or display and etc...

Panel & Public speaking

Crowning of Miss Eeyou-Eenuo Nation

Feast & Celebration (Entertainment by CNAKA)

Closing Remarks



Through the success of a regional partnership, the 1st Miss Eeyou/Eenuo Nation princess pageant was organized as a way to empower young women and girls of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee.

The intention was to create and solidify bonds between the participants as well as to showcase the variety of talent found within our young women. Although the aim was not to be competitive, this pageant allowed the selection of the first Miss Eeyou/Eenuo Nation, Kayleigh Spencer, to be given the privilege to go to the Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, which happens to be one of the biggest Pow Wows in North America.

4th Cree Outstanding Women Award

On October 22, 2016, CWEIA honoured some of its members during the 4th Cree Outstanding Women Award held in Val d'Or.

With categories varying from social implication to cultural knowledge, these awards serve as recognition of the efforts women of Eeyou Istchee demonstrate within their communities.

By valuing these women, we hope to encourage and empower them and many others.

Congratulations to the winners and nominees.



4th Cree Outstanding Women Award Winners

Betsy Longchap	Mistissini	Women in Arts and Culture
Cindy Coonishish	Nemaska	Women in Business
Edith Matoush	Nemaska	Keeper of the Language
Florrie Mark-Stewart	Eastmain	Mother of Cree Language
Janet Mark	Mistissini	Women in Education
Louisa Wynne	Whapmagoostui	Women in Politics
Priscilla V. Coon Come	Mistissini	Women in Health
Sally Paula Petawabano Mattawashish	Mistissini	Women Volunteer
Virginia Wabano	Waskaganish	Women in Public Service





Support to the Local Women Associations (LWA)

This year, a total of six (6) LWAs received a total of \$3500 to organize activities within their communities related to empowerment, culture, and tradition.

Chisasibi
Women’s day celabaraiton

Ouje-Bougoumou
Moose hide tanning

Nemaska
Women empowerment event, yet to be organized.

Whapmagoostui
Caribou hide project

Chibougamau
purchasing of sewing material

Seneterre
Women Tee-pee and empowering workshops

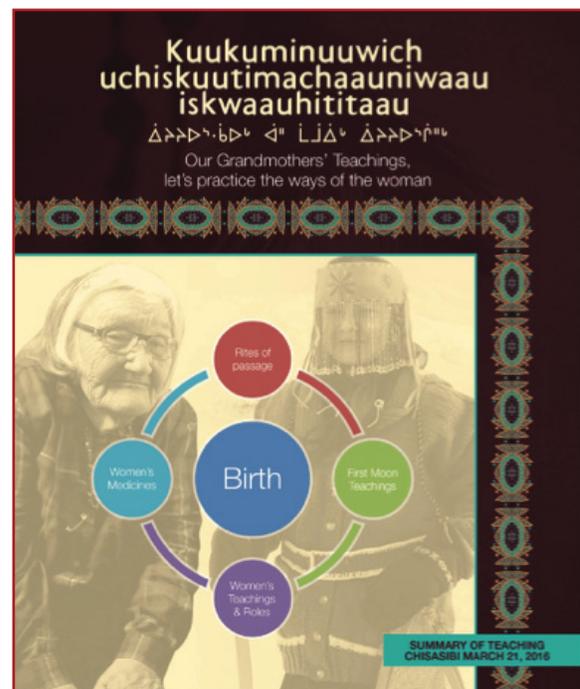
Thanks to the Board of Compensation for making these local initiatives possible.

Re-appropriation of Living Culture

Considering that culture is ever changing and adaptive, this project concerns the importance of transmitting Eeyou culture and assuring its continuity by motivating people to rediscover them on their own initiative.

Following the Kuukuuminuwich Gathering, the teachings shared were gathered together in the form of a booklet. Furthermore, pamphlets will also be developed using the reoccurring themes of both the teachings and the booklet.

An advisory committee was put in place to review the booklet content and to also discuss and start the preparation of the 2nd Kumkumnouch Gathering.





Finances

This year, CWEIA submitted a total of seven (7) funding proposals. Although three (3) were denied, two (2) have been approved and another two (2) are still pending.

The regional funding within Eeyou Istchee has decreased. This has resulted in a negative impact on our operations and projected plans.

REVENUE	AMOUNT
Grand Council of the Cree EELP/NRA	\$208,306
CNG Regional Development Funds	\$100,000
Board of Compensation (BOC)	\$76,921
CNG Elder Agreement	\$66,500
Centre initiation a la recherche (CIRADD)	\$40,000
Cree Health Board (CHB)	\$36,800
Secretariat Condition Feminine (SCF)	\$35,000
CNG Elder Agreement - Deffered	\$19,472
Sponsorship - Cree Women Award	\$11,720
Quebec Native Women	\$6,147
Sponsorship - Lithium Mine	\$2,500
Cree Women Award – Deffered revenues	\$1,653
Membership	\$1,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$606,019

Regional Partnerships

A big part of CWEIA's work includes the creation of partnerships with other entities and groups and maintaining them. Here is a brief overview of CWEIA's partnerships.

Cree Health Board (CHB)

CWEIA works with the CHB through a service agreement that concerns the well being of Eeyou women. This includes our involvement with the following:

1. Women shelters
2. The re-appropriation of traditional birthing practices with the Cultural working Group for Midwifery and Birthing Centres
3. Traditional healing through the Healing Lodge project
4. Regional Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention initiatives.

Cree Nation Government (CNG)

Some of CWEIA's projects include a focus on social economy and the well-being of women. The CNG collaborates on the following files:

1. The Social Development table to further identify opportunities for its members.



2. The Cree Social Economic Regional Table (CSERT), another example of CWEIA's involvement in this matter, mostly in regards to establishing an arts and crafts industry.
3. The Mamuu Awash – Early Childhood. As for child and family services, CWEIA is also involved in reviewing project proposals
4. Finally, in association with the Justice and Correctional service, a book entitled Wisdom of Elders is being produced as a form of cultural support to our well-being.

Eeyou Istchee: Other Partnerships and Representation

CWEIA also took part in the planning committee and help in the event delivery for the:

1. 6th Nishiyuu Council of Elders. Held in Nemaska Sept. 5-8, 2016.
2. Regional Suicide Prevention Conference, held in Waswanipi on February 20-21, 2017.

Plus CWEIA is currently involved in the the planning of the Nishiyuu Men's Gathering.

Finally, CWEIA has attended some of the Council Board meetings as an observer, represented by the President who participated physically or via live stream.

Women Networks (Representation)

CWEIA's work is done with other entities that have the interests of women at heart. As a member of Québec Native Women, CWEIA holds a seat on the Council of Elected Representatives. Regionally, CWEIA also holds a partnership with the Algonquin women in regards to the denunciation of wrongdoings done by members of the police force in Val d'Or.



Together, the Eeyou and the Algonquin strive to find solutions to the current situation. To improve the service to indigenous women in Chibougamau, CWEIA is also involved with the Jamesian women.

Finally, at a national level, CWEIA was present at the AGA of Native Women Association of Canada in Alymer and at the 5th National Indigenous Women's Summit in Toronto.



OTHER EVENTS AND REPRESENTATION

Eyou Istchee

Apr. 12-14	CHB Regional General Assembly on Health and Social Services	Vice-President, Elder Rep
Sept. 2-8	NCOE 6th Traditional Gathering Nemaska	President & Reg. Coord.
Oct. 4	Sister in Spirit	Whapmagoostui, Wemindji
Oct. 19	CNACA 11th AGA - Waswanipi	President
Nov. 8-9	CSB Regional AGA	President
Dec. 13	Grassroots Empowerment & Partnership	President, Gookumnouch Council
Mar. 24-25	CNYC Inspire Hope	Rep. & Reg. Coord. President

First Nation

Sept. 10-11	QNW Leadership Training - Val d'Or	VP, East., Mist., Reg. Coord., & 1Mem.
Sept. 20	FNQL SDI - Territory & Natural Ressources	President
Nov. 15-18	7th Biennial International Indigenous Research Conference 2016	President
Nov. 21-25	Dialogue for Life - MTI	Reg. Coord., Maria Kawapit, & 2 members

Others

Sept. 9	Secretariat Condition Feminine Consultation Day, QC Ministry	President
Sept. 7-9	International Forum on Social Economy - Montreal	Marlene I. Kitchen (Paid by CNG)
Jan. 30	Social Development Consultation by Secretariat Affaires Autochtone (SAA) QC Government	President
Mar. 22	International Entrepreneurship	President

Conclusion

For this year, moving forward can be considered one of CWEIA's many accomplishments. From slowly gaining independence to the finding of solutions, its members have been actively working toward motivating and supporting the women who have given the association its reason for being.

A special thank you to all those who have supported and collaborated in CWEIA's initiatives. Also, Misti-meegwetch to the generous and kind contribution of Cree Nation Government (CNG) department of Finance and the department of Justice and Correctional Services.

A woman with glasses and a red shawl with geometric patterns is smiling and holding a young child. The child is wearing a blue and white patterned headscarf and a tan fringed tunic. The woman is holding a small wooden object in her hands. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery.

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