

Cree Nation Governance Working Group Annual Report

May 27, 2011

Introduction/Purpose

We Cree have governed ourselves since before recorded history. In the last 35 years, we have slowly put together governing structures and bodies to make decisions, care for each other, and relate to the outside world.

For many reasons, now is the time that we have the opportunity to look at our own governance as a whole and create what will work for us in the 21st century. The Federal Government supports this initiative, as the mandate for a process on Cree governance comes from Chapter 3 of the New Relationship Agreement.



So a “Cree Nation Governance Working Group” was created to look into the matter. After extensive study of the topic of governance, the group decided that it would hold Cree values and consult with people on the values they want to hold in Cree governance, and suggestions they have for a Cree government. This was done in order to create the foundation and building blocks to build a governance model that reflects the people’s wisdom.

Timeline of Consultations

In late winter 2010, two pilot consultations were held, in Waswanipi and in Whapmagustui. The process was refined after these meetings, and tested at the CNGWG meeting in June, 2010.



Between August 2010 and February 2011, the traveling consultation team gathered input from elders, youth, men, women, and leadership in 10 communities including Washaw-Sibi, 5 government entities (Youth Council, Cree Women’s Association, Cree School Board, Cree Trappers Association and Cree Health Board), and 5 locations outside Eeyou Istchee where Cree live and go to school (Val d’Or, Ottawa, Montreal, North Bay, and Sudbury).

A local representative set up each consultation, so there were local differences, but the same questions were asked from everyone.

The questions were also asked in surveys linked to the CNGWG website (<http://cngwg.ca>) and a Facebook page for Cree Governance Working Group.

Process

The intent of the process was to gather ideas from the people before models of governance are created, so that the models can reflect the will of the people.

In each consultation, a slide show was shown about our history of Cree governance, so that people understand the topic and the great legacy this process is building upon. (This slide show is available on the Facebook site for CNGWG).

Then we asked three main open-ended questions of the people.

1. "What are the Cree core values and guiding principles we want to see in a governance model for the future?" People wrote their answers on cards and clustered on the wall, and then the themes were named.
2. After a quick video sharing a proposal for Quebec that Abel Bosum and his team are working on, we asked, "What suggestions do you have for the negotiating team for the proposal to Quebec?"
3. The next question was "What are some specific suggestions you have for the form of government we are creating for the Cree Nation?" People walked around by posters on the wall and wrote their thoughts on sticky notes.

All of the results were documented: the card workshops are each documented as a table, the suggestions for the Quebec proposal are documented by a video camera and notes typed as people were speaking, and the specific suggestions were typed up in answer to the 10 questions.



Number of Participants

Each community had elders, women, men, youth, and secondary students participating, in different groups depending on the community setup and community events. Our youth were highly represented.

- Mistissini: 165 (4 groups)
- Chisasibi: 153 (4 groups)
- Washaw Sibi: 20 (1 group)
- Val d'Or students: 5 (1 group)
- Ottawa students and community: 51 (2 groups)
- Waskaganish: 61 (3 groups)
- Eastmain: 42 (4 groups)
- Waswanipi: 115 (4 groups)
- Ouje-Bougoumou: 41 (4 groups)
- Wemindji: 40 (4 groups)



- Nemaska : 58 (4 groups)
- Whapmagoostui : 65 (5 groups)
- North Bay : 16 (1 group)
- Sudbury: 10 (1 group)

In addition, the four entities involved more than 50 more people, and the Facebook page and website pages involved even more.

Total: more than 900 participants



Summary of Values and Guiding Principles

In February and March, 2011, the Cree Nation Governance Working Group (CNGWG) summarized all the results from all the people. Each of these phrases holds many ideas from many people – there were more than 1000 different ideas expressed. There is a document that has the elements that make up each of these 11 values.

As a Cree Nation we hold these values and principles in governance:

- **Taapwaayaayihimuwin (Spiritual Beliefs).**
- **Integrity.**
- **Building a Strong Foundation.**
- **Eeyou Kischihuwin.**
- **Eeyou Miyupimaatsiun, Health and Social Well-being.**
- **Cree Identity / Being liiyuu.**
- **Eeyou Uchimaan.**
- **Eeyou Pimaatsiun.**
- **Economic Power – Control of Land.**
- **Respect.**
- **Youth and Education.**



Recommendations to Quebec Negotiating Team

Across the whole Cree Nation, there was strong support for the proposal that Abel Bosum's team is working on. No one suggested less than the proposal. Many people wanted to go further, and have full control over category III lands.

Quotes;

- "Today, we are trying to save our lives and our way of life." –Chisasibi elder
- "The thing I want to recommend, the maps of the territories, specially the lands in the territory, have the actual names that were given by the people that lived in the land." –Chisasibi woman
- "To me the only place we gave away our own rights are the areas where they build the dams and camps for the workers. I hope Abel will fight for the land to take back what is rightfully ours." –Chisasibi elder
- "Conscience of the land, land is the base of the negotiations." –Ottawa Student
- "We have the knowledge and we are capable in running our own land." –Waskaganish elder

- “Ski doo trails on their lands, the Eeyou can’t ride on them and yet it’s their property.” –Waswanipi public
- “I noticed on the highway that there are signs up where we can’t camp, hunt and so on.” –Chisasibi public
- “We are not allowed to hunt near the hydro camp and the sport hunters are hunting.” –Chisasibi council
- “Why propose a joint venture when we can have it all.” –Waswanipi youth
- “I will be glad to have our people to have full control of the land, we have our communities, controlling all the categories that’s what I want to see. This is our land.” –Ouje-Bougoumou public
- “No more strings attached. The non-Cree government always has to find a way to be attached.” – Mistissini elder
- “Can we ask that the category 1 and 2 lands be expanded by community on the basis of today’s population rather than by the population in 1975?” –Nemaska youth
- “Make sure it’s a nation-to-nation relationship.” Wemindji Public



Main Themes of Specific Structural Suggestions

In February and March, 2011, the Cree Nation Governance Working Group (CNGWG) summarized the specific structural suggestions from the stickies that were answers to the 10 questions on the posters, as well as other insights from the values workshops that answered these questions. There were over 1000 different suggestions from the people that clustered into 15 different themes of Building Blocks for Cree Governance.

As the Cree Nation, we suggest the following building blocks for government structure:

- ❖ **Division of Powers.**
- ❖ **Eeyou Knowledge to Good Governance.**
- ❖ **Maintain Traditional Economy.**
- ❖ **Cree Law over Lands.**
- ❖ **Educate to Empower.**
- ❖ **Economic Self Reliance.**
- ❖ **Communications.**
- ❖ **Keep Cree Values.**
- ❖ **Ancestral Laws and Values.**
- ❖ **Broad Representation in Decisions.**
- ❖ **“Ministries” of Cree Government.**
- ❖ **Accountable Actions.**
- ❖ **Nationhood.**
- ❖ **Balance of Local and Regional Powers.**
- ❖ **Cree Collective & Cree Individual Rights for Citizenship.**



Next Steps

The CNGWG will be using the results to build models of governance that will work for Cree people. Each of the values and building blocks will be a part of the models. Then these models will be taken to the people for consideration.



Conclusion

We thank all in the Cree Nation for their participation. Together we will build a government that reflects our long history and values in governing ourselves, and builds a strong foundation for our self-governance into the future.

William Mianscum

CNGWG Coordinator

Grand Council of the Crees

Cree Nation Governance Working Group

284B Queen Street

Mistissini, Quebec

G0W 1C0

Email: wmianscum@gcc.ca

Tel.: 418. 923. 2901, 418. 923. 2903

Fax: 418. 923. 2902

Cell: 514. 234. 8073

Website: www.cngwg.ca

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/CNGWG>