

EASTMAIN COMMUNITY VOICES ON THE FUTURE OF THE MARINE REGION

A conversation with Eastmain community members on what they value, the issues they face, and their vision for the future of the Eeyou Marine Region



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EEYOU MARINE REGION PLANNING COMMISSION
COMMISSION D'AMÉNAGEMENT DE LA RÉGION
MARINE D'EEYOU
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THE EYYOU MARINE REGION PLANNING COMMISSION (EMRPC)

The Eeyou Marine Region Planning Commission (EMRPC)

The EMRPC is an independent body created out of the EMRLCA. The EMRPC is responsible for developing a land use plan to guide development and conservation in the Eeyou Marine Region. The EMRPC is made up of two commissioners nominated by the Grand Council of the Crees, one nominated by the government of Canada, and one nominated by the government of Nunavut. The commission also includes a chairperson selected by the other commissioners.

At the time of the consultations, the EMRPC included:

- Chairperson: Tina Petawabano
- Cree Nominee: Chantal Otter Tetreault
- Cree Nominee: Chris Beck
- Canada Nominee: Lorne McNeice
- Nunavut Nominee: David Alagalak

The EMRPC works closely with the Eeyou Planning Commission formed out of the 2012 Cree-Quebec Governance Agreement. The EPC includes Commissioners from each of the Cree communities and is chaired by the Cree Nation Government.

The EPC commissioner for Eastmain is:

- Raymond Shanoush



**WHAT DO
EASTMAIN
CREES VALUE
MOST ABOUT THE
MARINE REGION?**

VALUES

WILDLIFE

"I value the marine life. Even on the small islands you can see caribou prints. There's lots of caribou, beluga, seal, and migrating birds. There's also a camp owned by the community for smoking fish."

HARVESTING

"The islands are used for blueberry picking, gathering driftwood, goose, and fishing."

CREE KNOWLEDGE

"I love being on the land with my family. I learned knowledge of travel in the winter and summer when I was young by observing my family."

HEALING

"The land is healing for those troubled in spirit."

HISTORIC USE

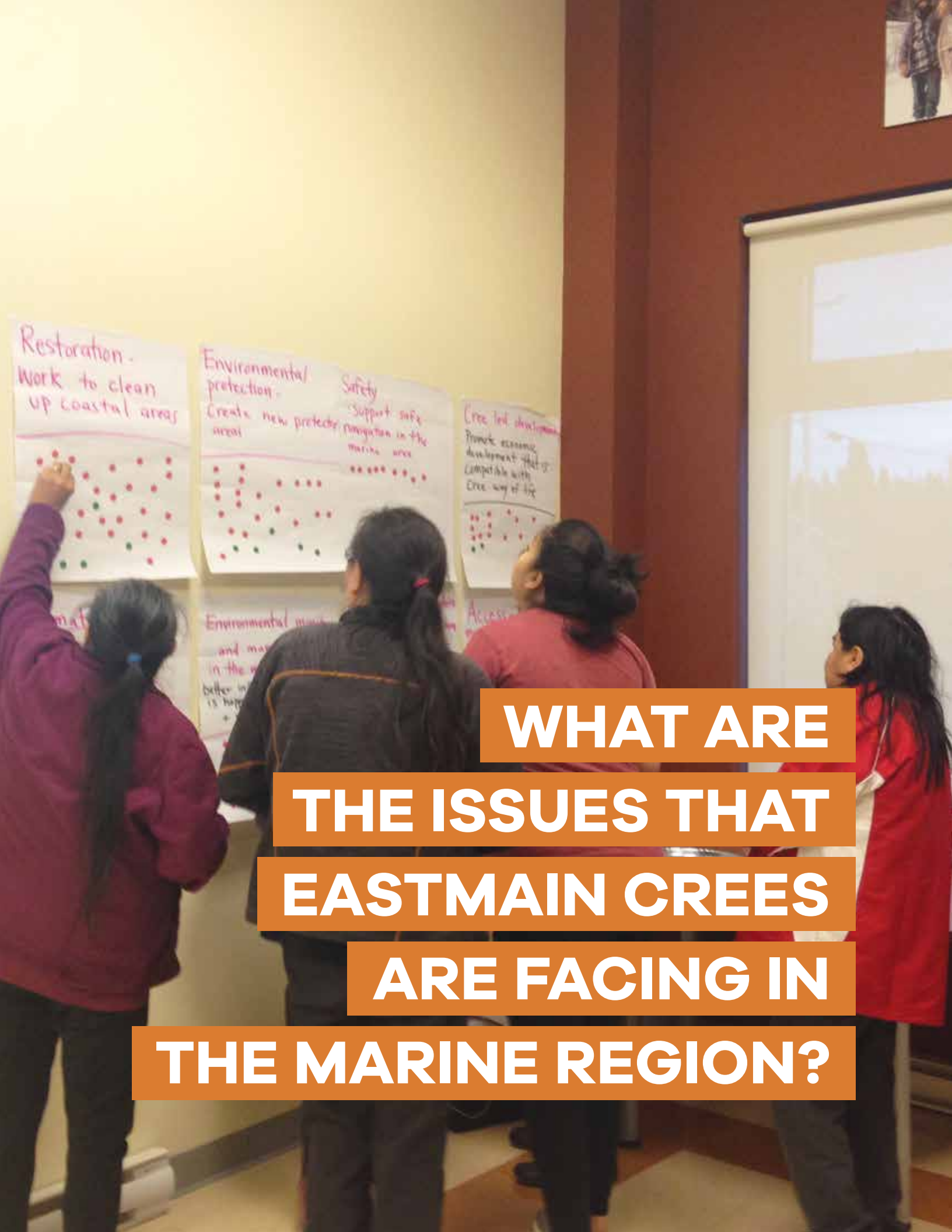
"We have to keep in mind that there's a big difference from what used to be before the Eastmain diversion. Now there are less users than back then. The majority of people used to use the land year-round from the Jack River area up to the Old Factory region."

IMPORTANT PLACES

"There are many important places out there. For example, graves and places we used to go and gather in different seasons."

TOURISM

"In the past, people used those islands to harvest migrating birds but today's generation people don't occupy those islands for the same purposes. Some knowledge still remains with active users but there are few of them. Tourism is an important way for us to retain that knowledge from our elder users of the bay."



**WHAT ARE
THE ISSUES THAT
EASTMAIN CREEES
ARE FACING IN
THE MARINE REGION?**

ISSUES

CHANGES TO WATER FLOW...

“Before the diversions, the flow of the river was strong enough that it kept salt water out of the river. Now the tide goes up to the first rapids. That’s why we had to put in a new water treatment plant.”

LEVEL...

“Once I sat with the late John Mayappo watching the river break up; he said that one day I would see an island there. Today there is an island there because the water levels are so low now. Long ago, fresh water extended five miles out into the bay; now, salt water extends far upriver.”

AND QUALITY

“The water has changed. Creeks and lakes are black and yet we are expected to drink it. It is filtered and comes out as white water. What has been put in it to make it look like that?”

CHANGES TO FISH...

“Fish do not taste the same anymore since the diversion and damming of the river.”

GEESE

“I have seen what was good in the past and what is not good now. Now, the geese are skinny in the fall. What they used to eat during fall migration is no longer there (eel grass). The waterfowl all leave early, there is nothing to value anymore.”

ISSUES

NEW SPECIES

"There are many, many new species showing up: bald eagle, vulture, crane, Greenland shark. There are too many kaahkaachiiship (cormorant) and they eat many species of fish. There are some invasive species such as green crabs that are very invasive and have no natural predators. They are affecting the eelgrass."

IMPACTS TO FISHING

"Long ago, nets left in water did not get dirty. Today, a net cannot be left even for only one day before it gets very dirty. Sometimes, we have to switch nets more than once a day. And we don't catch as many fish today as long ago. We cannot set nets along the shore as before; sometimes the nets sit on the shore because of the water level."

HUNTING IMPACTS

"We have seen many changes to the land and environment. The waterfowl do not stay, they just hatch chicks and leave therefore the hunt is decreasing."

LESS BERRIES

"We have seen less growth of berries. One of the main activities we did on the island in the past was berry picking, we don't see that anymore."

NAVIGATION CHALLENGES

"Since the diversions, spring use of the bay is much harder so there are many helicopters flying around the bay."

ISSUES

CLIMATE CHANGE

"Climate change has changed the quality and condition of the ice compared to 10-20 years ago, the thickness is not the same. It is not solid when people travel by skidoo. Some areas don't freeze and there are open waters during the winter."

CONTAMINATION

"At Cold Water Lake they left drums along areas. Some were never picked up. What happens if these things bust? They rust and will eventually break. That will flow into the marine area."

CHANGES TO CREE WAY OF LIFE

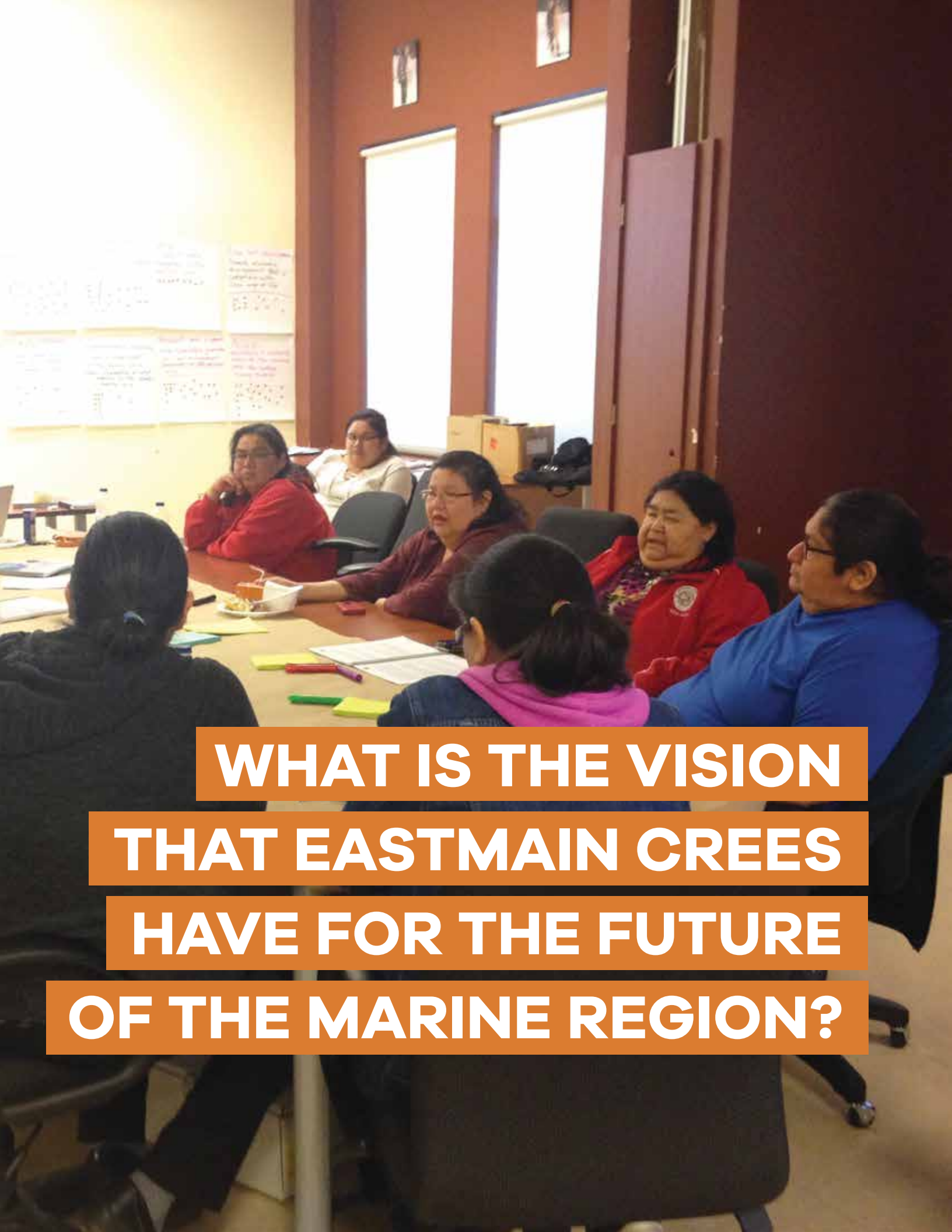
"I learned knowledge of travel in the winter and summer by observation when I was young. It is not this way anymore; families do not go out together anymore."

SAFETY

"Tides on the coast are a lot drier than before. From 1975, since diversion we've seen change in the tides. Tallymen worry that the usual channels offshore have dried up more now giving caution to users of islands and travel routes. They fear that the can no longer use the channels they would always follow."

JURISDICTION

"Quebec is trying to claim part of category two land along the coast. Quebec hunters are travelling to the coast on category three land and then going hunting along the coast on category two land on my trapline."



**WHAT IS THE VISION
THAT EASTMAIN CREES
HAVE FOR THE FUTURE
OF THE MARINE REGION?**

VISION

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT...

"I want to see protection of the environment, spawning grounds on the river and conservation feeding grounds for geese."

WATER...

"We need to protect the water. If we don't, it alters the hunting and fishing."

AND BURIAL SITES

"I want to see respect for burial sites along the coast."

NO CONTAMINATION

"I would like to see environmental restrictions in place; by-laws or regulations and strong cooperation between the Crees and Canada. We need to preserve what we have now; for it not to get worse."

RESTRICTING DEVELOPMENT

"I don't want to see any oil drilling or mining. In 25 years, want to be able to swim and put my feet in the water and for it to be clean."

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

"It is important to decide what and how the marine region and islands can be used for; we must think about our children and future generations. There is much to think about"

VISION

ENERGY GENERATION

“It hasn’t moved forward yet, but we were considering working with Eeyou Power Corp. and developing wind power. There were two locations thought to be viable on the coast. But the locations proposed (Cape Hope Island and High Rock) are important locations for us so we’re not sure if it could go ahead. There would need to be a majority vote at Council Board for something like that to go forward.”

COMMERCIAL FISHING

“I was interested in exploring the possibility of a sturgeon farm. It would likely be located on land to avoid contaminating the wild fish. With something like that, we could push Cree branding. We could also explore farming clams or mussels. We would need to do it in an area out in the bay that’s away from contamination.”

STEWARDSHIP

“There are some invasive species such as green crabs that are very invasive and have no natural predators. They are affecting the eelgrass. Perhaps we could harvest them to sell commercially or create a stewardship program to catch and freeze them.”

TOURISM

“We’re looking to develop tours to take people out in the marine area by boat. We have lots of animals: caribous, belugas, seals, migrating birds. These are the attractions we are aiming for. We’re not promoting it as a polar bear sighting trip, although the success rate for seeing polar bears when we go out is amazing. When we out on a scouting trip we saw polar bears on every trip – including on South Twin island, Weston Island and Trodley Island.”

VISION

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

"We're planning to build a marina and also planning for landscaping for shore stabilization. The marina is in early stages, we hope to be finished by next year. We plan to dredge the area. The channel between the island and the mainland is very low and difficult to cross. Because of low tides, we are building a marine docking system and will have to haul boats out."

RESTORE AREAS

"We need environmental clean-up. Perhaps we can build lakes where waterfowl can feast and become fattened; the original state will never be restored."

FISHING CAMPS

"Fishing camp areas need to be restored; is very nice to be out there. Those on Income Security cannot go to fishing camps anymore because the land is not the same as it was before. Families could go there again if areas were cleaned up and restored. Many other activities could be carried out again as before that children and youth could learn from."

PRESERVING AND PASSING DOWN THE CREE WAY OF LIFE

"The only thing you can plan is how do you maintain the activities of the Cree. We must hold on to our culture and traditions: hunting, trapping, fishing."

SAFETY

"There needs to be some entity that will regulate activity on marine area e.g. coast guard and we need a boat that can take big waves for emergency and surveillance purposes. Eastmain is purchasing a search and rescue boat this summer. But if we were qualified and trained by the Coast Guard, we could be Coast Guard auxiliary officers."





For more information on the Eeyou Marine Region
Planning Commission please see:

<https://www.eeyoumarineregion.ca/>

You can contact the Eeyou Marine Region
head office at:

819-895-2202

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EeyouMarineRegion

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