

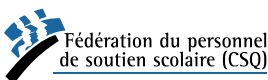


Centrale des syndicats
du Québec

Welcome
WACHIYA!



Living and working in a **Cree** **community**







Message from the CSQ

Wachiya, welcome to all who wish to work in a Cree (eeyou) community!

For the past 50 years, the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ) has represented educational professionals working in Cree and Inuit communities, members of the *Association des employés du Nord québécois* (AENQ-CSQ) and the *Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels en milieu scolaire du Nord-Ouest* (SPPMSNO-CSQ).

Over the years, thanks to our *Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement* (FSE-CSQ), *Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire* (FPSS-CSQ) and *Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec* (FPPE-CSQ) members working in Indigenous communities, we have developed a sense of the challenges facing Cree Nation members because of the prejudices of non-Indigenous people; we also understand their wish for economic and sociocultural development that resembles them, and their desire to contribute to their education system.

We are also aware of the difficulties facing non-Indigenous staff members who choose to work in these communities, particularly with regards to their retention in the North and the labour shortage.

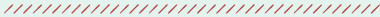
Quebec's labour shortage is worrisome, but in Northern Quebec this issue is even more alarming. Certain individuals living in the south are tempted by a northern work experience while others are fearful of living in a remote and unfamiliar community.

This guide aims to answer frequently asked questions about working in a Cree community. For many individuals, integrating a new living or work environment is as exciting as it is stressful—Cree Nation territory is no exception.

The goal is to raise awareness regarding Cree realities and enlighten educational professionals interested in working in Cree communities. A better knowledge of Northern culture and lifestyle will prepare workers to better intervene and guide the actions they take.

Welcome to education
in the Cree community!

Anne Dionne
Second Vice-President of the CSQ,
responsible for Indigenous affairs



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Table of contents

1

My new environment	12
1.1 <i>Land of the people</i> (Eeyou Itschee)	13
1.2 Administration	14
1.3 Cree School Board	15

2

Living conditions	16
2.1 The cultural and economic way of life	17
2.2 Daily life	20
2.2.1 The colour of time	20
2.2.2 Housing	21
2.2.3 Transportation	23
2.2.4 Food	24
2.2.5 Health care	24
2.3.6 Domestic animals	25

3

Professional integration	26
3.1 At first, shock	27
3.2 Cultural learning	28
3.3 Support from colleagues	30
3.4 Support for daily work	31
3.5 Building a trusting relationship with youth	32
3.6 School attendance	33
3.7 The words to say it	35
Your union	37
To find out more	40

Lexicon

This lexicon is a simple tool intended to encourage respect for Cree culture and create an open-minded connection to ensure everyone's well-being. It also helps you quickly become aware of the surroundings to better understand the people who live here.



Community names¹

Whapmagoostui

Place of the beluga

Chisasibi

The Great River

Wemindji

Red Ochre Mountain

Eastmain

Lands east of James Bay

Nemaska

Where the fish abound

Waskaganish

Little House

Mistissini

Big Rock

Oujé-Bougoumou

The place where people gather

Waswanipi

Lake where we are fishing under torch/
Light on the river

1. QUÉBEC. MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE ET DES COMMUNICATIONS (2015). *Les 9 communautés cries Eeyou Istchee*. [Online]. [mcc.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?id=1750] (Accessed June 15, 2020).



The language

The Cree language, *iijiyuu ayimuun*, comprises two dialects:

- Northern dialect (Whapmagoostui, Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain and Waskaganish)
- Southern dialect (Nemaska, Waswanipi, Oujé-Bougoumou and Mistissini)

Other linguistic resources

- Online East Cree dictionary
eastcree.org/cree/en/dictionary/
- Glosbe – English-Cree online dictionary
glosbe.com
- The Canadian Encyclopedia— Article on the Cree language
thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/cree-syllabics
- Voix Multiples – Aboriginal languages teaching tool
voixmultiples.com/en/translations/

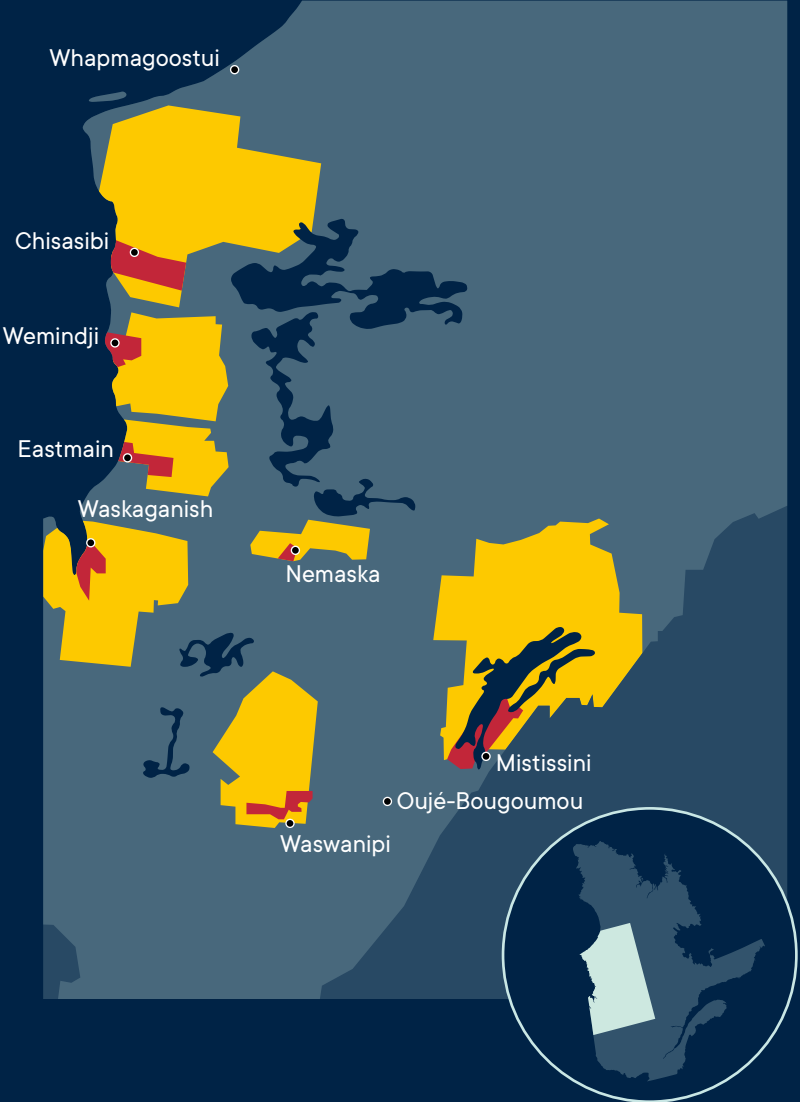
1

My new environment





1.1 Land of the people (Eeyou Itschee)



EEOU ITSCHÉE

- Category 1 land
- Category 2 land
- Category 3 land

Welcome to the Land of the people, *Eeyou Istchee*.² The Cree School Board territory—extending nearly 300,000 square kilometres from the 49th to the 55th parallel—on which there are 9 Cree villages. Along the James Bay coastline are the Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain, Waskaganish and Whapmagoostui villages. The latter is the most northern, neighbouring Inuit village, Kuujjuarapik. Mistissini, Nemaska, Oujé-Bougoumou and Waswanipi villages are located inland.



1.2 Administration

Contrary to other Indigenous nations, but just like the Inuit, Quebec's Eeyou (Cree) do not reside in communities previously called *reserves*, but in villages that have the status of “village municipalities,” and this since July 2012 when the Quebec government and the Grand Council of the Crees signed an Agreement on Governance in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory.

Today, the Cree political, cultural, economic, and legal administrations are managed by the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) and by the Cree Nation Government, two separate legal entities—with identical governance structures—that are governed as a single organization by the Cree Nation. Representing nearly 20,000 members of the Cree Nation³ of Eeyou Istchee, these two organizations work to develop and defend the Nation's rights—including treaty rights—and promote its economic interests. These organizations are also responsible for external relations and mandated to strengthen cultural and political ties with Quebec, Canada and other First Nations, as well as sustain international relations.

2. For more information: engov.ca/community-culture/communities/ (Accessed June 4, 2020).

3. GRAND COUNCIL OF THE CREES (EYYOU ISTCHEE)/CREE NATION GOVERNMENT (2020). *Governance and structure*. [Online]. [engov.ca/governance-structure/grand-council-of-the-crees/] (Accessed June 10, 2020).



1.3 Cree School Board

According to the school board's vision for education, its mission reads:

Provide lifelong learning while instilling the Cree identity in partnership with our communities to allow each student to acquire the qualifications and competencies to become a successful contributor to the Cree Nation and society at large⁴.

The Cree School Board was created in 1975 under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), a treaty protected by the Constitution of Canada; in 1978, it became independent from the federal education system. Section 16 of this agreement stipulates its full jurisdiction over its entire territory regarding elementary and education and adult education, and vocational training. This school board is 75% funded by the federal government and 25% by the Quebec government. Governed by the *Education Act for Cree, Inuit and Naskapi Native Persons* (R.S.Q. I-14), the school board holds some flexibility regarding the minimum 180 school days per year. Its educational curriculum is adapted to provide Cree language and culture teachings.

The Cree School Board has 16 schools offering preschool, elementary, and secondary education. In preschool, Cree is the language of instruction; in elementary and secondary schools, teaching is done in English or French, depending on the community. The school board also oversees the Sabtuan Adult Education Service that includes the Sabtuan Regional Vocational Training Centre in Waswanipi. At the college and university levels, the post-secondary student services sector supports Cree Nation members enrolled as JBNQA beneficiaries. The school board's head office is located in Mistissini. Note that the working languages are English and French.

The Cree School Board website displays a list of Cree communities and their schools. Click on a community name to display basic information such as school name and address, contact information, school calendar, language of instruction, number students and more⁵.

-
4. CREE SCHOOL BOARD. *Vision, Mission, Values*. [Online]. [eeyoueducation.ca/org/who-we-are/vision-mission-values] (Accessed June 10, 2020).
 5. To access this information: eeyoueducation.ca/org/who-we-are/territory-communities (Accessed June 26, 2020).

2

Living conditions





2.1 The cultural and economic way of life

According to the definition of the Cree Nation:

“As Eeyouch/Eenouch, our relationship with the land, and its ability to provide for the needs of current and future generations, will be at the heart of our collective identity. The land has been the foundation of who we are as a people; this connection to the land has guided us in our struggles and accomplishments throughout our history.” (Matthew Coon Come, Grand Chief from 1987 to 2017, Annual Report 2015–2016)⁶



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6. HENNIGS, Rebecca, and Stéphanie BLEAU (2017). *State of Climate Change and Adaptation Knowledge for the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory*. Report presented to the James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment, Montréal, Ouranos, 64 p. Also available online: ouranos.ca/publication-scientifique/RapportEeyouIstchee_EN.pdf.

Throughout the past centuries, social, economic, cultural, environmental, and political changes have shaken this nation. Establishing hunting territories dates to the fur trade—when trading posts, established on ancestral territory, changed the Cree nomadic lifestyle. This led some Crees to a semi-sedentary mode of life, while others remained in their more modern villages.

This settling process—heightened during the 19th century when successive Canadian governments established policies under the pretext of facilitating the management of Cree territories—disrupted their ancestral practices. The *Indian Act*, which was enacted in 1876, plainly sought to assimilate Crees into non-Indigenous, i.e. allochthonous, society by replacing their traditional systems of governance by band councils subject to the government and its agents. It also forbade the expression of Indigenous identity through culture-related activities. It was in the wake of this Act that the residential schools were created, whose devastating consequences are still obvious today. The aftereffects of these events weigh heavily on the communities, particularly in education. The bonds of trust between staff and students will be discussed in a subsequent section.

During the 20th century, mainly since the 1990s, attempts have been made to modernize the *Indian Act*. However:

The Indian Act's modern version still contains numerous rules relating to reserves, the financial guardianship of minors and incapacitated adults, management of band-owned resources, internal elections, and other aspects of life on the reserve. [...] These legislative efforts were, however, marked by controversy with First Nations across the country who opposed them for a variety of reasons, the key one being the lack of a process for a complete and appropriate consultation. A number of agreements—such as the 1999 First Nations Land Management Act—have nonetheless enabled First Nations governments to acquire a degree of self-government without abolishing the Indian Act⁷.

7. HENDERSON, William B. (2018). "Indian Act" in the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, [Online]. [\[theacanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-act\]](https://theacanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-act) (Accessed June 10, 2020).

Additionally, during the 20th century, Cree communities saw their traditional economic activities even more disrupted by the James Bay hydroelectric development. The construction of dams and reservoirs flooded what was once traditional hunting territory, and substantial deforestation has caused irreversible damage to their environment, impacting hunting and fishing⁸.

Determined to reclaim control over their territory, the Crees and Inuit set a North American precedent; in 1975, after a long legal saga, they negotiated the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, a treaty protected under the Constitution of Canada. This agreement introduced a specific legal regime by granting Cree and Inuit communities political and administrative autonomy, creating new jobs, and building roads to circulate on the territory. It also granted exclusive hunting, fishing and trapping rights on their respective territories⁹.

8. Watch the video online: *Occupy the territory*:
lieuxderencontres.ca/en/content/at-akulivik-bay/plus/naming-to-protect.html.

9. KAINÉ, Elisabeth, Jean TANGUAY and Jacques KURTNESS, dir. (2016). *Voix, visages, paysages. Les Premiers Peuples et le XX^e siècle*, La Boîte Rouge VIF and Presses de l'Université Laval, Québec, p. 123-125 and 129.

But:

“It is also at the origin of the flooding of the hunting grounds and the waning of the ecosystems, thereby disrupting the vast sphere of life in the communities and the cultural base that supported the whole¹⁰.”

In 2002, the Cree Nation signed an agreement with the Quebec government: the *Paix des Braves*. This partnership has empowered the Crees to acquire real means to develop projects while respecting their lands and manage their territory with greater autonomy.

Finally, in February 2020, the Quebec government and the Grand Council of the Crees signed the Memorandum of Understanding known as the “Grand Alliance,” endorsing the long-term economic development of the Eeyou Istchee Baie-James territory. This agreement should ultimately allow “the deployment of an ‘ambitious’ infrastructure plan, primarily road and rail, to encourage mining development in the Nord-du-Québec region. The ‘Great Alliance’ also provides for the identification of new protected areas¹¹.”

2.2 Daily life

Before arriving, it is essential to understand certain realities that influence daily life in a village. Some of you come alone or with your life partner, and children. Adjustment is different depending on your situation but, generally, the following information applies to everyone.

2.2.1 The colour of time

Living in Eeyou Istchee means long summer days, but short winter days. Climate change causes considerable regional and seasonal variability, and increasingly difficult weather forecasts. Typically, summer temperatures fluctuate between 10 and 25 °C; in winter, the temperature can drop to -40 °C. If light disturbs your sleep, you should consider an opaque window covering. Also, plan your wardrobe to ensure daily and outdoor activity comfort.

10. WALTER, Emmanuelle (2016). *Le centre du monde: une virée en Eeyou Istchee Baie-James avec Romeo Saganash*. Montréal, Lux Éditeur, p. 50.

11. LÉVESQUE, Fanny (2020). « Québec et les Cris scellent une entente de 4,6 milliards », *La Presse*. [Online] (February 18). [[lapresse.ca/actualites/regional/2020-02-18/quebec-et-les-cris-scellent-une-entente-de-4-6-milliards/](https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/regional/2020-02-18/quebec-et-les-cris-scellent-une-entente-de-4-6-milliards/)] (Accessed June 10, 2020).



Most of Quebec's largest freshwater lakes are in this region, notably Lake Mistassini. In the south, the region is covered by the boreal forest, which fades and gives way to the taiga further north. The Northern Lights are exceptional in this area and it is a hunter, angler, and outdoor enthusiast's paradise¹². Several villages are well equipped with leisure facilities: snowmobiling, ATViing, hiking, canoeing, golfing, bowling, etc.

2.2.2 Housing

The growth of the Cree population is significant: 60% the community members who are enrolled as JBNQA beneficiaries are under 35 years of age¹³. Obviously, housing is important. The federal government is responsible for housing in the villages. Its financial commitments are clearly insufficient in light of demographic growth, and the housing situation is critical: dwellings are inadequate and overcrowded; as a result, they are rapidly deteriorating. This overcrowding affects the educational success and health of young Indigenous students.

12. To learn more, visit: escapelikeneverbefore.com/en/what-to-do/aboriginal-experience/ (Accessed June 10, 2020).

13. GRAND COUNCIL OF THE CREES (EYYOU ISTCHEE)/CREE NATION GOVERNMENT [s. d.]. *Annual Report 2018-2019*. [Online], p. 22. [cng.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/gcc-cng-ar-2018-2019-bookmark.pdf] (Accessed June 10, 2020).

In 2016, it was estimated that more than 2,000 housing units were needed to meet the population's current needs. Depending on the village, the short construction season, the elevated costs of materials and fuel, as well as maintaining the current property inventory represent challenges that exacerbate this housing shortage for Cree families¹⁴.

The situation is somewhat different for educational professionals who come to work in the communities; this causes frictions that should not be taken lightly. In fact, the school board provides staff housing for individuals whose permanent residence is more than 50 km from their place of employment. These duplexes or apartments are furnished, heated and lighted; they are not free, but inexpensive, and the rent is deducted from worker's pay. This amount, considered a taxable employment benefit, is added to the worker's tax receipt.

In addition to the rent, be sure to bring items such as a microwave, coffee maker, radio, television, telephone, and toaster; also dishes, pots and pans, utensils, bedding, shower curtain, hangers, etc., in other words, any item that will make your stay more enjoyable.

14. A joint Canada-Cree Nation working group was assembled to form a partnership to implement the Cree Nation Housing Strategy, with sectors where the federal government could invest (JBNQA, section 28).



Upon arrival at your accommodation, it is recommended that you carefully examine the premises. The school board's policy provides for an inspection report. Taking pictures is a great idea, as this makes it easier to get repairs done, if necessary, or for insurance. This is even more important if you leave the village for summer vacation as the school board may use your accommodation during your absence, in which case you must safely store your personal effects. You may refuse and cover the rent during the summer..

Based on experience, it is advisable to take out personal insurance. To avoid complications, contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) directly, that will automatically assign you an insurer^{15,16}.

2.2.3 Transportation

All villages are accessible via road or plane, except for Whapmagoostui that is only accessible by plane. Being able to access a village by road helps lessen the feeling of isolation and, often, eases adaptation. Every year, three return trips, either by airplane or by car, are paid for by the school board. These trips allow travel between a person's residence and the village where they have been assigned for a full year, except for those employed in adult education and vocational training. These trips can also be used by your dependents.

15. CSQ members benefit from Protections RésAut CSQ. For more information visit: lacsq.org/services/la-personnelle-les-protections-resaut/.

16. Inquiring with your union, the AENQ-CSQ or the SPPMSNO-CSQ, is an excellent idea (contact information can be found in the **Your union** section at the end of this guide).



It is important to note that while the first two trips are eligible for a tax deduction, the third, regardless of the means of transportation, is not except for a medical trip (See the Cree School Board's policy on outings and taxes for further information); verify with the employer before using the third trip.

2.2.4 Food

There are grocery stores in five villages. The available products clearly illustrate the dependence on southern foods. Food is very costly, and the variety of products available is not the same as in southern grocery stores. It is therefore common for people to regularly travel to Abitibi, particularly, Val-d'Or, or to the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean to shop. People living in Whapmagoostui, Wemindji, Waskaganish, Eastmain and Nemaska can have food shipped from stores in the south. The food is delivered, and transportation costs are reimbursed. In addition to the school board's food transportation allowance, school board employees are entitled to an additional reimbursement equivalent to 66% of the cost of their claims. Your colleagues can help you make the best use of these services¹⁷.

2.2.5 Health care

All nine villages in Eeyou Istchee have a Miyupimaatisiun Community Centre (CMC), which is similar to the Integrated Health and Social Services Centres (CISSS) elsewhere in Québec. CMCs provide general medicine, home and dental care, and social services. Chisasibi has a Regional Hospital Centre with 29 beds¹⁸. However, health care is offered by the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) and, under the *Act respecting health services and social services for Cree Native persons*, its priority is the Cree population, therefore access to care for those who do not benefit from this law is rather limited¹⁹.

17. For more information, see the Food section on the website: lieuxderencontres.ca/en/content/learning_to_cook.html (Accessed June 10, 2020).

18. CREE BOARD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES OF JAMES BAY (2012). *Chisasibi* [Online]. creehealth.org/chisasibi (Accessed April 28, 2021).

19. For more information on health care: creehealth.org/ (Accessed June 10, 2020).



2.3.6 Domestic animals

For some, bringing their pet with them is essential as they are family. A pet can also help counter boredom and isolation. If travelling by plane, it is possible to bring your pet with you, but this presents certain challenges: you must ensure there is place available for its transport, and this, two months in advance. Even when you have reserved a place for your pet, depending on the number of pets on board, it may no longer be available come departure time. You should also be aware that there are times when animals are not authorized to travel. Be sure to check with the airline, as these restrictions may shorten your vacation time south. Also, pets are prohibited in some apartments or duplexes, and the school board may limit the number of pets.

3

Professional integration





3.1 At first, shock

“It is not up to Eeyou Istche, its residents or students to adapt to you. It is you that must make the effort to adapt to their lifestyle and culture²⁰.”

This new territory to discover is one that has forged the Cree Nation over the centuries. For you, everything will be new: Cree perspective on the world, history, connection to the seasons, language, cultural practices, food, time management, school pace and community organization.

These disparities between your own cultural references and the Cree way of living and thinking can be destabilizing, especially at the beginning. You must not deny this culture shock: it is inevitable. For this reason, those who have already experienced northern living say that it is important to prepare yourself before your arrival.

Several actions can help tame this new work environment and your integration into the community: learning the language, acquiring knowledge or skills pertaining to Cree history, cultural perspectives, and contemporary issues²¹. It is important to understand the evolution of the Nation’s culture in the modern context. You have the opportunity to have access to this culture and become familiar with activities.

Another likely shock relates to your adaptation to programs adopted by the school board²². In this regard, the expertise of colleagues, including teaching and support staff as well as educational advisors, is essential to help you understand the differences and develop teaching practices tailored to your new environment.

20. Anonymous quote from a questionnaire submitted to members of the *Association des employés du Nord québécois* (AENQ-CSQ) to realize this guide.

21. At the end of this guide, you will find suggested reading, videos and other documents that will help you better understand the realities of the Eeyou Istchee.

22. To watch the video on education: lieuxderencontres.ca/en/content/after_pre_college.html.



3.2 Cultural learning

Throughout the weeks, you will adjust to your new environment, understand its ways, and gradually adapt to the village, but mainly to the school and its students. Even with the efforts made by the elders, distinctive traditional Cree subsistence activities have considerably disappeared without enough new paying jobs being developed in the villages to ensure the economic autonomy of all families. Some do well in terms of employment, but not all.



Subsequently:

No less than a third of the population maintains a lifestyle based on subsistence activities, and an even greater number of Crees practice subsistence activities part-time, splitting their time between a job in the village and activities in the forest²³.

Goose Break, a hunting period in May, where schools shut down to allow people to head to their hunting camps in Eeyou Istchee, is a good example²⁴.

It is vital to learn about the culture and issues affecting the Cree and the village where you will be working. Many people who have worked in Eeyou Istchee say that it is important to develop connections outside the workplace and to mingle without prejudice. To integrate and socialize, participate in community activities, read, or listen to local and regional media²⁵, join a sports team or a cultural project.

Social media promote the development of cultural habits that are distinct from traditional practices and customs. As one teacher pointed out, more and more young people are online and have Facebook accounts, although Internet access is still problematic in several villages.

23. WALTER, Emmanuelle (2016). *Le centre du monde: une virée en Eeyou Istchee Baie-James avec Romeo Saganash*. Montréal, Lux Éditeur, p. 85.

24. Watch short videos:

lieuxderencontres.ca/en/content/passeurs_culturels/plus/igniting_the_flame.html;

lieuxderencontres.ca/en/content/peace/plus/where_i_belong.html.

25. Visit the website: nationnews.ca (Accessed June 10, 2020).



3.3 Support from colleagues

“Colleagues who helped me get to know the school and understand life in the North significantly aided my integration²⁶.”

In many areas, the union or colleagues organize welcome activities; these are important as they allow you to meet the people with whom you will work during the school year. Do not hesitate to attend. In some schools, there is also pairing or mentoring between more experienced individuals and newcomers. Such contacts help ease loneliness and counter boredom.

Developing a relationship with colleagues to talk about the challenges of working with young people, and the administrative or technical work required, is especially important. Other people’s experience helps put our own experiences into perspective. Whether it is swapping tips or ideas, these exchanges help you understand the village mindset. These provide a better understanding of parent-student relationships, student services, each staff member’s role, classroom organization, procedures, school administration and maintenance.

26. Anonymous quote from a questionnaire submitted to members of the *Association des employés du Nord québécois* (AENQ-CSQ) to realize this guide.



3.4 Support for daily work

In each village, a union delegates representing educational and support staff who are members of the *Association des employés du Nord québécois* (AENQ-CSQ) are available. Professional staff can count on the *Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels en milieu scolaire du Nord-Ouest* (SPPMSNO-CSQ). These people can be of great support in helping you obtain key information relating to your set up, your work rapport and your integration into the position as well as into the community.





3.5 Building a trusting relationship with youth

“Youth are the hope of their people²⁷.”

Despite many efforts, the current school system places Cree students in a cultural environment that is foreign to them. In fact, there is a large gap between the current education system and Cree learning systems. In the current system learning depends on the student’s reading and writing skills, whereas in communities, oral transmission—via the elderly and shared cultural codes—are fundamental and define youth identity²⁸. But even today, despite studies and reports, learning in schools is scarcely based on these codes: books and programs are poles apart from the Cree culture, and the school calendar scarcely aligns with traditional activities²⁹.

To establish student trust, it is essential to give them time to get to know the school staff from the south. The effects of the Non-native education personnel turnover rate must not be under-estimated. This makes bonding difficult as every year, students experience a certain abandonment. For many, there is no point in bonding with someone who will be leaving. Despite all this, depending on your adaptability and attitude to their reality, over time, you will build trust and bond with them.

You must be aware that you are not there to change the culture of young Cree, but allow them to pursue their education and achieve their goals, while respecting their culture. This is the challenge that awaits you.

27. Anonymous quote from a questionnaire submitted to members of the *Association des employés du Nord québécois* (AENQ-CSQ) to realize this guide.

28. Sheila Watt-Cloutier highlights the importance of the report: *Silatunimut: le chemin de la sagesse*. (WATT-CLOUTIER, Sheila (2019). *Le droit au froid*, Montréal, Écosociété, p. 140).

29. KAINE, Elisabeth, Jean TANGUAY and Jacques KURTNESS, dir. (2016). *Voix, visages, paysages. Les Premiers Peuples et le XX^e siècle*, La Boîte Rouge VIF and Presses de l’Université Laval, Québec, p. 133-136.

Not all Cree youth are familiar with their origins, the history of their people, their value system, customs, and language; therefore, it is difficult for them to appreciate their opportunities and acknowledge their potential. The courses and the education system must help restore and strengthen their Cree pride.

All these factors can influence school attendance.



3.6 School attendance

Dropping out of school is symptomatic of the socioeconomic and cultural difficulties facing Cree communities. The statistics speak for themselves.

For the 2017-2018 school year, the rate of young people leaving school without a diploma or qualification in general education at the Cree school board is 67.7%, which is alarming; in comparison, the Quebec rate is 13.6%. According to data from the Minister of Education and Higher Education (MEES), those leaving school were 74% boys and 62.2% girls³⁰.

Beyond statistics, one must understand the historical and contextual factors that explain the societal issues in the villages, and make schooling so challenging for young Cree. Yet, these young people are brimming with curiosity and dreams, which are too often shattered by their living conditions.

30. QUÉBEC. MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION ET DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR (2020). *Taux de sorties sans diplôme ni qualification en formation générale des jeunes*. [Online], 11 p. [education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/statistiques_info_decisionnelle/Methodologie.pdf] (Accessed June 29, 2020).

The Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services, better known as the Viens Commission, clearly demonstrated that the boarding and residential school systems in Quebec between 1934 to 1996 contributed to destroying the culture and identity of the youth placed in these schools. These traumas have been passed down from one generation to the next and still affect the communities. The under-education and distrust of parents in the school system influence their children, rendering communication between parents and school staff tricky³¹.

Several socioeconomic factors contribute to learning difficulties and hinder academic success, but these are not irreversible, even if being successful in school in an Indigenous community is often a challenge³².

Yes, it takes time and constancy to be accepted by students facing all these challenges, and their families, and encourage them to take an interest in their child's education. From an academic standpoint, do not hesitate to think outside the box; establish a flexible learning framework, innovate with alternative, adapted to their culture, educational practices, and services—all to develop their sense of belonging to the school. Several school staff recounted the positive effect of cultural activities and sports competitions. For others, it is scientific activities, in particular science fairs, and new technologies that motivate and encourage them to persevere in school.

31. To know more:

Interview with Katherine Sorbey: lieuxderencontres.ca/en/content/crying_in_the_streets_of_montreal/more/the_shock_of_reside;

Interview with Rose-Anna McDougall and Anne Tremblay: lieuxderencontres.ca/en/content/crying_in_the_streets_of_montreal/plus/dissociation.html;

Interview with Irene Otter: lieuxderencontres.ca/en/content/crying_in_the_streets_of_montreal/plus/great_wounds_great_courage.html.

32. CREE BOARD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES OF JAMES BAY [s. d.] *Publications — Chiffres clés*, [Online]. [crssbaiejames.gouv.qc.ca/1341/Publications.crssbaiejames] (Accessed June 10, 2020).

An open-mind and unpretentiousness are excellent tools for a successful integration. It is possible to develop strategies that link village life and school life; awaken in these young people new talents and discover student role models³³. Again, exchanging with colleagues is important, as there are positive experiences that can inspire you and lead to a successful school year.



3.7 The words to say it

Like the other Indigenous languages³⁴, Cree is rooted in its territory, as demonstrated by the names of several places.

For Melissa Mollen-Dupuis:

“In our languages, words describe a relationship to something or to someone. The universe cannot exist without a connection to others³⁵.”

While English has become the primary language in five Cree villages, French is fluently spoken in Waswanipi, Chisasibi, Mistissini and Waskaganish. However, this cohabitation with English and French poses a challenge for the future of the Cree language. On September 17, 2019, the Grand Council of the Crees and the Cree Nation Government adopted the *Act respecting the Cree language of Eeyou Istchee* and created the Office of the Languages Commissioner. Its mandate is to promote the language and support the efforts of the Crees to recover, revitalize, maintain, and strengthen their language³⁶.

33. Examples of interesting educational initiatives can be found in the document from the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi: CENTRE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS NIKANITE (2016). *Revue de la persévérance et de la réussite scolaires chez les Premiers Peuples*, [Online], vol. 2 (October), 109 p. [colloques.uqac.ca/prscpp/files/2016/10/montage_revueCPNN_FR.pdf].

34. For more information:

lieuxderencontres.ca/en/map/singing_in_our_ancestors_language/an_atikamekw_language_lesson.html;

KAINE, Elisabeth, Jean TANGUAY et Jacques KURTNESSE, dir. (2016). *Voix, visages, paysages. Les Premiers Peuples et le XX^e siècle*, La Boîte Rouge VIF and Presses de l'Université Laval, Québec, p. 101-104.

35. Melissa Mollen-Dupuis during a round table session by *Relations* magazine, the theme:

« Décoloniser notre regard », no. 802, May-June, 2019, p. 25.

36. For more information: cngov.ca/governance-structure/legislation/cree-laws/ (Accessed June 10, 2020).



Your union

To facilitate your professional integration and your daily work, your local union can provide you with information on various work and collective agreement topics. Do not hesitate to contact a union advisor to book an appointment or to talk.



Here are some topics you can obtain information on:

- Pay scales
- Insurance plans
- Information regarding payroll deductions (income taxes, union dues, insurance premiums, retirement plan contributions)
- Employment insurance
- Maternity, paternity, adoption, and sick leaves
- Education and training
- Professional integration program
- School calendar and pedagogical days
- Minimum protections that the employer must grant
- Any occupational health and safety issue
- Professional obligations

If you are educational staff or school support staff, you can contact the *Association des employés du Nord québécois* (AENQ-CSQ), which is affiliated with the *Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement* (FSE-CSQ) and the *Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire* (FPSS-CSQ):

Association des employés du Nord québécois (AENQ-CSQ)

9405, rue Sherbrooke Est
Montréal (Quebec) H1L 6P3

Telephone: 514 356-8888, ext. 2801

Toll free: 1 800 465-0897

Fax: 514 354-8714

Email: aenq@lacsq.org

Website: aenq.org

If you are professional staff, you can contact the *Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels en milieu scolaire du Nord-Ouest* (SPPMSNO-CSQ) that is affiliated with the *Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec* (FPPE-CSQ).

Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels en milieu scolaire du Nord-Ouest (SPPMSNO-CSQ).

554, chemin du Lac Malartic
Rivière-Héva (Québec) JOY 2H0

Telephone: 819 735-2040

Fax: 819 757-3016

Email: pres@pnordouest.com

Website: sppmsno.com



Your Centrale

Your union is affiliated with the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ), your central labour body. The CSQ groups several education and public service employee federations:

- *Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec* (FPPE-CSQ)
- *Fédération du personnel de l'enseignement privé* (FPEP-CSQ)
- *Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep* (FEC-CSQ)
- *Fédération du personnel de soutien de l'enseignement supérieur* (FPSES-CSQ)
- *Fédération des syndicats de l'action collective* (FSAC-CSQ)
- *Regroupement des unités catégorielles* (RUC)
- *Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement* (FSE-CSQ)
- *Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire* (FPSS-CSQ)
- *Fédération du personnel professionnel des collèges* (FPPC-CSQ)
- *Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec* (FIPEQ-CSQ)
- *Fédération de la Santé du Québec* (FSQ-CSQ)
- *Fédération de la recherche et de l'enseignement universitaire du Québec* (FREUQ-CSQ)

The CSQ also negotiates with the government on issues common to public and parapublic sector jobs, such as wages, insurance and pension plans, parental rights, and regional disparities.

The CSQ has set up a youth committee to represent it. This committee's mandate is to support the emergence of a dynamic union succession and promote the adoption of practices likely to increase the involvement of young people within the CSQ. It also monitors government policies towards young people. Meetings (youth networks) are organized by the CSQ.

The CSQ has created other committees and networks in which you can participate to represent your local union. Whether you are interested in political action, the status of women, democracy or environmental issues, occupational health and safety, or sexual diversity and gender identity, you will be able to discuss these issues with other CSQ members.

For more information, visit the Centrale website (lacsq.org).

Facebook: [@lacsq](https://www.facebook.com/lacsq)

Instagram: [lacsq](https://www.instagram.com/lacsq)

Twitter: [@csq_centrale](https://twitter.com/csq_centrale)

YouTube: [Centrale des syndicats du Québec \(CSQ\)](https://www.youtube.com/Centrale%20des%20syndicats%20du%20Qu%C3%A9bec%20(CSQ))

To find out more



To read

- AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, and MIKANA (2019). « *Tu n'as pas l'air autochtone !* » et autres préjugés. Booklet available at accueil@amnistie.ca. Also available online: amnistie.ca/sinformer/publications/autres/tu-nas-pas-lair-autochtone-autres-prejuges.
- CENTRALE DES SYNDICATS DU QUÉBEC (2012). *Sociocultural and political changes among the Crees of Québec* (September), 12 p. Publication available via the CSQ Documentation Centre under D12338-A.
- KAINE, Elisabeth, Jean TANGUAY and Jacques KURTNESS, dir. (2016). *Voix, visages, paysages. Les Premiers Peuples et le XXI^e siècle*, La Boîte Rouge VIF and Presses de l'Université Laval, Québec, 248 p.
- LEPAGE, Pierre (2019). *Mythes et réalités sur les peuples autochtones*, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse and Institut Tshakapesh, 180 p. Also available online: cdpdj.qc.ca/Publications/Mythes-Realites.pdf.
- SAUL, John (2015). *Le grand retour: le réveil autochtone*, Montréal, Boréal, 336 p.
- WALTER, Emmanuelle (2016). *Le centre du monde: une virée en Eeyou Istchee Baie-James avec Romeo Saganash*. Montréal, Lux Éditeur, 145 p.
- WATT-CLOUTIER, Sheila (2019). *Le droit au froid*, Montréal, Écosociété, 360 p.
- To discover the Eeyou Istchee culture: EYYOU ISTCHEE BAIE-JAMES (2016). *Aboriginal Experience* [Online]. [escapelikeneverbefore.com/en/what-to-do/aboriginal-experience/].
- A series of CSQ articles on Inuit and Cree realities in education. Available at: magazine.lacsq.org > Magazine > Société > Autochtones.



To watch

- Campagne Prof, ma fierté!
facebook.com/profmafierte/videos/?ref=page_internal
- Campagne Prof, ma fierté! en territoire cri
facebook.com/profmafierte/videos/1054184981436181/
facebook.com/profmafierte/videos/390620181718406/
- Campagne L'école a besoin de soutien
youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRP-jOUtFOZVnwgEwKKRC4IKaNtkgs-Jk
- **The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN)**, is a Canadian television network. It is the first national public television network for Indigenous people in the world.
aptn.ca
- **Espaces autochtones** is a Radio-Canada site designed to reveal, explain and understand Indigenous realities. An inclusive site to obtain information, express yourself, and debate.
ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones
facebook.com/espacesautochtones
- **Wapikoni mobile** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to distribute films and educate audiences about the issues facing First Nations and Inuit by promoting their rich, and, too often, overlooked culture.
wapikoni.ca



To discover

- **Eye on the Arctic** is a circumpolar co-production created and coordinated by Radio Canada International. It brings together print, radio, television, and web journalists from circumpolar countries to better describe the reality of communities and people directly affected by global warming.
rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/about-us/
- **Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada** presents Indigenous perspectives, much older than the nation itself, shared through maps, artistic creations, history, and culture. It was produced by the Royal Canadian Geographical Society in partnership with the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis Nation, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and Indspire.
indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/



Centrale des syndicats
du Québec