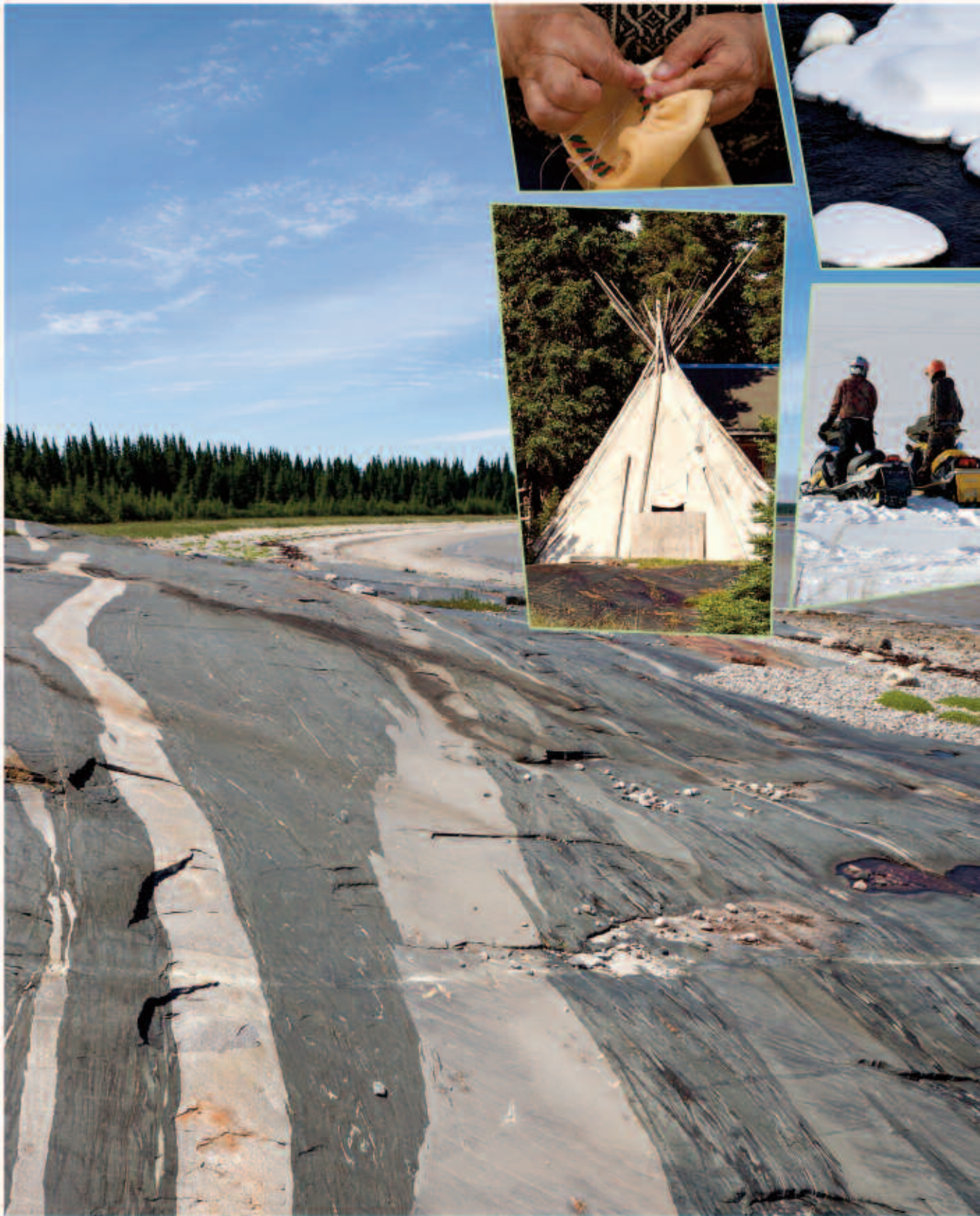


2013-2014



Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association
Annual Report

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A note from our President



On behalf of COTA, I am pleased to present the 2013-2014 Annual Report. The past 12-month period represented the final year of our current 3-year Tourism Action Plan. It has been a busy and productive year with many key projects coming to a close while others are nearing completion.

Our Tourism Action Plan – which is built around a 3-part strategy, including product development, marketing, and human resource reorganization – has been successful in getting a number of initiatives under way. While the Plan highlighted the region’s many strengths that include abundant natural attractions (wildlife and plant life, forests and tundra, and lakes, rivers, and the sea) and our rich cultural heritage, it also pinpointed some of the most important challenges we face. Of particular note were issues such as the lack of market-ready tourism products and packages, more convenient and affordable air access, improved signage on roads and within communities, and a more efficient regional booking system.

To address these challenges, beginning in 2012, important initiatives such as the Air Access Master Plan, Product Development Coaching, and a review of the viability of a Destination Management Company were launched. Each of these projects represents a tangible step toward a viable and sustainable tourism industry. We are looking ahead to building even more momentum as we achieve these critical and strategic objectives.

It is gratifying to see how diverse initiatives – including adventure, nature, and culture-based tourism activities and the creation of a strong brand image for the region as a whole – can be combined as part of a shared strategy to foster the development of our tourism industry.

I believe that if we continue along our current path of development, we will succeed in establishing a world-class tourism industry in our region for the benefit of our communities and visitors.

I would also like to congratulate the winners at this year’s Regional gala of Grand Prix du tourisme québécois that took place on March 27. They are, *Aanischaaukamikw* Cree Cultural Institute, the Maquatua Inn, the Waswanipi Old Post Fishing Derby, and Gilbert Baribeau and Patrick Forward both of the Mistissini Lodge.

Finally, a huge thank you to our staff, members, and partners for their ongoing support. We’ve been working together to position Eeyou Istchee Baie-James as an outstanding and truly distinctive tourism destination – and we’re encouraged by the progress we’re making toward that goal.

“Agoodah Wachiya! God Bless Eeyou Istchee!”

Julie-Ann Cooper

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A note from our Executive Director



Another year has gone by, and we can look back on 2013 with a strong sense of accomplishment. The past year was clearly a purposeful and productive one that has brought us closer to achieving our vision for tourism in Eeyou Istchee.

We continue to pursue our goals with determination, knowing how important tourism is for our region and its sustainable economic development in the long term. Our efforts are focused on realizing the vision for which COTA was created under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). We remain committed to transforming our region's vast potential into a viable economic reality. How are we doing this? By focusing on three critical issues: (1) enhancing air access for tourists to the region; (2) fostering the development of market-ready tourism packages; and (3) facilitating booking.

Air access is crucial to the development of a successful tourism industry and as such we have supported the Master Plan for Air Access to examine how to offer tourists affordable and convenient air access to and within Eeyou Istchee Baie-James. A particular focus of the Plan is to look at bundling flights as part of an overall travel package. Various promising possibilities are under consideration, including a potential partnership with Mont-Tremblant and its international airport.

Market-ready tourism packages are also key which is why a coaching program dedicated to product development was implemented. The program which is currently underway is designed to help current and future tourism operators devise, develop, and position their tourism packages in ways that are attractive to travellers. Our region offers a number of unique travel, leisure, adventure, and cultural opportunities for visitors; the coaching program will help operators position such opportunities more effectively. Also, by providing coaching to local Cree entrepreneurs, we ensure that the Cree remain the primary beneficiaries of future development.

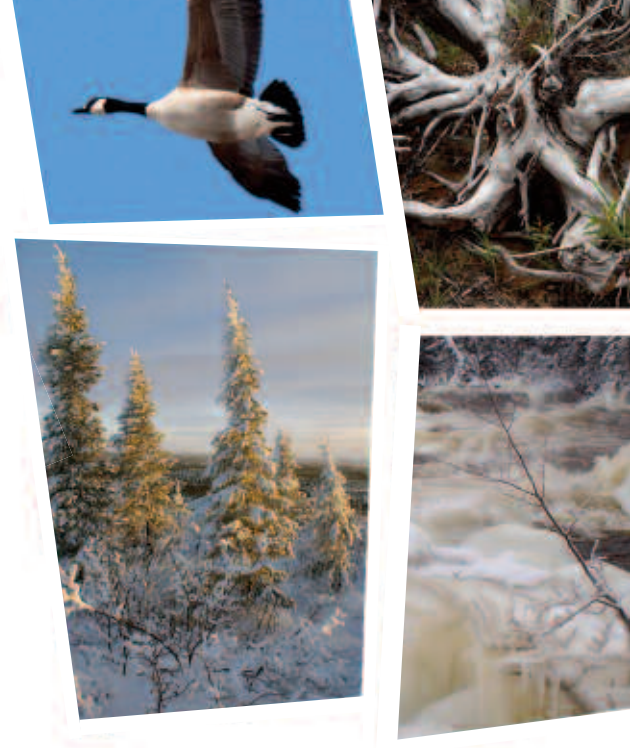
The need to offer convenient and accessible booking mechanisms and create diversified tourism packages must also be addressed and to this end, a Destination Management Company (DMC) is being established to oversee this critical component. With the development of the DMC, COTA is working towards fulfilling its obligation in part under Article 28.6.1 of the JBNQA to provide marketing, booking, and promotion services for Cree outfitting operations.

To achieve real progress and build a world-class tourism industry in our region, we need to move forward on all of these fronts. Without affordable air access for tourists, even the most attractive tourism packages will fail to attract visitors. Without the effective marketing and booking capabilities that a DMC can provide, even the most alluring travel packages will not sell.

With each of these initiatives along with COTA's growing team of dedicated staff, we know we can look forward to a bright future for tourism which in turn offers an exciting opportunity to showcase our culture, traditions and the beauty of our natural environment.

Robin McGinley

About COTA



History

COTA was incorporated on December 7, 2000 as a non-profit corporation under Part II of the Canadian Corporations Act. The actual process that eventually led to the creation of COTA, however, began over 30 years ago during the negotiations for the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA).

The negotiations leading to the JBNQA provided the platform for gaining control over tourism development. With the signing of the Final Agreement in November 1975, the legal framework for this control became a reality and paved the way for the creation of COTA as a treaty obligation under sections 28.4 and 28.6 of the JBNQA.

28.4 Cree Associations

28.4.1 Subject to the positive conclusions of the necessary feasibility studies involving the Crees to the greatest extent possible and to the availability of funds, Canada and/or Québec will assist the Crees with funding and technical advice in establishing, as soon as possible, as described herein:

- a) a Cree Trappers' Association;
- b) a Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association;
- c) a Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association.

28.6 Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association

28.6.1 As soon as possible following the execution of the Agreement and subject to the results of the feasibility studies referred to in paragraph 28.4.1 there shall be established a Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association which shall inter alia:

- a) provide marketing, booking and promotion services for Cree outfitting operations;
- b) provide business, management, accounting and professional services for Cree outfitters;
- c) conduct feasibility studies related to establishment or siting of individual outfitting facilities or a network of outfitting facilities.

28.6.2 Subject to the results of the feasibility studies and in the event that a Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association is established, Canada, Québec and the Cree Regional Authority, in proportion to be mutually agreed upon shall assist the Association in its operation and objects.

Objectives

Implement Section 28.6 of the JBNQA

- Provide marketing, booking, and promotion services, where necessary, for Cree outfitting and tourist operations.
- Provide business, management, accounting and professional services, where necessary, for Cree outfitters and tourist businesses.
- Conduct feasibility studies related to the establishment of individual outfitting or tourism facilities or a network of outfitting or tourism facilities.

Community Awareness and Capacity Building

- Place a priority on increasing awareness of tourism as a sustainable economic development opportunity.
- Increase the capacity of local and regional institutions to provide services by improving access to information.
- Support and undertake training and skill development initiatives that recognize Cree skills and industry standards.
- Support and encourage human resource development related to tourism.

Industry Development

- Promote partnerships among Cree businesses, communities, and institutions.
- Represent the interests of COTA members at meetings with governments, commissions, other organizations, and non-native developers.
- Support the development of Cree tourist products that exceed market standards by creating quality standards and by recognizing success with awards.
- Ensure the participation of the Cree Nation in the development and promotion of tourism and outfitting activities.

Communications

- Ensure effective communications with Cree stakeholders including Tallymen, governments, communities, and industry.
- Promote COTA's vision, objectives, activities, and accomplishments.
- Promote a positive image of the membership.
- Develop alliances and coordinate with other tourism and indigenous organizations to work toward common goals.
- Serve as a liaison between Cree tourism and outfitting operators, the tourism industry, and the markets they serve.
- Incorporate current technology to increase the ease and efficiency of communications and reduce the associated costs.

Marketing

- Increase market share by researching the feasibility of regional projects that promote the communities.
- Conduct product development and market research that include visitor statistics and product inventories.

Financial Development

- Actively seek funding and other resources from governments, the private sector, and other sources.
- Develop, where appropriate, revenue-generating activities.

The COTA Board is comprised of ten members who serve a 3-year term. One Board member is appointed by the Cree Nation Government (CNG). The remaining nine are elected by the COTA membership.

2013-2014 Board of Directors

Contact information for each of our board members can be found at www.creetourism.ca



Julie-Ann Cooper
President
Waswanipi



Raymond Blackned
Vice-President
Waskaganish



Titus Shecapio
Executive Board Member
Mistissini



Anna Bosum
Board Member
Oujé-Bougoumou



Roberta Georgekish
Board Member
Wemindji



Redfern Mark-Stewart
Board Member
Eastmain



Roy Mamianskum
Board Member
Whapmagoostui



Karen St-Cyr
Treasurer



Fred Wapachee
Observer
Washaw Sibi



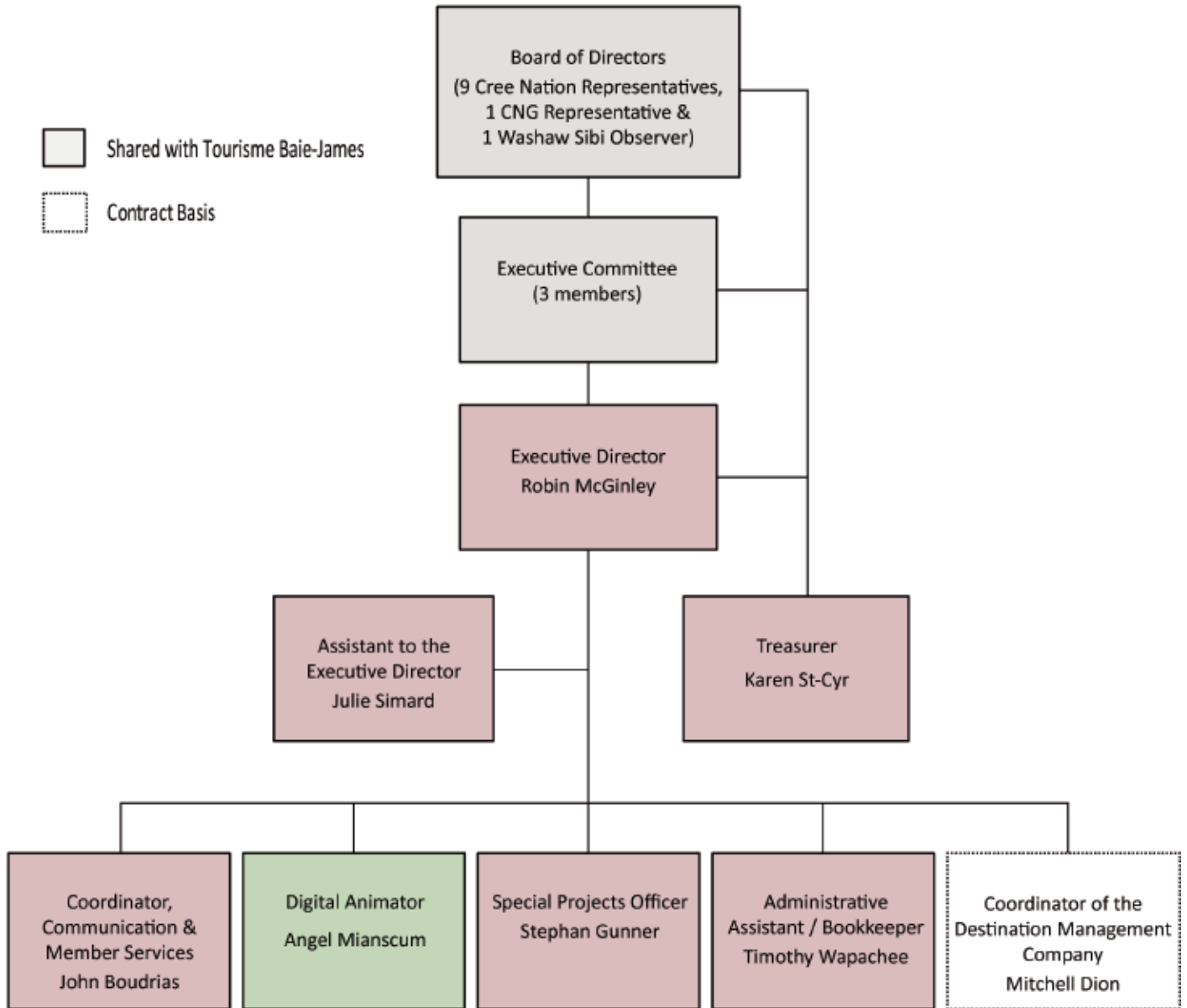
Dianne Ottereyes-Reid
CNG Representative

Not pictured:

Anderson Jolly, Board Member from Nemaska
Joseph Fireman, Board Member from Chisasibi
Kenny Loon, Corporate Secretary

COTA Organizational Chart

The chart below illustrates COTA's organizational structure to April 1, 2014



Project Summaries



Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association Projects and Initiatives

Following are brief summaries of the projects and initiatives that were undertaken and/or launched in the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

1. Destination Management Company (DMC): the pre-commercialisation phase is launched

In efforts to create favourable market conditions for the launch of the DMC, COTA and Tourisme Baie-James (TBJ) have agreed to implement a pre-commercialisation phase for a period of 18 months.

1.1 Current objectives

The pre-commercialisation phase will determine the most effective means of marketing regional tourism products and targeting potential customers. This 18-month project is also designed to define the DMC's operating structure. The project includes:

- Benchmarking tourism packages on the basis of available and potential tourism products and target customer groups
- Determining the sales level required to ensure that the DMC is profitable
- Identifying the most efficient operating systems

- Establishing staffing needs
- Designing and drafting a standard memorandum of agreement for contractual negotiations with tourism operators
- Engaging in discussions with tourism lodging operators to establish the DMC as the leading tourism product and service marketer in the region
- Identifying needs with respect to promotional and transactional tools as well as best practices in this regard

The above tasks are being pursued in accordance with the needs and expectations of the DMC's various partners, including outfitters, cultural organizations, and National Parks.

1.2 Future objectives

There is no doubt that efforts carried out during the pre-commercialisation phase will result in a stronger DMC. Consequently, the DMC will be in a better position to:

- Attract a growing number of international tourists through a world-class tourism offer
- Help tourism operators provide value-added services

- Ensure that tourism offerings are in compliance with Tourisme Québec’s sustainable tourism standards
- Provide tourism packages to visitors flying in from Toronto and New York
- Establish a charter flight service between Mont-Tremblant International Airport and Eeyou Istchee Baie-James

This project was conducted in partnership with TBJ.

We would like to acknowledge the support of our funders, Tourisme Québec and Ministère des Finances et de l’Économie under ACCORD niche

2. Product Development Coaching

In early 2012, in response to its member survey, COTA launched the Product Development Coaching program. This is a 3-year initiative designed to provide Cree entrepreneurs with support to upgrade and enhance their tourism products. It is also designed to help them create market-ready tourism offerings that are specifically designed to meet the needs and expectations of travelers to the region.

The program offers coaching on business development and implementation with a focus on individual needs. Participating businesses include:

- Nuuhchimi Wiinuu run by David and Anna Bosum
- Eagle Mountain Tourism Adventures operated by Paul and Joseph Mianscum
- Natagam Boreal Adventure and, new this year
- Tee-pee Adventures run by Roy Mamianscum

The project includes 4 distinct phases.

During Phase 1, the needs and expectations of the participating businesses were clearly defined and a set of clear and realistic objectives were established.



Phase 2 was an evaluation of the current status (market readiness) of each of these businesses and included an analysis of current tourism trends as well as the overall state of tourism in Eeyou Istchee.

Phase 3 provided the opportunity to review and evaluate the “vision” of each of the participating businesses and help them establish a clear and viable set of objectives and 3-year business strategy.

Phase 4, currently underway, is the implementation stage, which is scheduled to be completed in April 2015. During this final and extended phase, funding sources are being identified and participating businesses are undergoing the necessary modifications and upgrades to ensure their market readiness. To this end, a thorough and customized action plan was produced for each of the 4 businesses. It clearly outlines the development timeline, provides a breakdown of tasks and responsibilities and includes a detailed budget.

The strategy also accounts for the implementation of COTA's tourism quality standards and training for staff such as hospitality, customer service, safety, and cultural interpretation. The first training session, snowmobile guide training, took place in March 2014 and subsequent sessions will be offered throughout the duration of this phase. While participating business owners/operators will undertake the bulk of the work, they will receive continual support and regular visits to ensure progress. They will be encouraged to seek advice and assistance when needed.

Since its launch, the Product Development Coaching project has been making good progress and is well-positioned to achieve a high level of success upon completion.

Funding for this project was provided by Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada, Tourisme Québec and COTA.



3. Tourism Air Access Development Master Plan

Eeyou Istchee Baie-James has enormous potential for tourism development. All but one Cree community, that of Whapmagoostui, is accessible by road however, convenient and affordable air access is a requirement for the development of a successful tourism industry in the region. In fact, the need to improve air access is becoming increasingly critical. Accordingly, in June 2012, a mandate was issued to conduct an in-depth analysis of the current state of air travel to the region and within it. The information collected as part of this analysis has been used to create a Tourism Air Access Development Master Plan.

Convenient and affordable air access is a requirement for the development of a successful tourism industry in Eeyou Istchee Baie-James.

3.1 Toward viable regional air access

The Plan, which was completed in December 2013, presents a realistic and viable air-access model that will be used to help guide the decision-making process for tourism development throughout the region, including access to specific and remote locations.

The objective of the Tourism Air Access Development Master Plan was to establish a vision and development scheme for the tourism industry in Eeyou Istchee Baie-James. It included:

- A detailed review of current transportation options
- An assessment of existing airport services
- An analysis of available tourism products
- Recommendations for an air-access platform
- Detailed analysis of the required infrastructure
- Marketing opportunities and target markets for each opportunity

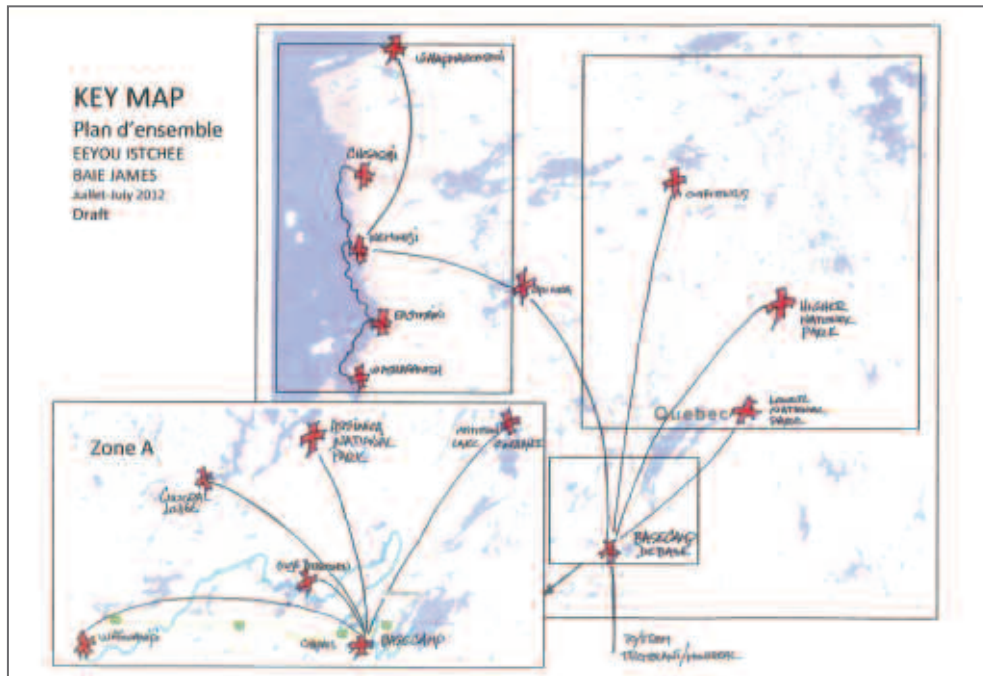
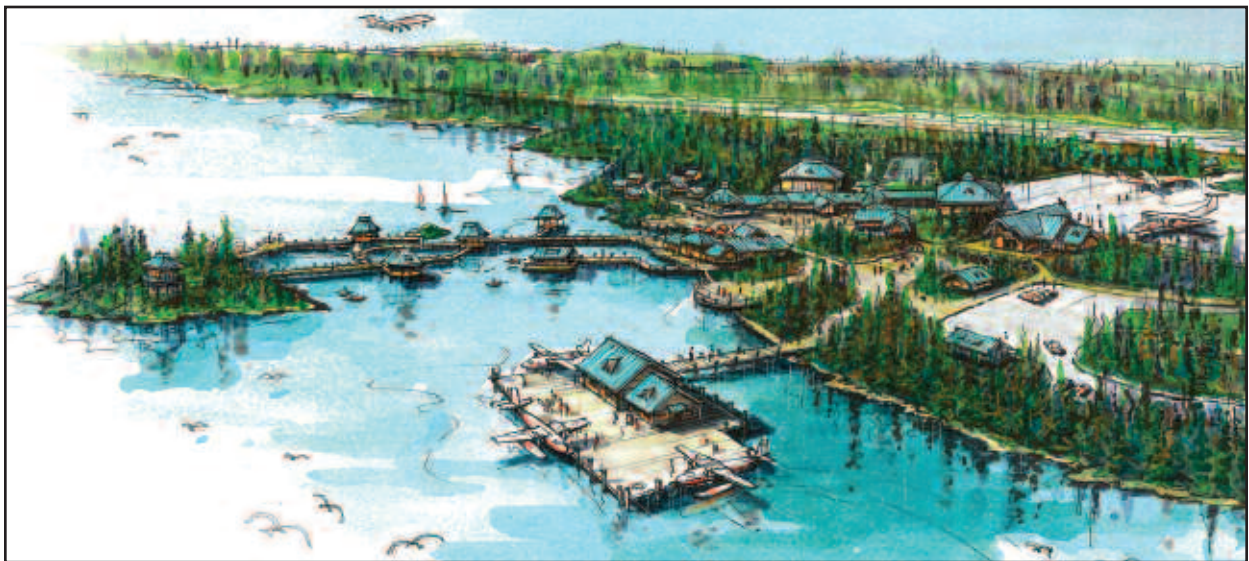
The Plan also details a number of recommendations, including:

- Implementation of a Destination Management Company to handle the development of tourism packages
- Infrastructure improvements at Chibougamau-Chapais Airport
- Implementation of air connections
- Consolidation of existing products

- Continued development of flagship products to appeal to a broader range of visitors (caribou safaris, Cree cultural stays, National parks packages, and polar bear watching tours)
- Support efforts to create high-quality employment in the tourism industry throughout Eeyou Istchee Baie-James

Project partners include TBJ and Mont-Tremblant International Airport.

Funding generously provided by Tourisme Québec and Ministère des Finances et de l'Économie under ACCORD niche



4. Cape Hope Island Cultural Tourism

In the summer of 2012, as part of the development of its Coastal Route Project, COTA organized a reconnaissance trip to the Twin and Cape Hope Islands and surrounding area. This initiative confirmed the region's beauty, ecological diversity, and cultural vitality. Cape Hope Island may be of great interest to visitors, particularly in association with other community-gathering sites, including the mouth of Old Factory River where the former trading post was located.

4.1 Project Overview

The project included library and archival research to locate records for the area and write the "story" from the perspective of record-keepers. This information was presented in report form and will be used as a basis for future tourism development and site interpretation.

In the summer of 2013, filmmakers accompanied two Elders who had lived on Cape Hope Island known in Inuktituk as "Nunaaluk", George Kudlu and Mini Aodla Freeman, to record their experience. While on the island, professional photographs and videos were shot of people, places, scenery, wildlife, and historical sites. Following the visit, materials were produced, including an image bank, a short trailer and a longer video for use by guides and visitors as part of a



potential coastal tour. The video about Cape Hope Island titled *Nunaaluk: A Forgotten Story* was launched at Montreal's McCord Museum on December 17, 2013. Since the launch it has been featured in film festivals such as the Wakefield Film Festival in March 2014 and the Global Visions Film Festival in Edmonton on May 11, 2014. Interpretation panels developed with the Elders will be installed at key vantage points to provide visitors with historical and cultural information.

We would like to thank our funders, Tourisme Québec and Ministère des Finances et de l'Économie under ACCORD niche

5. Snowmobile Guide Training

The Snowmobile Guide Training consisted of 3, 3-day training sessions that took place from January 27-29, 2014 and March 17-19, 2014 in the community of Mistissini and March 22-24, 2014 in Wemindji. Participants from throughout the region were invited to attend. The overall objective of the training was to have Cree entrepreneurs and their staff become certified snowmobile guides and become recognized by Aventure Ecotourism Québec.

The training consisted of both theoretical and field based (hands on) workshops. Participants were expected to have some prior experience with regards to handling/driving a snowmobile but the training was not limited to individuals who had prior guiding experience. Some of the key learning activities included emergency

preparedness, safety, developing leadership skills, understanding risk management, how to develop and plan an itinerary, dealing with inclement weather as well as some hospitality training including how to deal with difficult clients. The training session also covered snowmobile maintenance and general repairs.

The training was given by seasoned adventure tourism professional Jean-Charles Fortin who has been guiding ATV and snowmobile expeditions for almost 20 years. He is a Conseil québécois des ressources humaines en tourisme certified tourism trainer and has been teaching snowmobile guiding since 1999.

Graduates of the Snowmobile Guide Training are:

Mistissini - January 28 & 29, 2014:

- Jimmy Matoush
- Peter Matoush
- Eddie Matoush
- Anna Bosum
- Brent Longchap
- Willy Bosum

Mistissini – March 17-18-19, 2014:

- Stephan Ryan Gunner
- Paul Mianscum
- Paul Jr. Ryan Mianscum
- Elijah Shecapio
- Derek Shecapio

Wemindji – March 22-23-24, 2014:

- Earle Jr. Danyluk
- Roland Tomatuk
- Earnie Hughboy
- Corey Asquabaneskum

There are plans to offer this training program in the future.

Funding was generously provided by CHRD and COTA.

6. Training for the new Digital Animator

The Digital Animator is a new position, shared by EIT/COTA and TBJ. The position was recently filled by long-time COTA employee Angel Mianscum who will work closely with the Marketing Agent and be

responsible for:

- Managing the content and programming of the EIT/TBJ promotional web site.
- Maintaining and updating social media platforms and promote Eeyou Istchee Baie-James as a distinctive tourism destination

This new position is a great opportunity to tailor the job to the specific needs of both EIT and TBJ; accordingly, a 3-year training initiative was developed to provide:

- Ongoing support to all employees regarding the implementation of an online communication program
- Manuals and support materials to build the knowledge base and enhance employees' skill sets (enabling them to manage and maintain digital and social marketing platforms)
- Assistance in the development of the communication component of the strategic plan and its strategic online communication plan
- Mentoring and support for the Digital Animator in using search engine optimization (SEO) techniques and social media buying practices
- Training on internal marketing and communications, strategic planning, and budgeting

The training is being delivered in Oujé-Bougoumou by Robert J. Palmer Ph.D., Professor Williams School of Business at Bishop's University. Angel Mianscum will be receiving university credit for the training.

Funding was provided by CHRD and COTA.

7. Annual General Assembly

This year's Annual General Assembly took place on November 5th, 2013 in Mistissini. During this one day session, Benjamin Loon of Cree Human Resource Development gave an informative presentation outlining the programs currently being offered. Additionally, as part of our standard protocol, was a review of the audited financial statements and approval of the minutes from the previous AGM.

Please visit www.creetourism.ca for a complete list of current COTA/EIT members.