



Eeyou Istchee Tourism

ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016



Eeyou Istchee Tourism

EIT Annual Report Table of Contents



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A note from our President

Raymond Blackned

Since the founding of Eeyou Istchee Tourism in 2007, we've worked hard to make the most of the opportunities that come with being a regional tourism association (RTA).

RTAs enjoy certain benefits, including membership in ATRAQ and participation in various government consultation initiatives. Last autumn, for example, we made a presentation to the government's nature and adventure tourism task force, allowing us to raise awareness about the great tourism potential that exists in the North.

I'm pleased with the progress achieved since the release, last year, of Recommendations and Next Steps for Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Reception. Providing tourists with accessible and professionally staffed tourism information centres, is key to creating a positive experience for travellers in the region. With a joint Cree and Jamesian committee for reception in place and an approved site plan for tourism information offices, we are well-positioned to take the next step, which is to build tourism information offices. We have also selected a reception-service training program that will benefit our tourism information centres.

I'm also pleased that Quebec's tourism ministry will renew its funding for the Regional Tourism Partnership Agreement (RTPA). The RTPA is a major development tool for Cree tourism. It provides essential funding to entrepreneurs and startups, thereby encouraging investment in our region's tourism industry. The RTPA represents a positive and forward-looking working relationship involving all four partners: Tourisme Québec, Eeyou Istchee Tourism, the Cree Nation Government, and Société de développement de la Baie-James.

As our international and cooperative marketing programs evolve and grow, more and more people learn about the many varied and culturally authentic tourism attractions offered by Cree tourism operators. An increasing number of market-ready Cree businesses are prepared to welcome visitors and we have more hotels offering modern conference facilities. The DMC, which will soon be launched, will help to promote these features and attract more visitors to our region.

In the year ahead, we will continue to move current initiatives forward. Together with Tourisme Baie-James, we remain focused on positioning Eeyou Istchee Baie-James as a unique and desirable tourism destination.

I would like to end by sharing my sincere condolences to family and friends of former COTA president, Sherman Herodier who passed away this past April. Sherman will be missed by all who had the privilege to know him.



About EIT History



Eeyou Istchee Tourism is the 22nd Regional Tourism Association (RTA) to come into being in Québec and the 3rd to share the administrative region of Northern Québec. This RTA is designated to represent the Cree communities of the Eeyou Istchee tourism region.

On August 15 2007, the Government of Québec granted RTA status to the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association (COTA).

Given the considerable difference between the RTA and COTA in terms of roles and responsibilities, a decision was made to create a separate organization, namely Eeyou Istchee Tourism to provide for proper fulfilment of the RTA's mandate.

As set out in the formal agreement between EIT and the Government of Québec, the role of the RTA is to promote tourism and regional operators, support the development of new products, make information more readily available to tourists, and cooperate with other RTAs in creating a Québec-wide tourism policy.

Objectives of EIT:

- Position and promote Eeyou Istchee as a key destination for First Nations tourism, outdoor and adventure tourism, and outfitter services.
- Support the development of marketable tourism products and the upgrading of existing products with a view to contributing to regional economic growth and development of the tourism industry.

- Enhance regional tourism infrastructure by facilitating access to information relating to tourism products and services.
- Develop a tourism industry based on the principles of sustainable development and designed to have a positive impact on youth, elders and cultural life in the region.

Dues-paying COTA members automatically become members of EIT. Some of the additional benefits for our members offered by EIT include a listing in the Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Tourism Guide, access to targeted funding and eligibility for the international and cooperative marketing programs.

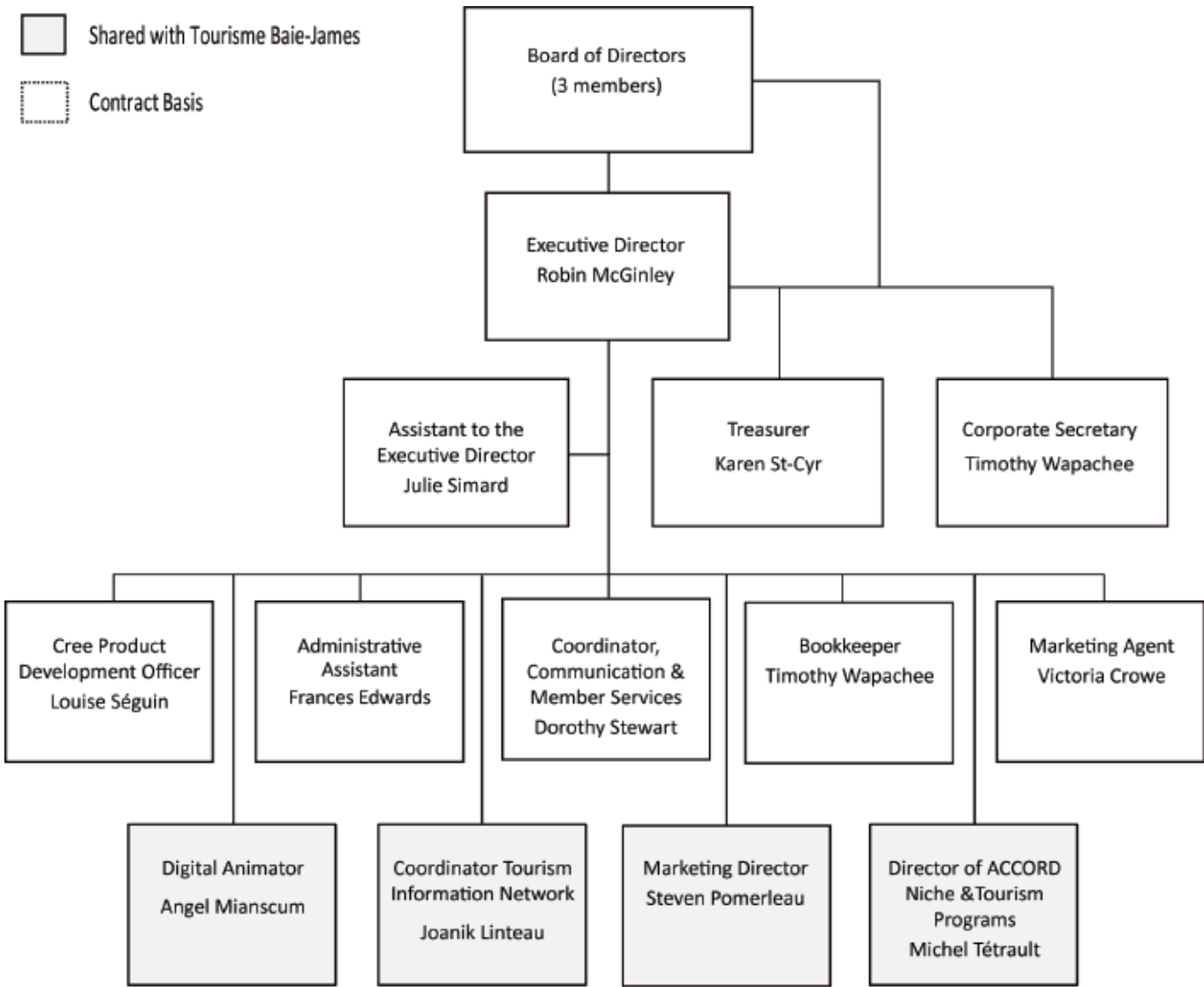
EIT is responsible for the planning and delivery of projects, initiatives and events such as the development of the Regional Tourism Guide and the Tourism Symposium.



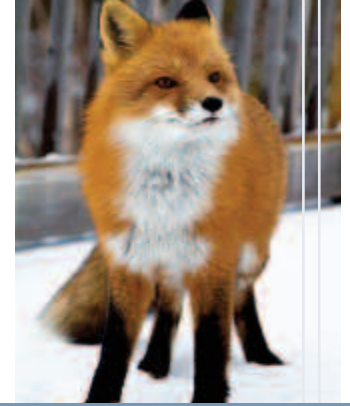
About EIT

Organizational Chart

The chart below illustrates EIT’s organizational structure to June 1, 2016. All staff positions are shared between EIT and COTA.



2015-2016 Project Summaries



As a member-driven association, EIT works to develop and promote projects that meet the evolving needs of our members while striving to optimize the tourism potential of the region. With the support of our members, we continue to work to establish Eeyou Istchee Baie-James as a world-class tourism destination.

1. Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Reception

As part of an overall strategy to improve tourism reception and information services throughout Eeyou Istchee Baie-James, in February 2015, a report and action plan titled Recommendations and Next Steps for Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Reception was developed. This document included four main objectives/recommendations:

- Create a joint Cree and Baie-James committee for reception
- Adopt a joint site plan for tourism information offices
- Adopt a joint Eeyou Istchee Baie-James reception policy
- Select a site for a regional tourism reception and information centre

Since the release of Recommendations and Next Steps for Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Reception, considerable progress has been achieved, with three of the four recommendations implemented. First was the establishment of the joint Cree and Baie-James committee: it consists of individuals representing both Eeyou Istchee and Baie-James. As of the publication of this annual report, the committee has had two formal meetings.

The First Meeting: Joint Site Plan

The first meeting took place on September 2, 2015 in Matagami. At this meeting, the joint site plan for tourism information offices was formally presented and adopted by the committee. The plan includes the development of three regional tourism information offices at three key entry points to the Eeyou Istchee Baie-James region as well as the development of a local tourism information office. The committee also agreed that the three regional tourism information offices should share a common architectural theme, representing both cultures of the territory.

The Second Meeting: Tourism Information Office Design

The second meeting of the joint committee was held on November 24, 2015 in Oujé-Bougoumou. During this meeting, proposals for the design of the regional tourism information offices were presented, and a concept was selected and approved. In addition, in recognition of the importance of having a well-informed, well-trained staff, at all reception centres, a training program focusing on reception services, information and promotion at tourism information centres offered by Cégep de St-Félicien was proposed and will be offered to staff in the hospitality sector in May 2016.

The next step is to adopt a joint Eeyou Istchee Baie-James reception policy.

2. 3-Year Marketing Plan

In September 2015, EIT rolled-out their new 3-year Marketing plan. The purpose of the marketing plan is to increase travel to the region through a series of well defined and targeted marketing initiatives. The plan will be carried out by EIT with the support of Arctic Kingdom. Arctic Kingdom has over fifteen years of practical experience in tourism development in remote and northern destinations.

The primary objectives of this marketing plan are to:

- Collect and manage data on which to make tactical marketing decisions.
- Build awareness of, and interest in, Eeyou Istchee Baie-James as a must-visit tourism destination among adventure travellers around the world.
- In year one - encourage “Early Adopters” in the Northeast to experience the region to seed word-of-mouth marketing.
- Inspire 6,000 to 9,000 adventure travellers to request an information package about visiting Eeyou Istchee Baie-James.
- Meet travel influencers to hear their reactions to information about Eeyou Istchee Baie-James to identify language and descriptors that engage them.

2.1 Marketing Agent for Promotion of Cree Culture

To help fulfill this mandate, EIT has secured 3 years of funding from Canada Economic Development to hire a Marketing Agent for the Promotion of Cree Culture. In September 2016, Victoria Crowe was hired to fill this position. To prepare her for this role, Ms. Crowe is receiving training from Arctic Kingdom.

While officially the activities and mandates outlined in this plan are to be launched at the start of our new fiscal year, EIT, lead by our new marketing agent, was present at two important Travel and Adventure Tradeshows that took place in March 2016. The first was held in Washington D.C and the second in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In her capacity as marketing agent, Ms. Crowe has also worked with the Destination Management Company project coordinator to develop a weekend getaway

package to Oujé-Bougoumou which is now available for purchase.

We would like to thank Canada Economic Development for their financial support.



3. Alliance de l'Industrie touristique du Québec (AITQ)

Alliance de l'Industrie touristique du Québec is a not-for-profit organization founded in 2015 and mandated by the Quebec government department for tourism (Tourisme Québec) to set guidelines for tourism promotion in the

province. It replaces the government agency formerly responsible for tourism promotion and marketing (Direction de la promotion et de la mise en marché du ministère du Tourisme). The Alliance is the result of the merger of Association québécoise de l'industrie touristique (AQIT), ATR associées du Québec, and ATS Québec and offers services formerly provided by one or another of these three bodies.

The mission of AITQ is to grow tourism revenue. The Alliance brings together and represents businesses and associations in the tourism sector and supports and takes part in the development and marketing of Quebec's tourism offer in accordance with a new approach that favours the sharing of expertise and the emergence of innovative ideas.

According to the Quebec government department for tourism, the Alliance must, in compliance with the department's stated orientations, recommend a single multi-year marketing strategy for the destination to the Minister of tourism and provide an annual plan of activities. It must also coordinate all promotion and marketing activities for the destination that target markets outside Quebec and gauge the performance of these activities.

4 ACCORD Tourism Strategy 2012-2017

The ACCORD tourism strategy is a detailed 5-year action plan that includes a budget for developing a niche of excellence encompassing sustainable adventure, nature, and cultural tourism in Eeyou Istchee Baie-James. Over the last 4.5 years, funding from the ACCORD program has supported a number of key initiatives including:

- Air access phases 1 and 2
- The Coastal Route
- Development of the destination management company (DMC)
- Country food and culinary research
- Cape Hope Island heritage site project
- Tourism symposium
- Tourism business development coaching
- Cree cultural kits
- Diversification of outfitting camp services
- Marine coastal tours development

Each of these projects meets ACCORD's funding criteria and offers tremendous potential for diversifying the region's tourism attractions and positioning Eeyou Istchee

Baie-James as a one-of-a-kind tourism destination.

The ACCORD project brings together Cree and Jamesians in developing a tourism strategy that is sustainable, respectful of Cree rights, and beneficial to both regions in the long run.

From September 2012 to March 2016:

- Total projects costs: \$2, 098, 200
- Governmental financial Assistance: \$1, 257, 800
- Private Investment: \$840, 400.00
 - Cree Investment: \$592, 400.00
 - Jamesian Investment: \$248, 000.00

Funding provided by the Ministère de l'Économie, des Sciences et de l'Innovation (MESI) and Tourisme Québec.

5. ACCORD Director

To support northern tourism development as it applies specifically to the ACCORD Niche of Excellence and in partnership with TBJ, the position of ACCORD director was established. The ACCORD director provides project management expertise in support of promoters and businesses operating within the niche of excellence as well as projects designed to deploy the niche's strategy and action plan. Additionally, the ACCORD director assists tourism entrepreneurs locate appropriate funding sources for their tourism related projects.

The ACCORD Director actively participates in the development of regional tourism in Eeyou Istchee Baie-James by carrying out all required studies, developing action plans and strategies, and implementing all potential means of fostering partnership and cooperation in collaboration with both EIT and TBJ.

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

6. 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for the Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Tourism Region

Building on the work undertaken in recent years by Eeyou Istchee Tourism and Tourisme Baie-James, we have studied the evolving northern tourism sector, analyzed our strengths, and identified challenges in an effort to define

our strategic orientation for the next five years. A key focus is to promote the development of market-ready tourism products through training, and other methods of support. An important objective of our Strategic Plan is to improve our positioning in the international market. Accordingly, we have identified a total of 62 measures in 11 sectors of activity that will be implemented to achieve this objective. The 11 sectors of activity are:

- Knowledge and research
- Human resources
- Access and transportation
- Development of the offer
- Quality and sustainability
- Promotion and marketing
- Sales and packages
- Reception, signage and tourism information
- Communications with Cree and Jamesian communities and member relations
- Regional, inter-regional, and provincial cooperation, governance, and public relations
- Collaborative model for the three organizations (COTA, EIT and TBJ)

Measures within each of these sectors have, or will be, assigned its own action plan that include a timetable for completion and required human, financial, and material resources.

The Strategic Plan was presented to the Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Regional Government (EIBJ) in January 2016. The Plan, which is in line with the Quebec government's Plan Nord initiative, is a comprehensive plan that promotes collaboration and serves as a guiding vision for tourism development.

7. Cree Product Development Officer

In 2013, as part of continuing efforts to encourage and promote regional tourism development, the position of Cree Product Development Officer was created, with generous support from Tourisme Québec.

The Officer's role is to foster partnerships with producers, small and medium businesses, development corporations, and other players in the tourism sector. The Officer must help develop new tourism products that enhance the

region's overall offer while ensuring that they meet quality standards. Also, the Officer must provide product development support to businesses in the region targeting favourable niche markets in the tourism sector.

In January 2016, Louise Séguin was hired on contract as interim Cree Product Development Officer. She replaces Dorothy Stewart who is now our Coordinator of Communications and Member Services. In this capacity, Ms. Séguin has assisted the communities of Whapmagoostui and Waskaganish to begin the process of developing a local community tourism plan. In addition, Ms. Séguin hosted a workshop on conducting community tours that are both engaging and educational. Three tourism officers – Irene Otter (Waswanipi), Tim Whiskeychan (Waskaganish) and Ron Simard (Oujé-Bougoumou) – took part in this workshop. Upon completing her contract, Ms. Séguin, who has considerable experience in northern and aboriginal tourism, will train the permanent Cree Product Development Officer.

8. International and Cooperative Marketing Programs

The International Marketing Program (IMP) and Cooperative Marketing Program (CMP) which were introduced in 2013, provide financial incentives to members of EIT and TBJ to form alliances for the purposes of advertising and developing tourism packages. Such alliances allow members to promote regional tourism – including the new Eeyou Istchee Baie-James brand image – more effectively. In fact, all initiatives supported by the Program must showcase the region's new brand image. The goal of the IMP is to promote tourism outside of Quebec while the CMP applies to marketing initiatives within Quebec.

Both programs can be applied to:

- Print advertising
- Tourism-package development
- Television, online and radio advertisement
- Participation in tradeshows
- Familiarization and press tours

To be eligible for one or both of these programs, applicants must demonstrate that their project meets the following criteria:

- Will attract visitors from outside the region
- Is not part of an existing marketing program

- Contributes to an increase in tourism promotion since the previous year (applies to existing projects and to previously submitted projects)
- Applicants must be members of EIT or TBJ
- Products must be market-ready

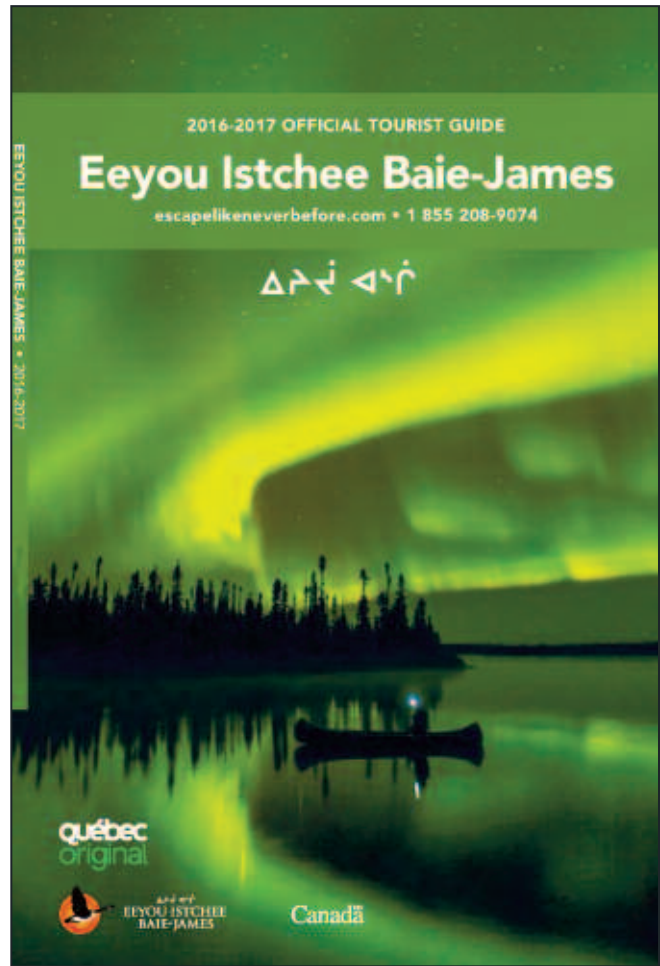
Approved promotional strategies will receive up to 50% of applicable costs.

Advertisements supported under the CMP include attendance at events and placements in publications such as, but not limited to:

- Sentier chasse et pêche magazine
- Salon Expert Chasse, Pêche et Camping de Québec
- Tradeshow Salon Expert Chasse, Pêche et Camping de Montréal

Advertisements supported under the IMP include attendance at events and placements in publications such as, but not limited to:

- Origin(e) magazine TAQ
- Toronto Sportsmen's Show



9. Regional Tourism Guide

As part of our partnership agreement with Ministère du Tourisme du Québec, EIT must undertake to develop an annual regional tourism guide in accordance with the guidelines and standards agreed upon by Québec's ministry of tourism. The guide is produced jointly with Tourisme Baie-James. This year marks the completion of our eighth addition. The full colour guide highlights the many tourism attractions and activities available throughout the region and includes a profile of each Cree community. The regional tourism guide is a great resource for tourists interested in discovering all there is to do and see in the region and also provides a great advertising opportunity for Cree tourism businesses. The 2016- 2017 edition is now available at tourism outlets throughout the province. Copies can also be ordered online at www.escapelikeneverbefore.com