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MISTISSINI
Largest Cree Community among the James Bay Cree

Mistissini at a glance

3,864 members
Approximately fifty businesses established in the community
Mistissini.ca
Overview of Current Economic Development

Mistissini is the largest Cree community among the James Bay Cree. Mistissini, which means the “Great Rock”, has grown into a large dynamic community, with more than 3,800 members who speak native Cree, French and English. It is located on the shores of Lake Mistissini, the largest fresh water lake in Quebec. For centuries and still today, the abundance of fresh water, lakes, rivers and forest resources have been the foundation of cultural and economic heritage of the region.

In 2015, approximately fifty well-established businesses are registered in the community. Due to the active mining sector, construction has become a booming business, but other businesses such as grocery stores, restaurants, filling stations, convenience stores, video outlets, and so on are also thriving. Last June, the construction of a new bridge was completed, which will allow the community to expand its territory, which will further enhance its economic prosperity.

At the present time, approximately ten young entrepreneurs, have been trained or are being trained, and are starting new businesses in the community. Notable among them, is Jerry Matoush, who opened a new garage in September 2014.

Works in progress
There are several works in progress in Mistassini. The community is actively promoting its new Business Centre, which is expected to open in 2016. The Centre will be ready to accommodate a new Driver Training School, explained Margareth Wapachee, who has been a Community Economic Development Officer in Mistissini for twenty-three years. The Tim Hortons franchise with the local promoters, Elaine and Anthony MacLeod and they started another Tim Hortons in nearby town Chibougamau.

How to get started
The Band Council provides some very important resources that are essential to anyone who wants to go into business. The Economic Development Department of the Cree Nation of Mistissini provides important tools, such as support and guidance, during all the steps that are necessary to obtain a loan. Contact the Department in order to find out more information.

Economic Development Cree Nation of Mistissini
T : 418 923-3461 x 219 et 223
economic@mistissini.ca
Mistissini.ca
Entrepreneur: Calvin Blacksmith  
Business: Cree Source for sports  
Community and Nation: Mistissini, Cree  
Date of creation: 2002  

Company History  
At the time Calvin was part of the police force in Nemaska, his brother-in-law, who was also his good friend, suggested that they start a business. According to Calvin, “My brother-in-law always dreamed of opening an outfitting business on Lake Mistissini. He wanted me as a partner; not necessarily as a financial partner, but to help out with some of the practical work, such as cutting wood.” Calvin didn’t decide immediately to go into business with Ilijah, because it was too far to travel to his work as a police officer. But about a year or two later, Ilijah Awashish, who was twenty-two at the time, approached him again about the partnership. At that time, Calvin travelled frequently to Chibougamau to purchase sporting goods. “I love sports and I purchased a lot of hockey
equipment. I asked the owner if he could give me a discount because I bought so much. He told me couldn’t do it, but after I returned home, I read in the paper, just one week later, that all the equipment that he sold me was on sale at discount prices. That’s when I made the decision to go into business on my own.” Mr. Awashish and Mr. Blacksmith then prepared a business plan to get a general idea of the costs and the equipment that would be required to open a sports store. “We started with 3,000 square foot, but today, Cree Source for sports has 12,000 square feet of retail space.”

Who are your competitors?
There will always be competition and Internet is a big competitor. Other retailers are also competitors, because they keep an eye on Cree Source for sports to see what we have in stock. There are also competitors who want to hire our sales staff. As Calvin explains, “When you live in a small territory, it can be hard to find good employees and to ensure that our staff remains loyal, we pay good wages.” High staff turnover generates higher costs in both time and money.

What are your challenges as a business owner?
“The main challenge to which I look forward is to help someone else do the same that thing I did, by sharing my experience and by offering advice,” Calvin explained that after 13 years, he had reached his goal. Becoming a mentor sounds like a pretty good idea to him.

Land ownership is considered an obstacle in Aboriginal communities. Because the land does not belong to us, it is difficult to resell it. In addition, it is mandatory to have an environmental impact study done and this involves additional costs. The whole process requires endless meetings and project follow-up. But it is an essential requirement in order to qualify for a loan from the Band Council.

Who are your customers?
“My customers are mostly families who can’t afford to make the trip to Chibougamau, Quebec or Montreal to buy what they need. But this is not a problem for me” explains Calvin. The prices in the community are usually better, because members are entitled to tax exemptions. Members of other communities are also my customers. Our store has a wide variety of choice, because our sales are based on seasonal activities. In August for example, hockey equipment sales begin to pick up, whereas in spring and summer, fishing equipment is more important.

Do you have a final few words of advice?

Start out small. “We made errors in the past 13 years.” As an example, Calvin explained that it is not a good idea to deal with people whose expertise is in sales in the city of Montreal. Community people do not have the same preferences as people from large urban centres. You have to begin by getting to know your customers.

Be a good manager “You have to give the employees their proper due and provide them with feedback so you can work as a team. You have to be able to assess the skills of each player and let them get involved.”

You need to have the right resources at the get go “You need to have enough money to start up and enough money to reimburse your expenses over the years. It is a good idea to start young.”

Always be ready to move forward “You have to call your suppliers and be proactive. There will always be people ready to block any project. When you are an Indian, you face prejudice. When you go outside the community, you represent Quebec. People are much more critical of Aboriginal businessmen” states Calvin Blacksmith.

Please note that Ilijah Awashish, mentioned in this report, is no longer partner with Mr. Blacksmith. He has opened a gas filling station in the community.

Cree Source for sports, Hunting, Fishing and Sporting Goods in Mistissini
Cree Source for Sports can answer all you needs for fishing, hunting or sports. With close to 12,000 square feet of retail space, it is one of the largest retailers in the region. The store offers a wide range of hunting guns as well as the best name brands in sports clothes and shoes. ▲

155, Amanda Street
Mistissini (Qc)
T : 418 923-3201
Creesports.com
At only 22 years old, Silas certainly follows his own advice. Hockey player, teacher, security guard, entrepreneur and proud new father of a baby boy... he impresses by his determination and all-around positive attitude. An entrepreneur at heart, he created his business, Mista Hotdog, with the help and support of his family, when he was only 16 years old.

Mista Hotdog started out as a single hot dog stand. “Most of the day, me, my sister Laurie-Ann (17) and my mother were running the stand, but my dad was there to help around too. It was always a family business, something we all liked doing together”, Silas says. Thanks to the Band Council’s authorization, they were able to park in different public areas in the community, such as the arena.

Even if the hot dog stand started off as a small summer project, a means for Silas and his sister to earn extra money to pay for activities they wanted to do, it quickly became popular and grew. “We didn’t think it would get this big!” he exclaims. Now, in addition to the hot dog stand, they also manage a small indoor canteen at the arena as well as some vending machines.

Silas and his family decided to open the canteen about three years ago. They then ran both the canteen (year-round) and the hot dog stand (during the summer) at the same time. “It was tough”, he admits, “but it’s something we all liked doing. Having the business has always kept us together as a family.”

The small business had a lot of support from family and friends, who were there every day. “It was just a hang out place for a lot of people”, he says. “At the end of the day, they would come and sit down with us.”

However, Silas remarks that it hasn’t always been easy: “We’ve faced some negative people, who had a negative attitude towards us. Some people would even try and kick us off from where we were parked. It’s tough. But in the end, it’s your business and you want to continue running it. We never fought those kinds of people; we just did our own thing. We continued offering a friendly service like we always did, and we earned respect from the community.”

One of the factors contributing to Mista Hotdog’s success is surely the Neeposh family’s friendly attitude, as well as their good relationships with the other businesses in the community. Silas insists that they didn’t really have any competition: “That’s the thing about us, that’s how we grew: we didn’t really have any competition. Even Adeles [restaurant] would come and ask us if we had any ketchup when they ran out, and when we needed something that we couldn’t order right away, we would ask them too. We didn’t look at them as competition. Even the Tim Horton’s owners, towards
the end of the day, sometimes they would come sit at the stand with their coffee, and just hang out, have a hot dog...”

Even though Silas chose entrepreneurship, he believes that it’s important to remember that everyone has different paths: “Some people have what it takes to build themselves up on their own, and in the long run, they’re ready to start their own business. But it’s not for everyone. Other people choose a different path, and it’s just as good. The important thing is to follow your own path, to have your own goals and seize your own opportunities.”

As for the future?

Silas is grateful for the opportunity and experience of starting his own business. “I wanted to learn the best that I could to run a business on my own and it taught me a lot,” he says. Now, he wants to pass on the business to his younger sister, Laurie-Ann. “That was the plan right from the start”, he explains. “We’re reaching a point where she can take my place.” Laurie-Ann and her father bought a mobile trailer recently, which will allow them to move Mista Hotdog to different areas much more easily. However, they agree that they don’t want to build or expand as a restaurant. They just want the business to stay as it is, a small friendly casserole.

As for Silas, even though he appreciates and enjoys where he is now, playing hockey, working at Voyageur Memorial High School and running his business, he is now looking for new opportunities. “I’m getting older, with a family of my own”, he explains. “With the mines opening up around the area, I’m thinking maybe it’s a sector I want to work in, something I could live off of. There are courses in Quebec City, for heavy machinery for example. It’s something I’m looking into. Over the next few years, the construction sector is going to be expanding like crazy. That’s why I developed this idea of getting qualified. Maybe I’ll start another business in that sector eventually... Why not?”

Entrepreneurs at a glance

**Flair Salon**
Entrepreneurs: Juliet Rabbitskin and Lilian Petawaieno
Open since December, 2014

**ADELS Restaurant**
First restaurant opened for business in 1971
Discover the buffet and the dining room!
Tourism Column

MIRACULOUS CATCH IN CREE TERRITORY

By Dave Laveau, QAT Executive Director

AS SUMMER VACATIONS ARE IN FULL SWING, WE WOULD BE REMISS NOT TO TALK ABOUT NATURE TOURISM. SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL, WILDERNESS, LAKES, AND RIVERS HAVE PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN OUR LIVES. NATURE’S IMPORTANCE BECOMES EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT TO COMMUNITIES SETTLED ON THE LAND AND WHO USUALLY SPEND MORE TIME IN THE BUSH DURING SUMMER. THE NATURE WE LOVE HAS PROVIDED FOR OUR ANCESTORS’ NEEDS AND SHAPED OUR CULTURE AND IDENTITY. IT IS NOW GAINING GREATER APPEAL AMONG OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS.

In Quebec, there are nearly 20 aboriginal outfitters, who operate from camps, lodges, cottages, and inns. Accommodations range from entirely traditional to four-star lodges. This vast territory holds an impressive diversity of game such as black bear, moose, caribou, various birds, wild salmon or walleye. Outfitters are an excellent choice to experience hunting and fishing at their best in Quebec. They also offer also high quality vacation accommodations that provide many opportunities to connect with nature.

Eeyou-Istchee James Bay Region & Mistissini Tourism Industry

Last stop before the Great North! Stretching from the 49th to the 55th parallel, James Bay constitutes an outstanding watershed that holds the largest fresh water lake in Quebec. Crees have occupied this land for millennia.

“The people’s land, our territory.” The meaning of the name “Eeyou Istchee” evokes the powerful connection that unites this vast, nearly virgin, territory to the people who have lived on it for more than 5,000 years. Further north, the taiga progressively reclaims the landscape, consisting of dense boreal forest, rivers, and lakes. The Eeyou Istchee James Bay region alone represents approximately a fifth of Quebec’s territory; and Lake Mistissini is the largest natural lake in the province measuring 2,335 km². Such a tremendous territory is a dreamland for hunters and fishers.

The Mistissini Cree Nation is blessed with incredible wilderness, in which many traditional activities such as hunting and fishing are still practiced today, and are taught and shared, based on full respect for the environment and for Mother Earth.

And these notions of sharing are also carried on in economic activities that began with the boom in ecotourism over the last several years. The Mistissini Cree Nation has developed an exemplary balance
between sharing their cultural and natural heritage, their dynamic vitality, and a well thought-out and structured vision for development.

The Cree Nation of Mistissini Tourism Department offers information on all tourism activities within the Traditional Cree Territory. Whether you are planning a trip for fishing, hunting, snowmobiling or ecotourism, their experts will help you plan your visit to Mistissini.

Outdoor adventure and cultural packages include activities based on traditional values and culture. They also provide customized packages to suit specific needs, including American and European plan packages provided by local outfitters.

As a member of the Quebec Outfitters Federation, the Association of Outfitters of Lake Mistassini offers unforgettable fishing trips north of the 51st parallel at the Osprey Lodge on magnificent Lake Mistassini as well as charming rustic accommodations with modern utilities at Camp Louis-Jolliet – the gem of the Cree Territory.

Information: mistissini.ca, mloc.ca and tourismautochtone.com

“Fish the exclusive waters of the longest lake in Québec and experience our trophy fishing for Speckled Trout, Lake Trout, Northern Pike and Walleye.”

- Dave Laveau, QAT Executive Director

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Legal Column

FSC CERTIFICATION TO SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF FIRST NATIONS IN QUEBEC

By Me Benoit Champoux Neashish & Champoux s.e.n.c.

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN GROWING INTEREST IN FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (FSC) CERTIFICATION AS WELL AS IN THE ROLE THAT FIRST NATIONS PLAY IN THE FORESTRY SECTOR. THE FSC IS AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION THAT WAS FOUNDED AFTER THE 1992 RIO DE JANEIRO EARTH SUMMIT BY REPRESENTATIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, FOREST INDUSTRIES, RETAILERS, ABORIGINAL NATIONS, AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS.

The FSC promotes first and foremost sustainable forest management, that takes into account the ecological, environmental, social, cultural, and spiritual factors that current generations are dealing with. The Council’s main goal is to certify businesses that will develop forest management practices that are environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial. Economic viability is ensured through the adoption and implementation of principles and criteria to inform consumers about the origin of such products.

There are 10 forest management principles that have a broad enough scope for them to be transposed on a worldwide scale. They are:

1. Compliance with laws and FSC Principles;
2. Tenure and use rights and responsibilities;
3. Indigenous peoples’ rights;
4. Community relations and worker’s rights;
5. Benefits from the forest;
6. Environmental impact;
7. Management plan;
8. Monitoring and assessment;
9. Maintenance of high conservation value forests;

FSC certification is a voluntary program – which means no business will ever be forced to comply with it under any circumstance. Of course, obtaining such a certification has many benefits as it provides an economic incentive and it can be required in certain cases (e.g. companies like Best Buy or IKEA require
that their suppliers bear this certification). However, FSC does not insist on perfection in satisfying the principles – in other words businesses do not have to meet all these principles. Nevertheless, major omissions regarding any individual Principle can disqualify a candidate from certification or lead to decertification.

Once FSC certification is obtained, a company can use the logo and enjoy the benefits that come with it, namely:

- Improved corporate image and reputation as a responsible citizen (well-known ecological and social practices);
- Increased company credibility by association with a certification that is recognized worldwide;
- Access to markets and clients that require the certification (paper users, lumber retailers, packaging suppliers, etc.)

A product bearing the FSC logo can increase in value due to compliance with certification standards. This competitive edge based on FSC certification may be very beneficial for aboriginal communities, especially since respect of aboriginal rights is one of the certification principles (see Principle 3).

Unfortunately, this principle is neglected or even ignored by certain forest companies, even though traditional forest activities on ancestral First Nations lands are an important issue for these companies. Aboriginal communities have treaty rights, the scope of which, has been defined by jurisprudence. All development projects, that may have an impact on these rights, require prior consultation with concerned aboriginal communities.

It is in the interests of First Nations to take part in the development of their territory, whether through partnerships with forest companies or with other groups and to ensure that any agreements are respected by the adoption of various mechanisms. Such partnerships can be completely consistent with the broader objectives of a First Nation. By being directly involved in these partnerships, communities can increase business opportunities for forest enterprises and for the First Nation, which will have the opportunity to take part in territory management activities and in the monitoring of commitments, rights and interests affecting the community. In this way, annual FSC audits can make an important contribution to economic development in the community.

The recent Baril-Moses agreement, negotiated between the Cree Nation and the Government of Quebec, is a good example (even though the context of this agreement is larger) of the monitoring and scope of FSC certification and of the role that an aboriginal community can play in helping a forest enterprise obtain and maintain it certification.

Here is a brief overview of the FSC certification process and the steps required to obtain a Forest Management Certificate or a Chain of Custody certificate:

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<th>FSC CERTIFICATION STEPS</th>
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<td><strong>STEP 1</strong></td>
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AN OUTSTANDING SHOWCASE FOR THE MINING INDUSTRY

November 23-26, 2015
Québec City Convention Centre

QuebecMines.gouv.qc.ca

The FNQLEDC will be there
List of Taxation Meetings in the communities for 2015

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<tr>
<th>Community</th>
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<td>Pikogan</td>
<td>August 12</td>
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<td>Mingan</td>
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<td>Uashat</td>
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<td>Wemontaci</td>
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<td>Pessamit</td>
<td>October or November (to be determined)</td>
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Next activities of the FNQLEDC

Annual General Meeting of the FNQLEDC

Date: September 16, 2015
Place: Four Points By Sheraton, Quebec city
Clientele: CEDO’s

* Registrations: CEDO’s must refer to the notice of the meeting and to the agenda they received on July 16.

Conference Day - Strategic Marketing

Date: September 17, 2015
Time: 9 am
Place: Four Points By Sheraton, Quebec city
Clientele: All
Inscriptions: 418 843-1488 or cdepnql.org/evenement.asp
Aboriginal Business Directory

ENTREPRENEURS! LIST YOUR COMPANY IN THE ABORIGINAL BUSINESS DIRECTORY - IT’S FREE. THIS DIRECTORY INCLUDES ALL ABORIGINAL ENTREPRENEURS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR ON RESERVE AND MOST OFF RESERVE AS WELL. THIS DIRECTORY IS USED BY MANY STAKEHOLDERS SUCH AS COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS (CEDOS), ABORIGINAL ENTREPRENEURS, PRIMARY CONTRACTORS AND BOTH LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT FOR CONTRACT ALLOCATION. CONTACT THE FNQLEDC OR VISIT CDEPNQL.ORG

Erratum

In the May 2015 edition of our newsletter, on page 4 we announced a new service for English speaking Aboriginals offered by the Registraire des entreprises du Québec (REQ). We wish to clarify that this service is offered to both French and English speaking clients. Moreover, we would like to remind you that this service is essentially over the phone – applicants must supply a phone number since the REQ cannot communicate in writing in English with clients because of obligations under the Charter of the French Language with regards to businesses.

Procedure - Reminder:

For persons who wish to register their business
1. Write “Aboriginal” in the email subject line
2. Write the name and the phone number of the person making the request
3. Indicate availabilities for a return call
4. Mention in the email the topics to be discussed

Other requests
1. Write “Aboriginal” in the email subject line
2. Write the name and the phone number of the person making the request
3. Indicate availabilities for a return call
4. Write NEQ number (if applicable)
5. Write request reference number (if applicable)
6. Mention in the email the topics to be discussed

Write to the following address: cresoutienre@servicesquebec.gouv.qc.ca