

## *Involvement of the Cree Nation of Mistissini and the Tallymen*

*Involvement of impacted Cree Nation  
of Mistissini tallymen in the  
development and management of the  
Albanel-Témiscamie-Otish National Park*

### **Background**

Since 2001, the task force mandated to establish this first park inhabited by a Quebec First Nation has held 34 meetings with representatives of the Cree Nation of Mistissini, as well as five general assemblies with the tallymen of the impacted traplines, concerning every aspect of the development and management of the Albanel-Témiscamie-Otish National Park Project.

Ultimately, it was agreed that along with continuing to exercise their rights to harvest and practise their traditional activities within the boundaries of the proposed park, tallymen from the impacted traplines will maintain their role as protectors of their rich heritage. In addition to being guardians and hosts of the park, they will play an important role in the development and management of this protected area and will have the continuing respect and support of the park's management.



Mount Wendigo from Mistissini,  
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Accordingly, it was acknowledged that all historical trapping grounds will remain reference units with respect to management and development of the park. Thus, the tallymen will be guaranteed a significant role in the services and activities offered in the park.

### Initiative

Discussions concerning the development of the park began as early as the 1990's. The Cree Nation of Mistissini is a Cree community on the south eastern shore of Mistissini Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in Quebec. The Cree Nation of Mistissini has a population of over 3,500.

In 2001, John Longchap, Chief of the Cree Nation of Mistissini, took the initiative and asked the Minister responsible for Quebec parks system planning to form a task force headed by a representative from the community. He also requested the appointment of a liaison officer to keep the community and tallymen regularly informed on the project's progress.

The government employees responsible for field studies in the five years that followed consulted the tallymen in the regions being studied and ensured that they were accompanied in the field by either the tallymen or members of their families. This was done as a sign of respect, and as a means of benefiting from the traditional knowledge of these hunters.

By taking this approach, we recognized the moral authority and important social status the tallymen have always held among their nomadic hunting communities. As in the case of the Quebec

government's approach to the forestry regime in the James Bay territory, the Cree trapping grounds will be considered development reference units. The tallymen will therefore continue to have primary responsibility for the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage.

In this sense, the master plan for the park is distinct in that it explicitly recognizes "...the importance that the Cree Nation of Mistissini attaches to the preservation of its cultural heritage, in conjunction with the area's natural heritage, and the influence tallymen will have in developing this vast territory. Historically, the latter have been its guardians and protectors. They must continue to play this role..." (Government of Quebec, MDDEP, January 2006, Provisory Master Plan, Foreword, page 5, paragraph 1).

### Lessons learned

The first lesson learned is the importance of obtaining the support of the Aboriginal people concerned and to involve them in every step of the process by maintaining a constant dialogue.

The Cree Nation of Mistissini has expressed its respect for the tallymen. Every trapping ground will continue to be considered community land to be developed and used according to traditional methods, using a holistic approach and abiding by the profound values of respect for nature and sharing that have contributed to the survival of this people since time immemorial.

The trapping grounds therefore represent dwelling sites where Cree families will warmly welcome visitors to share their pride in their ancestral



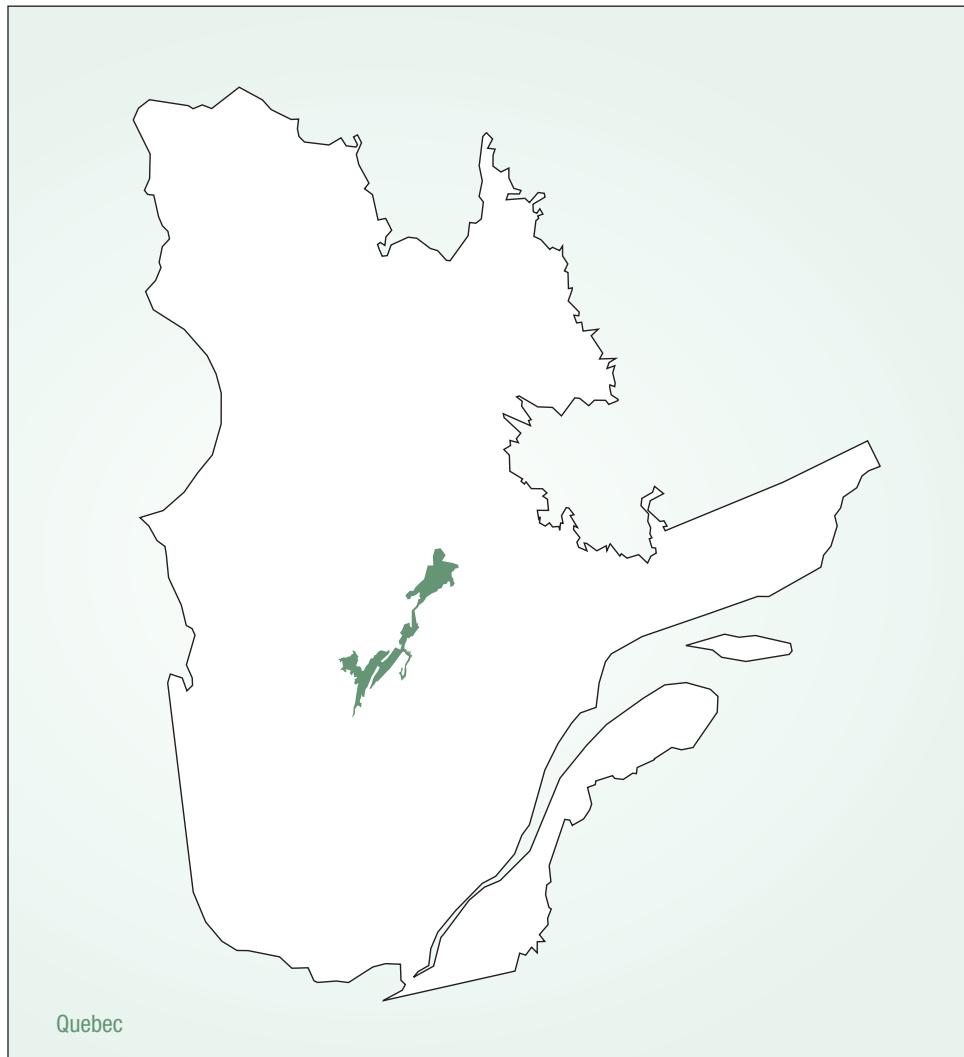
territory and culture. Hence, the Cree Nation of Mistissini and the tallymen consider the park an effective tool for ensuring that the integrity of their heritage is preserved and that their customs are maintained, while their local economy diversifies.

### Conclusion

The Albabel-Témiscamie-Otish National Park Project will be the first inhabited park in Quebec. The Cree Nation of Mistissini continues to work with the Government of Quebec and the Société des Établissements de Plein Air du Québec (sépaq) to make the park a reality and to develop a model



## Albabel-Témiscamie-Otish Park



*The Cree Nation of Mistissini has a population of over 3,500.*



of park management where the Cree Nation of Mistissini will take a leading role for the benefit of its members. The tallymen will, of course, continue to occupy a position of significant importance in the management of all of the activities and services that will be developed in the future.

### Quotes

"I have discovered in a lifetime of traveling in primitive regions, a lifetime of seeing people living in the wilderness and using it, that there is a hard core of wilderness need in everyone, a core that makes its spiritual values a basic human necessity. There is no hiding it. . . . Unless we can

preserve places where the endless spiritual needs of man can be fulfilled and nourished, we will destroy our culture and ourselves." (Sigurd F. Olson. *Reflections from the North Country*, excerpt from a speech presented to the Sierra Club in 1965).

"The concept of 'borders' no longer exists on Earth. Humans are familiar with and have polluted the four corners of our world. No more can we steal yet another piece of the forest or the Earth from Mother Nature and expect that one day we will discover a great wilderness that will recompense and forgive us our errors. (Grand Chief Ted Moses, excerpt from a speech at the World Ecotourism Summit in Quebec City, May 22, 2002).

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A view from Otish Mountains,  
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Sand bars of Temiscamie River,  
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