

Brief presented to the  
Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement

By the Naskapi Development Corporation and  
Naskapi Adoschaouna Services inc.

Schefferville  
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## **Introduction**

The Naskapi community is a unique society in many ways: it has its own culture, language and way of life.

The last of the First Nations of Quebec to come in contact with the Europeans, it occupied what was recently called the Ungava Region of Quebec and Central Labrador, neighbouring the Inuit to the North, the Cree to the West and amongst others, the Innus to the South.

Decimated by illness after their first contact with Europeans, they came close to extinction, but they are now close to one thousand individuals.

*“In the historical literature, the Naskapis enjoy a particular status. They distinguish themselves from the other autochthonous groups from the South arctic, because, as it is said, they seldom visited the fur trade posts during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and preferred caribou hunting instead of trapping animals for furs.”<sup>1</sup>*

In 1956, without any further formalities other than a unilateral governmental decision and the promise of jobs, school and housing facilities, the Naskapi were moved from Fort Chimo (Kuuujjiaq) where they lived, to Schefferville where they had to live in tents.

### **I. The James Bay Project**

At the beginning of the 1970's, the Quebec government and the Commission hydroélectrique de Québec (Hydro-Québec) undertook the construction of the James Bay hydroelectric complex.

In 1975, The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) was signed between the Crees and the Inuit, the Governments of Quebec and Canada.

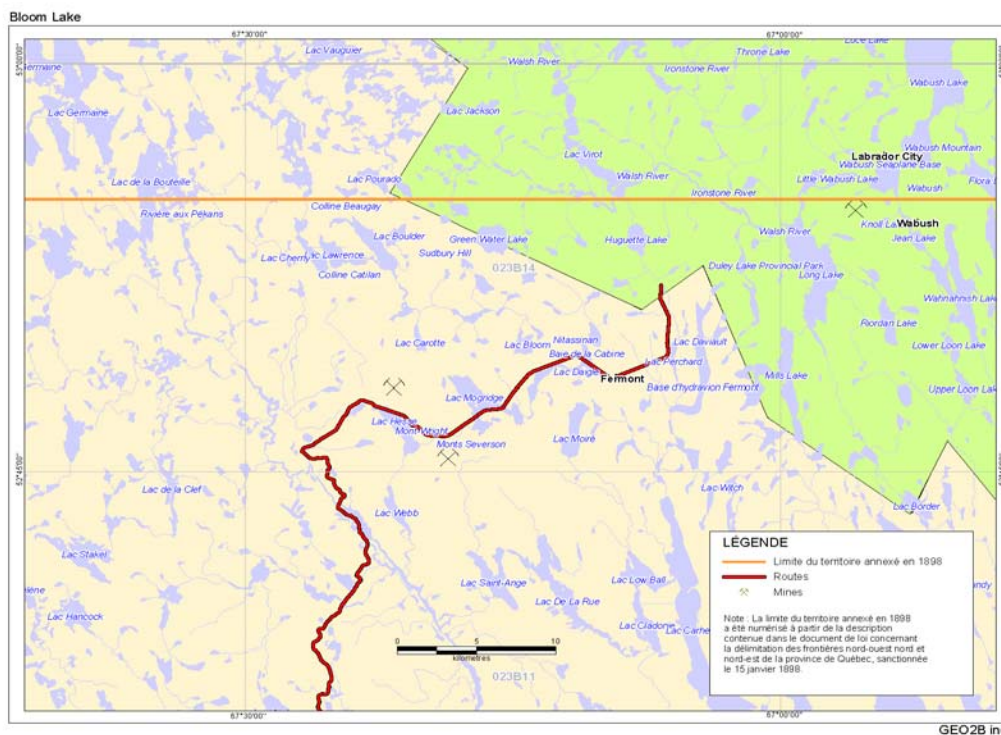
After being excluded from JBNQA negotiations, it was only in 1978 that the North-Eastern Quebec Agreement (NEQA) was signed by the Naskapis, Quebec and Canada.

Territory conferred under the JBNQA and the NEQA reach a Southern boundary line less than 20 kilometres North of Bloom Lake. (See maps 1 and 2)

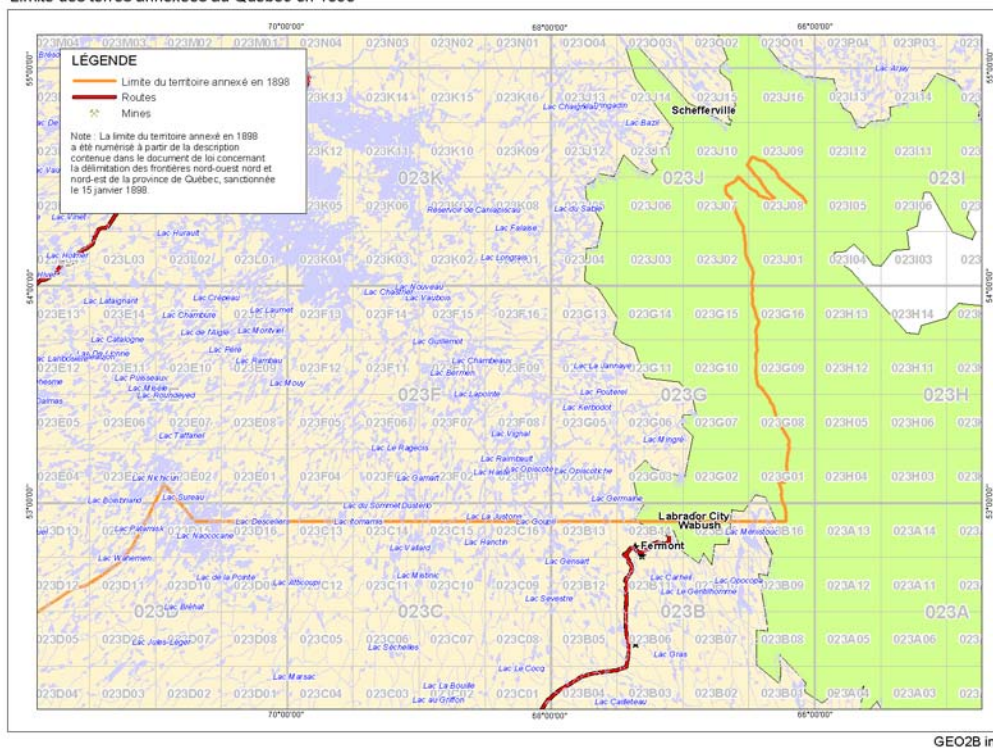
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<sup>1</sup> Quote from the publication Atlas historique du Québec « North Inhabitants and Evolution » Laval University Press, Sainte-Foy, 2001 (page 69 quoting the works of Tremer, 1888, On the Indians and Esquimaux of the Ungava district Labrador);

# Maps 1 and 2



**Limite des terres annexées au Québec en 1898**



The Naskapi ancestral way of life was nomadic, as that of their Innu brothers and sisters, and only a non-native can draw a straight line defining a boundary between Nations that lived in harmony for centuries.

## II. Understanding the Importance of the Northeastern Quebec Agreement

The presentation made by former Minister John Ciaccia, responsible for negotiating both the JBNQA and the NEQA on behalf of the Quebec Government, before the Quebec National Assembly, helps to understand the spirit in which the aforementioned agreements were signed:

*“In undertaking the negotiations with the native peoples, we have followed two guiding principles, two principles of equal importance. The first is that Quebec needs to use the resources of its territory, all its territory, for the benefit of all of its people. The use of these resources must be reasonably planned. The future needs of the people of Quebec must be anticipated.*

*The Government clearly has the duty to take the measures necessary to ensure the orderly and rational developments of the resources of our territory in the North. Those resources are a vital factor, they must be a vital factor, in the Government’s over-all plans for the future of Quebec.*

*The second principle is that we must recognize the needs of the native peoples, the Crees and the Inuit, who have a different culture and a different way of life from those of other peoples of Quebec.*

*We have negotiated with two minorities who felt themselves threatened with extinction. The native peoples are battling for their survival. **If the State does not succeed in establishing principles aimed at assuring the survival of these minorities, it could well happen that we might not even be able to guarantee our own.***

*(...) Their fate as collectivities would be sealed if the Government of Quebec were not determined to give their culture the chance of survival as long as it has vitality, and as long as they wish their culture to survive.*

*(...)*

***They have a mystique about the land, and what it contains. They have a special relationship with the land that their ancestors inhabited, a link, something indefinable but real and genuine nevertheless.***

*The native peoples who will be parties to this Agreement (...) are flesh-and-blood people who live and work in communion with the land they inhabit and who express, in their everyday activities, the continuity of a long, long tradition. They are living, if I may say so, a wholesome life in harmony with the land. They are at peace with nature.*

*(...)*

*So we are by no means talking about a dying way of live. On the contrary, it is strongly maintained. **The native peoples hold to it with every fibre of their being. And as the North is inevitably opened up to other peoples, it would be wrong not to do what is in our power to do to guarantee and protect this way of life.***<sup>2</sup>

When the Naskapis signed their own Agreement, the same held true for our community.

### **III. The Naskapi Development Corporation**

The Naskapi Development Corporation (hereinafter referred to as “NDC”) is a corporate entity created by a special law of the Province of Quebec: *An Act Respecting the Naskapi Development Corporation* R.S.Q. c. S-10.1 (hereinafter designated the “Act”).

The Act has its source in chapter 17 of the NEQA; the funds administered by NDC are those described in chapter 16 of the NEQA; its objects are listed in section 17.1, chapter 17 of the NEQA; and its powers are defined in section 17.5 of the NEQA.

Section 5 of the Act states:

*“5. The objects of the Corporation are*

- 1) to receive, administer, use and invest the compensation provided for in subsections 16.1 and 16.2 of the Agreement and the revenues therefrom, as well as all its other funds, in accordance with this Act;*
- 2) to relieve poverty and to see to the welfare and the advancement of education of the Naskapis;*
- 3) to ensure better living conditions for the Naskapis and to promote the development of the Naskapi community;*
- 4) to exercise the other functions vested in it by other acts or the Agreement;*

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<sup>2</sup> The JBNQA as explained by Mr. John Ciaccia, Mont-Royal deputy and special representative of Prime Minister Robert Bourassa at the opening of the Quebec National Assembly’s Permanent Parliamentary Commission on Natural Resources, Lands and Forests.

- 5) *to foster, promote, protect and assist in preserving the Naskapi way of life, values and traditions.*”<sup>3</sup>

NDC is a non-profit corporate entity whose members are the Naskapi beneficiaries under NEQA. In the exercise of its powers and as a means to achieve its objectives, NDC has, over the years, created a wholly-owned subsidiary, Naskapi Management Services Inc., and operates Naskapi Adoschaouana Services Reg'd, a construction business whose object is to create jobs, develop Naskapi expertise, and help finance NDC's other ventures, such as:

- CDCK 89.9 FM, the only Naskapi community radio station. It is the primary medium of communication amongst its members, circulating information concerning health and culture, creating means for members of the community to exchange their views, and serving as a significant tool for preserving and promoting the Naskapi language;
- Strategies to bring financial support and guidance to vital and essential projects involving culture and language, namely:
  - collecting Naskapi tales and legends, their consignment in writing in both Naskapi and in English, while ensuring precision and coherence of the texts;
  - drafting a book of Naskapi language grammar and syntax;
  - reviewing and updating the Naskapi language dictionary published in 1994 and verifying its consistency with work carried out on the Naskapi language grammar and syntax;
  - establishing an on-line dictionary of the Naskapi language;
  - constantly pursuing study of Naskapi toponymy (place names) in order to facilitate the transmission of its cartography by the Naskapis and in order to claim recognition of Naskapi toponymy by the Government of Quebec;
  - writing the history of the Naskapis with the help of the elders of the community;
  - collecting and consigning traditional knowledge on animals and plants, how they were used, and transmitting it from one generation to the next;

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<sup>3</sup> 1979, c. 26, s.5;

- translating the Naskapi Bible, a work of great importance for a community;
- financing initiatives involving transmission by the elders to the youths of Naskapi cultural identity, pride associated with their identity, values and traditional way of life;
- encouraging the Naskapi craft industry, its development and potential for employment, offering an outlet to the craftsmen through Manikin Centre, a commercial building financed by NDC;
- financial contribution to the Manikin grocery store to improve community health. It is of the utmost importance and difficult to attain without financing; Manikin co-operates with the Health Food committee and the CLSC.

All of these initiatives are vital to the Naskapi community. They form part of the essential roles that the signatories of the NEQA wanted NDC to be responsible for.

#### **IV. The Bloom Lake Project**

As early as 1992, the Supreme Court of Canada<sup>4</sup> expressed its views on the approach that should be adopted regarding environmental concerns:

*“I cannot accept that the concept of environmental quality is confined to the biophysical environment alone; such an interpretation is unduly myopic and contrary to the generally held view that the “environment” is a diffuse subject matter; see R. v. Crown Zellerbach Canada Ltd., [1988] 1 S.C.R. 401. The point was made by the Canadian Council of Resources and Environment Ministers, following the “Brundtland Report” of the World Commission on Environment and Development, in the Report of the National Task Force on Environment and Economy, September 24, 1987, at p. 2:*

*“Our recommendations reflect the principles that we hold in common with the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). These include the fundamental belief that environmental and economic planning cannot proceed in separate spheres. Long-term economic growth depends on a healthy environment. It also affects the environment in many ways. Ensuring environmentally sound and sustainable economic in many ways. Ensuring environmentally sound and sustainable economic*

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<sup>4</sup> *Friends of the Oldman River Society v. Canada (Minister of Transport)*, [1992] 1 S.C.R. 3

*development requires the technology and wealth that is generated by continued economic growth. Economic and environmental planning and management must therefore be integrated.”*

***Surely the potential consequences for a community’s livelihood, health and other social matters from environmental change are integral to decision-making on matters affecting environmental quality, subject, of course, to the constitutional imperatives, an issue I will address later.”***

During the pursuit of business activities by the IOC in Schefferville, not much concern was given to members of the Naskapi and Innu communities. Generally hired last, and first to be laid off, it took years before the Innus and the Naskapis could join the Workers’ Union of IOC.

When it shut down its Schefferville operations in 1982, IOC left:

- a disastrous landscape for those who remained;
- members of both First Nations without any compensation, even though the Naskapis had been moved by the government to Schefferville twenty-six years earlier, precisely in order for them to benefit from the economic activities of IOC in Schefferville.

Time has passed and things are starting to change.

**Consolidated Thompson Iron Mines Limited** has submitted a well defined project in a region that is already active in the mining industry and using existing infrastructures. Although the promoter did not initially consider the Naskapis in its impact study, it is obvious that concerns are expressed for First Nations, and our initial contacts are encouraging. The *Bureau des Audiences Publiques en Environnement* (“BAPE”) report should reflect the need to include concerns of the First Nation in the project, namely employment opportunities, job training, contracts, and other economic benefits arising out of participation in the development and operation of the mine.

## **Conclusion**

The BAPE must not forget that in 25, 50 or 100 years, when exploitation of iron ore will cease, the non-native population will leave the region, just as it did in Schefferville. However, members of the Naskapi community will remain since it is part of their territory, their home, the home of their ancestors and part of who they are today.

## **NASKAPI DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Edward Shecanapish, Vice-President, President of Naskapi management Services inc.