



JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Donald Nicholls, B.A., LL.B., B.C.L., LL.M

The theme of this year's Annual Report is 'We are Stronger Together'. Now more than ever, as we live in a new reality caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, our resilience and ability to unite as a Cree Nation to successfully keep our communities safe has proven to be an important characteristic of our People.

Our Department of Justice and Correctional Services places great value on collaborative approaches, where we share information and resources, in order to maximize support and benefit for individuals in our communities. For this reason, our Department continues to develop and nurture relationships with communities, entities and governmental partners. Our Nation is Stronger Together when our entities can join forces to offer support to our community members.

Our Department of Justice and Correctional Services is making great efforts and advances to improve services to those in the corrections system. Our Department is taking action, and the services that we offer in our facilities is a great example of this. In March of this year, we celebrated the inauguration and the start of services of the regional Cree Youth Healing Centre in Mistissini. We know that one of the most impactful ways to change the trend starts with our youth. In collaboration with the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, we are very proud to open a facility that provides a place to support our young and keep them on the territory to heal.

Another example is the progress in our transitional Tiny Home Communities project. We believe that our strength lies in our ability to build environments for people to grow, learn and ultimately reintegrate into their community. The project will roll out in phases, initially with three Tiny Home Communities hopefully launching in 2020, again working in collaboration with other entities to offer a holistic approach to healing. Both of these projects are the result of extensive review of best practices and meeting with other similar services which are offered elsewhere in Quebec and Canada. We also consulted the concerned communities to ensure that the programs offered in those facilities would be adapted to our Cree context. Alongside the regional Women's Shelters that are now fully operational in Waskaganish and Waswanipi, these facilities are integral to our continued efforts to offer services to those members in need of support.

Our Corrections team is working together with the Federal and Provincial Governments as well as other Cree

Nation Government Departments and institutions. This team continues to work tirelessly to offer culturally adapted services to offenders with the goal of supporting them to become contributing members of the community. The COVID-19 pandemic created specific concerns with reintegrating Cree individuals back to their communities. We were happy to assist the communities, the health authorities and governments in this regard.

We continue to invest in the development of our dedicated employees so that we can increase the scope and maintain and improve the quality of our services. This year, we created 3 new positions in our Department to further enhance our ability to serve our clients, including a Coordinator of Strategic Management, a Domestic Violence Liaison, and a CAVAC Liaison Officer (sexual violence), each specializing in areas we are working on to improve our collaborative response in the Cree Nation.

With the expansion of the Tiny Home Communities, we will be adding a significant number of personnel to our community based services throughout the next year. We continue to engage Cree summer students and interns in justice, legal or corrections related programs, and we encourage them to pursue these studies for the development of more services in the near future.

The number of criminal cases in the Court system has remained fairly consistent over the past ten years, with an increase of cases in some communities and a decrease in others in the past year. Our commitment to ensuring that accused individuals receive a trial that considers the cultural context is supported by the excellent work of the members of the Community Justice Committees and by our team of writers producing the Gladue reports.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing measures, we expanded the use of our video conferencing technologies for court hearings in the Cree communities. All of our Justice Facilities are equipped with state of the art video conferencing technologies, which enabled the courts to continue to hear urgent matters from a distance during the lockdown period and prevented the unnecessary deprivation of individuals' rights or liberty. We are currently exploring with the courts the possibility for them to continue to use our video conferencing technologies as they resume all hearings and while the threat of COVID-19 is still present, and social distancing measures remain in place, in our communities.



Youth Healing Centre Inauguration in Mistissini

In the past year, the Community Justice Committees were given an opportunity to expand through an agreement with the government the types of cases and offences they can hear and address locally. This expansion of authority to hear more types of cases and offences will contribute to the creation of community-based solutions to address these cases and offences and will allow the integration of Cree values and ways into more decisions affecting Cree individuals.

With the imminent graduation of our next class of CICR (conflict resolution) participants, conflict resolution skills will be further developed and entrenched within our communities. We have been fortunate to have one of the best trainers in conflict resolution, bringing with her a vast experience of involvement in thousands of cases spanning over more than 40 years in the field of conflict resolutions.

Our Community Programming and Prevention programs form part of the valuable frontline services that we provide. Throughout the year, we have offered a variety of programs aimed at high-risk individuals, and we continue to invest in our youth through the delivery of programs such as Stop Now And Plan (SNAP) and Youth Enrichment Services (YES), as well as organizing initiatives such as WE Days, Challenge Days, and Take Action Camps amongst others.

Our collaboration with the Provincial Government is also manifested through the Cree-Quebec Judicial Advisory Committee, which comprises equal representation from the Cree Nation Government and Quebec. This year the Committee welcomed three new Cree members, Deputy Chief

Samson Weistche, Irene Bosum and Flora Blacksmith. Deputy Grand Chief Mandy Gull remains on the Committee for the duration of her term as Deputy Grand Chief, and the mandate of Deputy Chief Daisy House was renewed for another 3-year term. The Committee also welcomed three new Quebec members, Alain Bellefeuille, from the Quebec Department of Justice, Richard Coleman, from the Department of Public Security, and Josée Couture, from the Secretariat of Indigenous Affairs. The chairmanship of the Committee is assumed on an alternating basis, between a Cree and a Quebec representative, for a period of two years. Josiane Gendron from the Quebec Ministry of Public Security is the current Chairperson until the end of October 2020.

Throughout the year, our Department participated in several important testimonies and conferences in Quebec to provide expertise and understanding of our context, as well as to learn more about practices from other places that could be beneficial for Eeyou Istchee. In particular, we testified before the Select Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Minors of the Quebec National Assembly and we appeared before an Expert Committee on Support to Victims of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence. The dialogue with these Committees was constructive and allowed us to share in a meaningful way. It also allowed us to recommend concrete solutions to issues and to highlight measures, including international measures adopted by the United Nations, that can be implemented here and that may have a significant impact, for example, in reducing exploitation of Indigenous children.



We Day 2019 in Montreal

The COVID-19 pandemic and the enforcement of emergency measures was a testament to our ability to unite as a Nation, and to react quickly and adapt. One of our key Cree values is to create communities of people around issues of importance for the Crees. As a Nation we want to take part in key decisions affecting us, and we are inclusive and respectful of everyone's contributions. We were able to maintain essential services throughout this period of COVID-19 by utilizing technology and putting in place measures to maintain the health of clients and staff. Again, our reaction and resilience in the face of global issues illustrated the importance of our collaboration in the successful achievement of any initiatives.

As we continue to develop services and build resources to support the Cree Nation, I am convinced that we will see the results of our efforts. As a Nation, we have the strength, resilience and ability to achieve our objectives. This continuing collaboration beyond COVID-19 amongst entities is important to our nation building capacity, as we truly are stronger together.

Youth Healing Centre in Mistissini



OUR PEOPLE

The strength of a Nation is directly proportional to what we invest in our people, so we continue to build capacity in our employees regionally and locally to create a foundation of services and infrastructure in justice and corrections. Together, our staff and organizations can provide more comprehensive and inclusive support to Cree people coming into contact with the systems of justice and corrections.

Providing broader support is a group of

22

Regional Staff

Which includes →

- Director
- Coordinators
- Psychologist
- CAVAC Officers
- Administrators
- Native Parajudicial Workers
- Court Liaison Officers
- Specialists
- And other positions

Each Justice Building is home to a core group of

49

Local Staff

Which includes →

- Receptionists
- Community Reintegration Officers
- Prevention Program Officers
- Community Justice Officers
- Primary Youth Workers
- Prevention Program Assistants

This year, we have also created

7

New Positions

Which includes →

- Translators
- Domestic Violence Liaison
- CAVAC Liaison Officer
- Fund Administrator
- Coordinator Strategic Management
- Coordinator of Knowledge Mobilization

All together, our department offers its services through our

78 

Department Employees

Skills Development

Our staff complements their skills with specialized instruction related to specific duties and overall services to the Cree communities. We open up the majority of our trainings to other Cree departments and entities we work collaboratively with.



First Aid CPR

Basic First Aid training for our staff to be prepared in emergency situations.



Trauma of Inner Child

Understanding childhood trauma when working with children and families.



Compassionate Self-Care Training

Explains the importance of self-care, so our staff can continue providing quality service.



Mental Health First Aid

Providing the understanding and tools to deal with moments of crisis.



Self-Injury Workshop

A comprehensive guide to understanding self-harm and how to respond.



SNAP Parents

How to facilitate and provide SNAP services for parents that may need support.

Celebrating 10 Years of Service



Anna Neeposh



Joseph Neeposh



Louise Coonishish

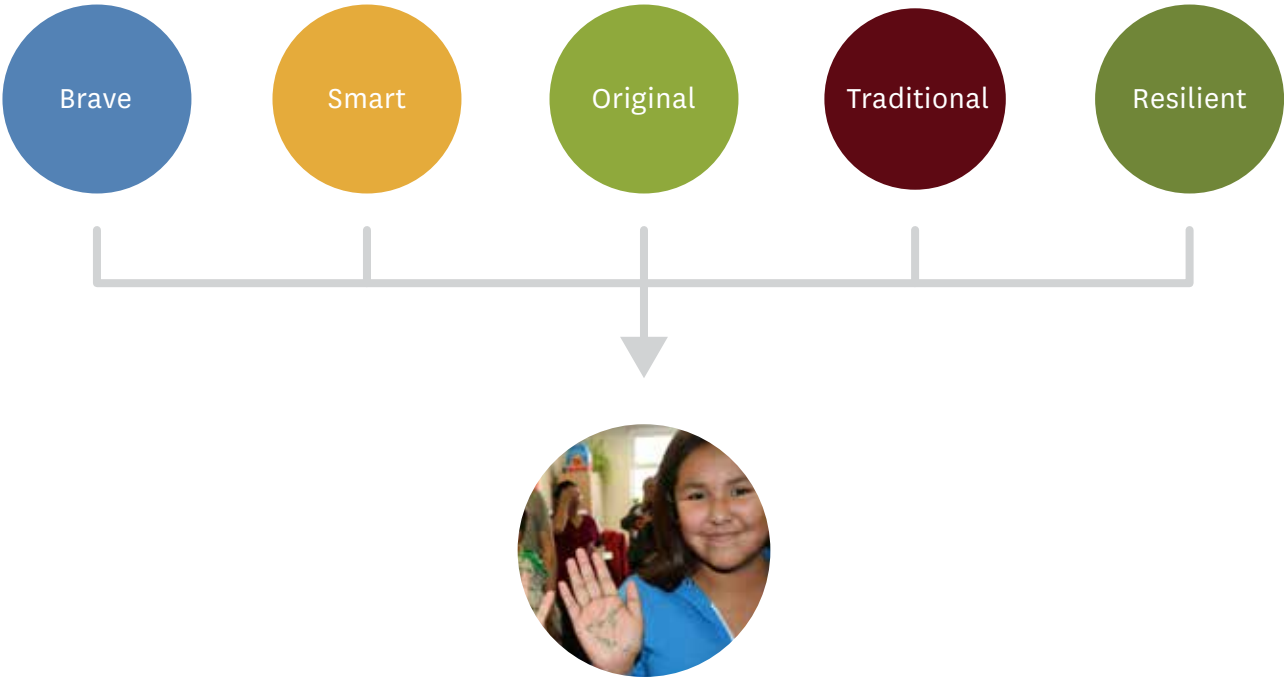


Nelson Mianscum

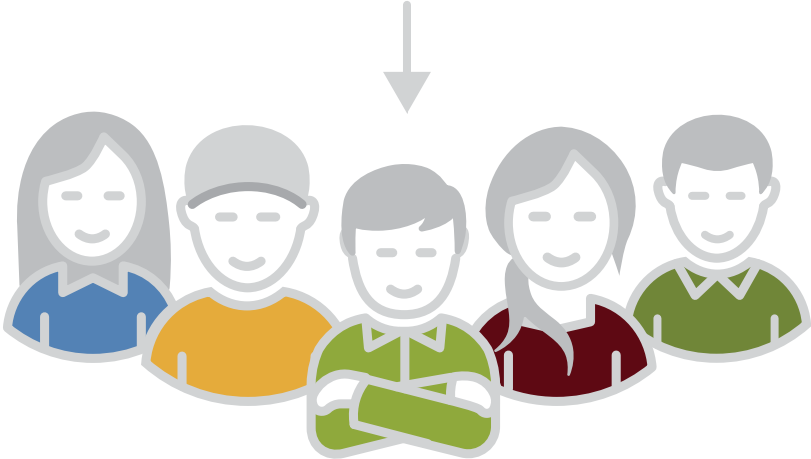
PREVENTION PROGRAMS

One of the key elements of our prevention programs is the ability to engage with children and youth at an early stage. The prevention program also works with adults and provides a number of ways to engage and support them throughout their self-examination of choices. We believe that as a part of a community wishing to be safer and stronger, we need to do our part.

Our Cree Youth



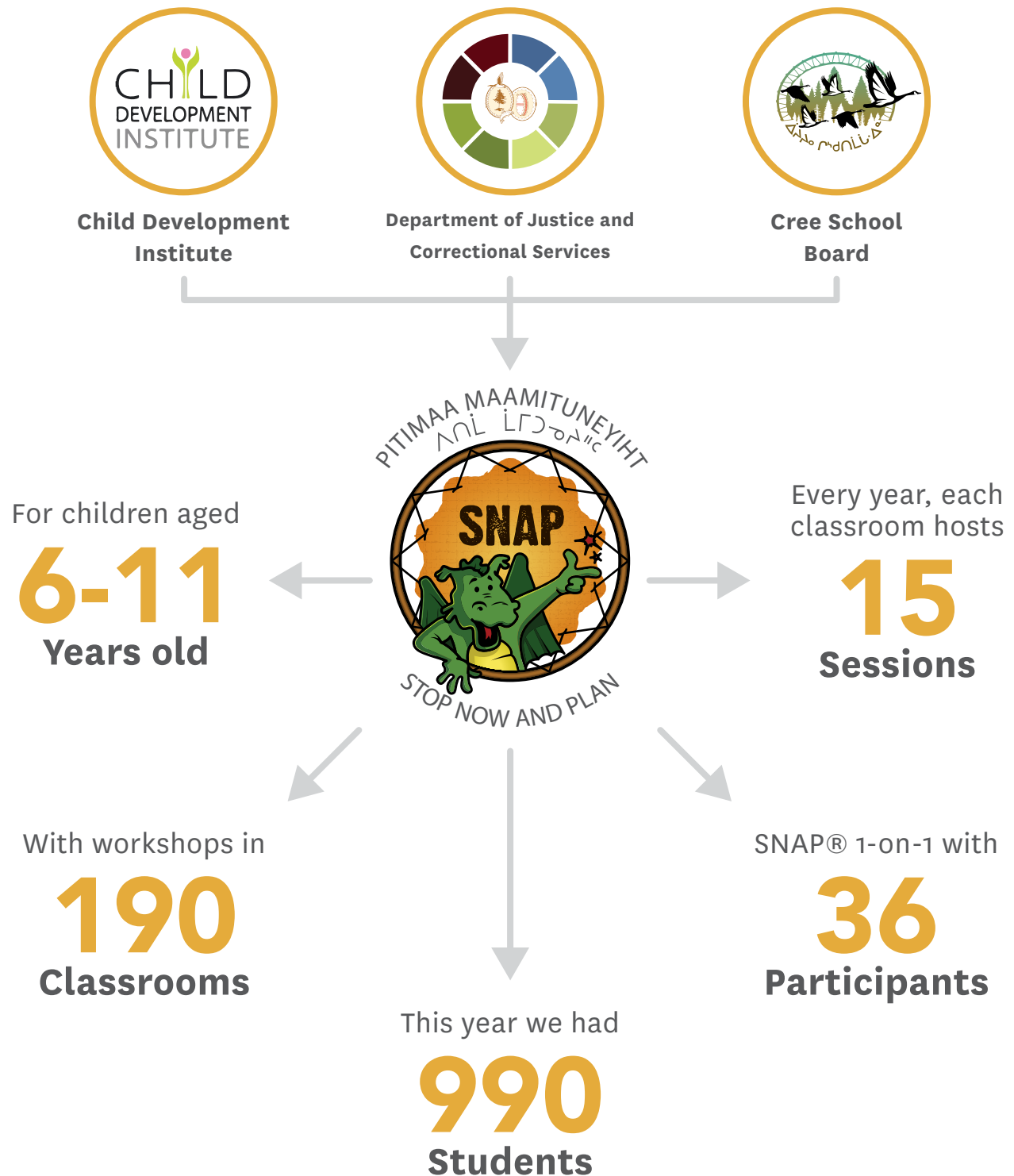
We **work together** with a variety of partners and run a range of prevention programs in **schools** and in the **communities**.



It is through these **programs** we can **engage, teach, coach** or **mentor** a youth at risk of being on an unhealthy path in their life.

Stop Now and Plan®

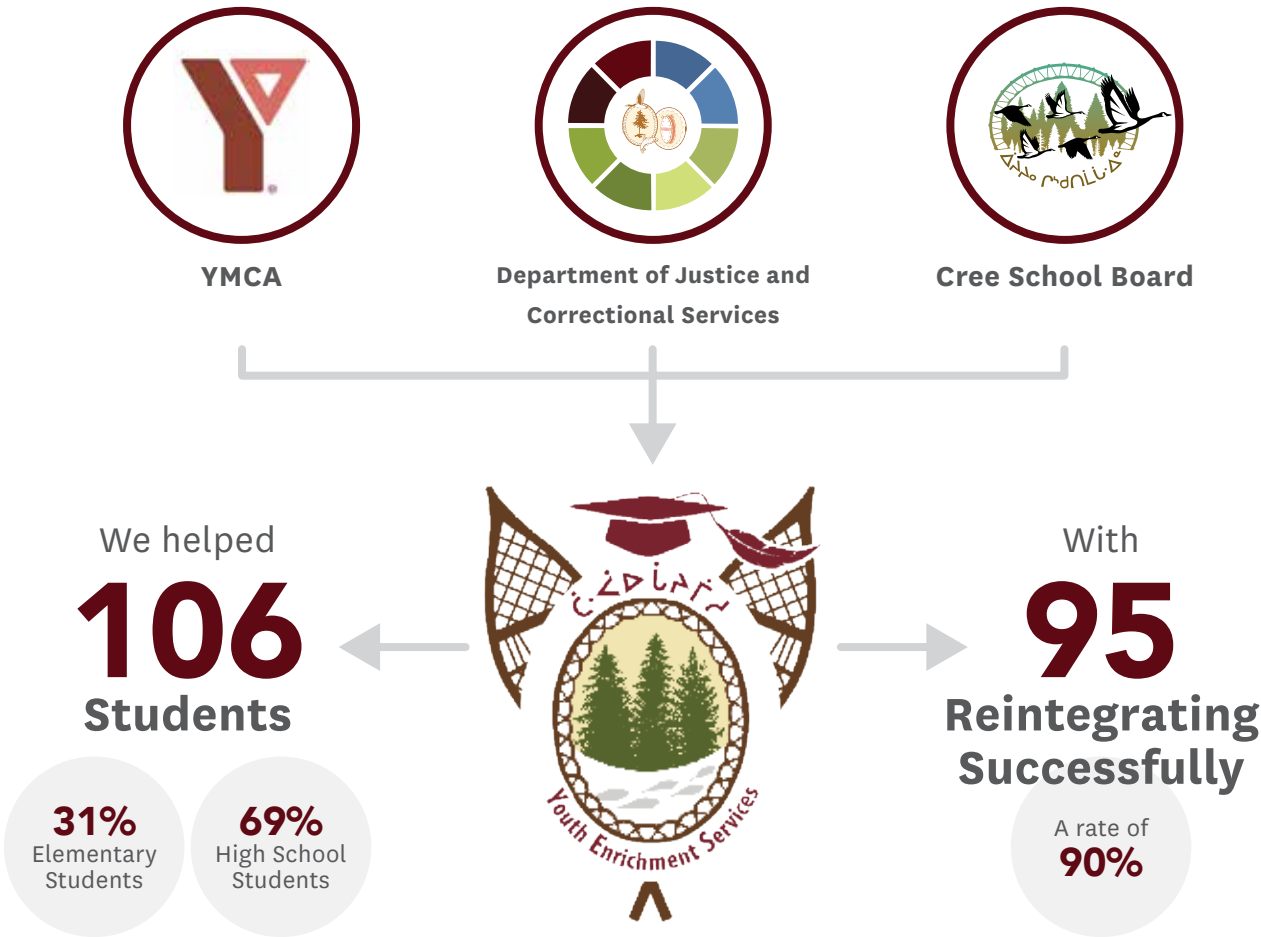
Stop Now And Plan®, in collaboration with the Child Development Institute and the Cree School Board, works with children on essential life skills such as how to deal with conflict, anger, frustration and anxiety. Having someone to help them identify the root cause of a decision can create an environment where change can occur in their lives.




PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Youth Enrichment Services


Our Youth Enrichment Services (YES) provides students who are referred by the schools or parents with a place to reflect on their attitude towards school, learn ways to improve their self confidence and catch up on schoolwork.




Referred students participate in **workshops** such as:

- 


STOP


Anti-Bullying
- 

Reflection Sessions
- 

Self-Esteem
- 

"You can do it!"

Motivation
- 

Art Therapy
- 

Counselling

Other Prevention Initiatives

In addition to the two larger programs that we have established throughout Eeyou Istchee, we support a variety of initiatives that aim at creating awareness about important issues.



26
Kids



63
Classes



25
Students



50
Students



434
Participants



170
Visitors

Programs of 2019-20



CREE JUSTICE FUNDS

The funds are about engaging the Cree entities and communities to form a stronger collaboration effort on issues impacting the Cree Nation. The Justice Funds build new relationships with shared objectives of having healthier and safer Cree communities.

The 3 Cree Justice Funds



Crime Prevention Fund

This fund looks to address some of the **larger issues** with **partnerships** and **collaborative** approaches.



Youth Engagement Fund

A fund directed at **supporting youth** to host a number of events or initiatives to address **justice related** issues



Corrections Fund

This fund is designed to support **rehabilitation** and **reintegration** of Cree offenders.

20
Approved projects



+1,000
Community participants



\$1,042,818
Total amount approved

EMPLOYEE INITIATIVES

Building upon the local connections our staff have in the communities they live and work, we created a fund to allow them to develop local initiatives with partners to achieve similar objectives to the Cree Justice Funds – healthier and safer Cree communities. The program was developed to encourage people to go beyond normal duties, and to do that extra effort that could make a significant impact in the lives of their clients.

Our employees initiated **10** programs with **+310** Participants

As the **employees** are **local** and so are the **clientele**, the approach will build upon the **values** of that community, with programs like:



Rock Your Gloves
Connecting with Your Identity



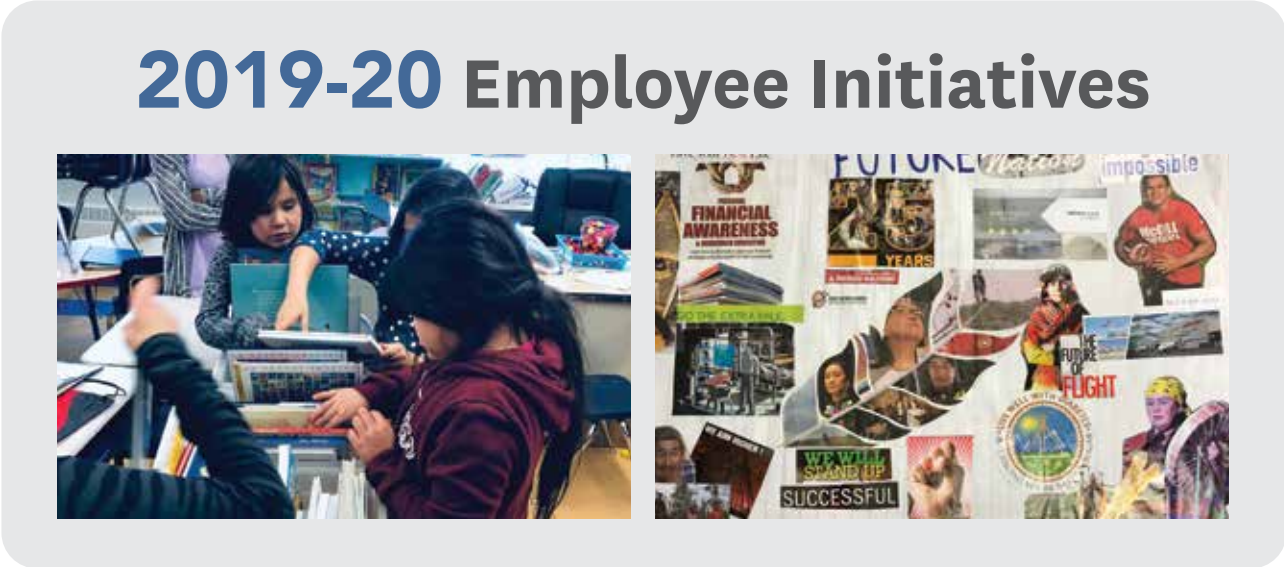
Beading with Youth
Building Relationships with At-Risk Youth



Learning to Cook
Teaching Self-sufficiency and Self-care

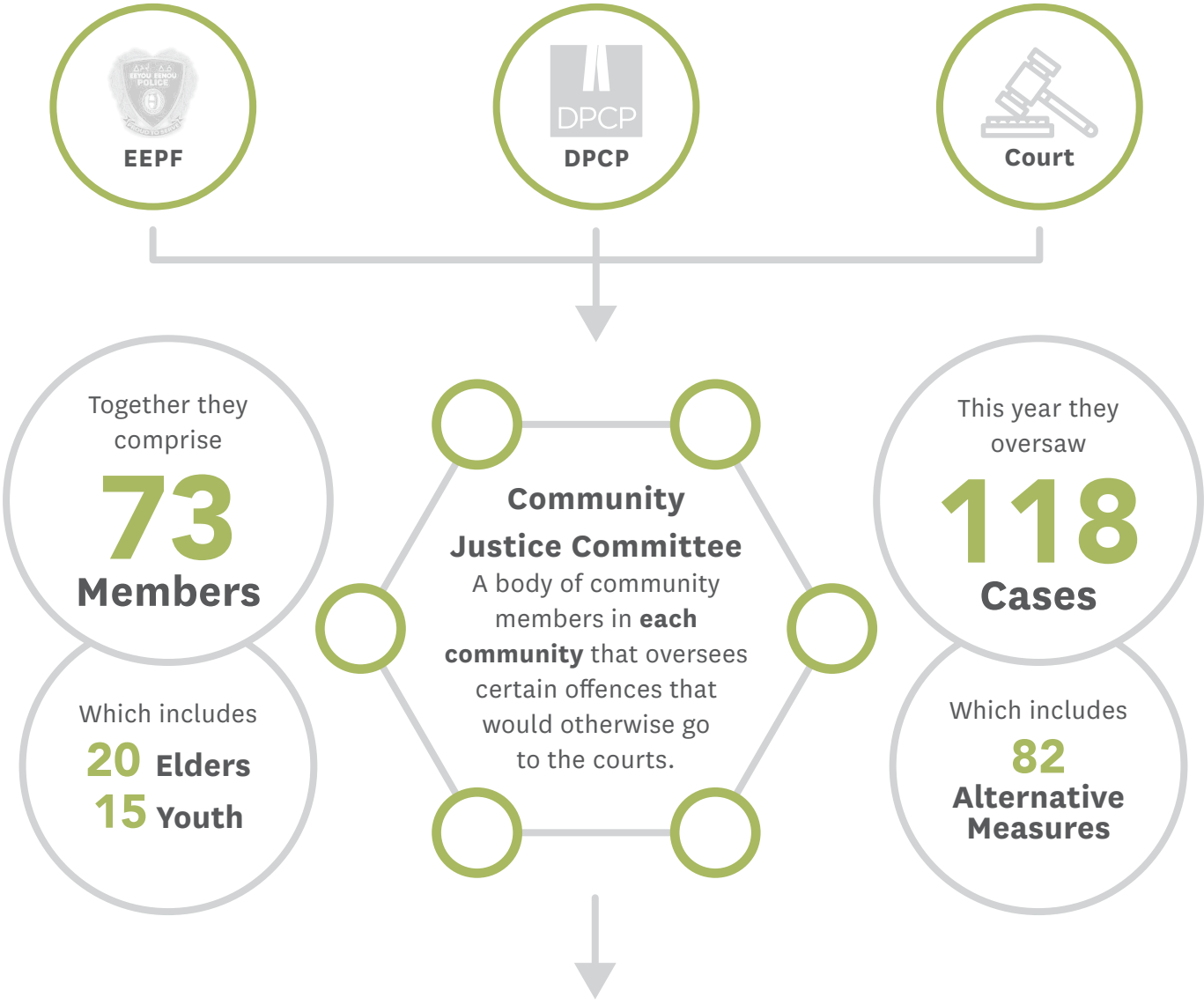


Together for Literacy
Essential Skills for Employability



COMMUNITY JUSTICE COMMITTEES

One of the key justice initiatives in a Cree community is the Community Justice Committee. A number of cases are redirected to these bodies each year to allow for the community to have a voice in how harm is addressed. We are appreciative of the many community members who volunteer their time to be an important part of our community based justice systems.



Community Remedy and Process for Healing

They apply community values and principles and seek to address the needs and interests of the individuals involved and the community as a whole through:

Community Hours



Land-Based Programs



Gladue Writing



Harm Reparation



Community Programming

In addition to overseeing certain offences, Community Justice Committees also organize programs that are aimed at Cree individuals who are at higher risk of becoming involved with the justice system.

This year CJsCs administered **43** with **+490**
programs **Participants**

By collaborating with **local communities**, we can offer a variety of programs to our clients, such as:



Arts & Crafts Program



Crime Prevention Week



Relationship Workshop



Parka Making Program



Land Based Programs



Goosebreak for Couples

Programs 2019-20



CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM

All of our staff begins their training with our signature Cree CICR program. The criterias to take part of this experiential learning journey are to be fully available and committed, open to change and transformation and willing to participate in a learning community.




To complete the training it takes:

140
Hours

4
Weeks

To this day, we have had **106** Graduates

Participants from **14** different Organizations



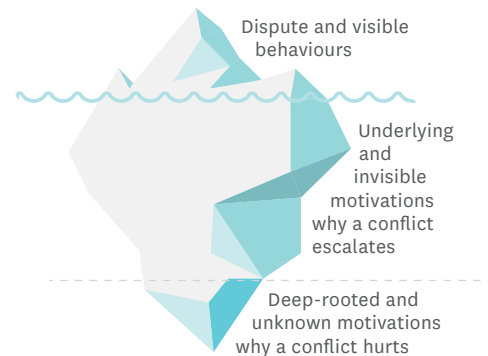
The majority of our staff are trained in **Cree third party neutral training** provided by **CICR** in order for our team to incorporate their **expertise** in a conflict situation.

Conflict Resolution Tools

All of the skills acquired during the training are geared towards self awareness and developing conflict resolution capacities while enabling individuals to intervene in conflict resolution processes as third party neutral. Some of the topics discussed are conflict coaching, facilitation, mediation, community dialogue, compassionate communication, negotiation and conflict management styles, etc.

Layers of Conflict

This section provides a deeper understanding of the various layers and complexities of a conflict. By using an iceberg as an analogy, participants have the opportunity to visually explore the visible, invisible and unknown factors influencing a conflict.



Human Identity Needs

Long lasting solutions can be discovered by increasing our awareness of the complexity of the “self” and our (unmet) human identity needs intertwined within the historical context.



Source: Cree CICR Manual and Vern Redekop

Training 2019-20



IMAGES OF OUR DEPARTMENT

Our department has been involved in a variety of initiatives, programs, and events. These next pages are dedicated to giving a glimpse into our involvement throughout Eeyou Istchee.



Annual Employee Gathering



Waskaganish Together for Literacy



Marc Mero, Champions of Choices Tour



Youth Healing Centre, Mistissini



Cree Justice Funds Initiative, Waskaganish



Youth Beading Program, Chisasibi



We Day, Montreal



Credit to Will Nicholls



Justice Committee Initiative, Whapmagoostui



Department participation in community general assembly

CREE CAVAC SERVICES

Prior to the establishment of the Cree CAVAC offices, victims and witnesses did not have a support network to assist them through a difficult process and time. The strength of our team is their passion for the work, and to make a contribution that matters in the lives of those who have been impacted by criminal acts. The Cree team approach is about community and inclusiveness, and about the ability to actively listen to the stories of people who have been traumatized.



Services For

Victims of Crime



Relatives of Victim



Witnesses of Crime



Community Members



4

Cree CAVAC
Offices in
Eeyou Istchee

→

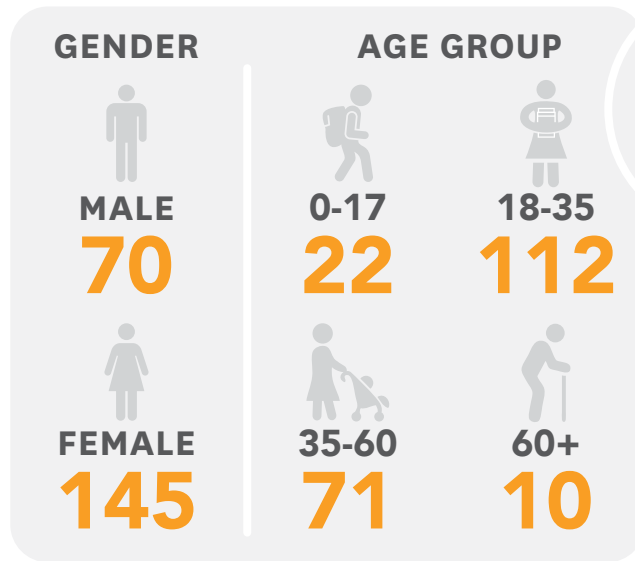
1. Cree Northern CAVAC
2. Cree Central CAVAC
3. Cree Southern CAVAC
4. CAVAC Liaison Office

A Caring Team

There is a healing in knowing that you are not alone, and that your hurt is acknowledged and recognized in the system. From the beginning of the process to the end, the Cree CAVAC Team is there to help people through it all because they care.

118 visits made to **Cree communities** outside of their court date visits.

We assisted a total of **215** clients



62% of our clients were **youth**.

This year we created **2** positions

- CAVAC Liaison Officer
- Domestic Violence Liaison

CAVAC Content for Clients



COURT

The courts, including the Court of Quebec, travel to Eeyou Istchee and provide services for the enforcement of Cree laws, as well as federal and provincial laws. All courts are hosted in our Justice Buildings in each community.

Criminal Court and Cree Laws

120
Days



944
Criminal
Offence
Cases

Criminal Offences may include offences under the Criminal Code and the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.



384
Cree
Law
Cases

Community Law offences include files for offences related to alcohol, curfew, and misdemeanours.

Youth Protection

55
Days



36
Youth
Offender
Cases

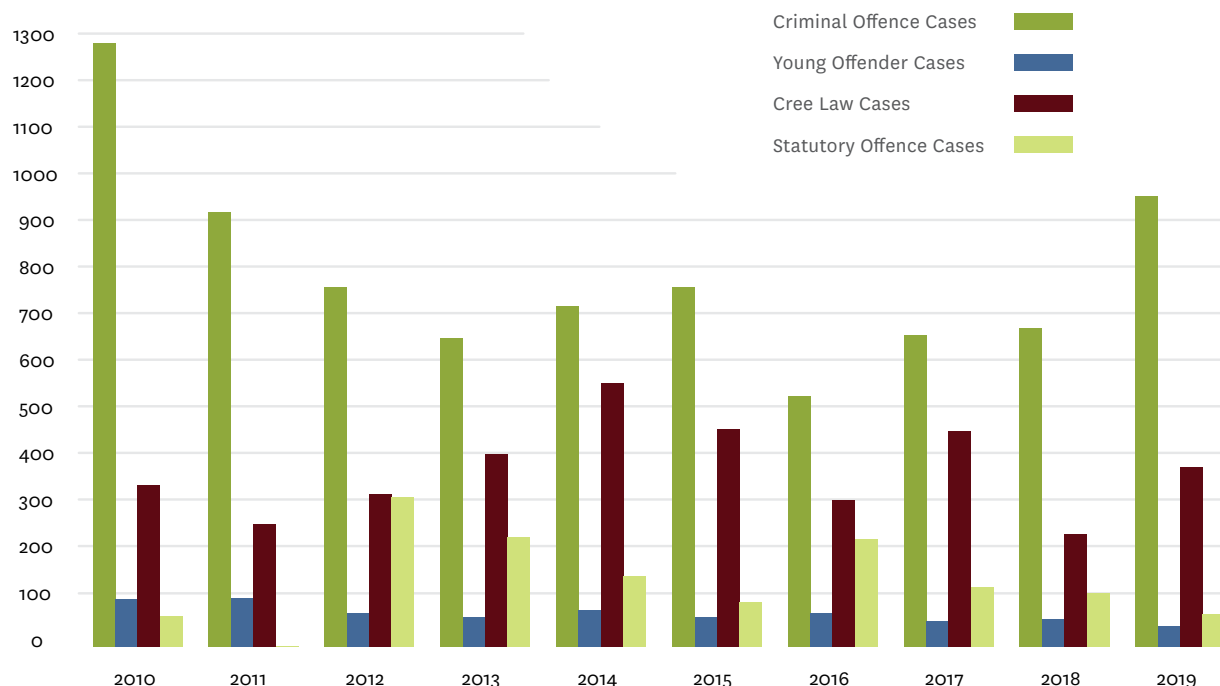
Young Offenders offences include legal proceedings instituted under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

Our **Facilities** are also able to host:



1. Superior Court of Quebec
2. By-Law Courts
3. Justice Committee Cases
4. Emergency Bail Hearings
5. Arbitration Hearings

Yearly Evolution of Number of Cases by Court Type



Throughout the court processes we have a team ready to work with you

- Coordinator of Justice
- Court Liaison Officers
- Community Justice Officers
- Native Para-Judicial Workers
- Justice Committee Members
- Cree CAVAC Workers
- Justice Administrators
- Receptionist

Our Court Facilities



IMAGES OF OUR DEPARTMENT

Our department has been involved in a variety of initiatives, programs, and events. These next pages are dedicated to giving a glimpse into our involvement throughout Eeyou Istchee.



Justice Committee Initiative, Chisasibi



Youth Healing Centre, Mistissini



Select Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Minors



Cree Justice Funds Annual Report



Department participation in community general assembly

VIDEOS WE HAVE PRODUCED

As a part of our commitment to reach as many people as possible with information and affirming messages, we have developed diverse platforms of communicating with the public.



“You are your Child’s first role model.”

Parents as Role Models Awareness



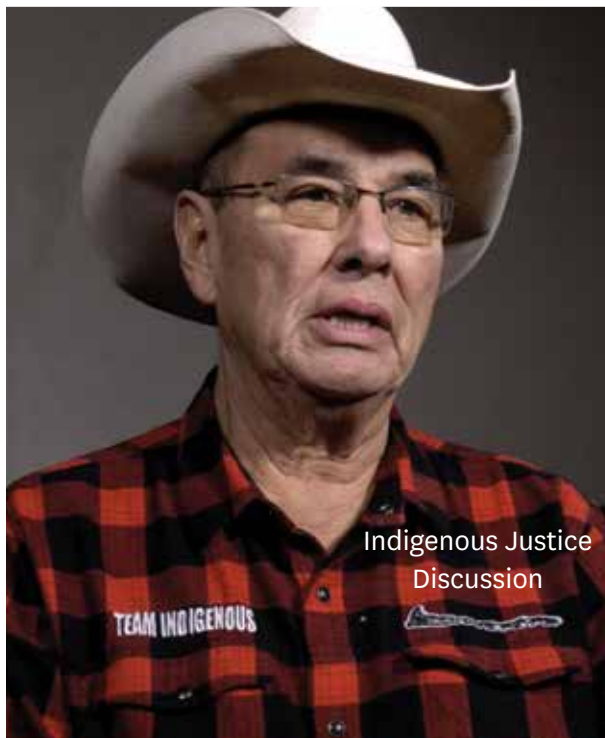
“Don’t lose focus of what’s important in life.”

Losing Focus Awareness



What is a **Gladue Report?**

Gladue Report Informational Series



Indigenous Justice Discussion

Dr. Wilton Littlechild Interview.

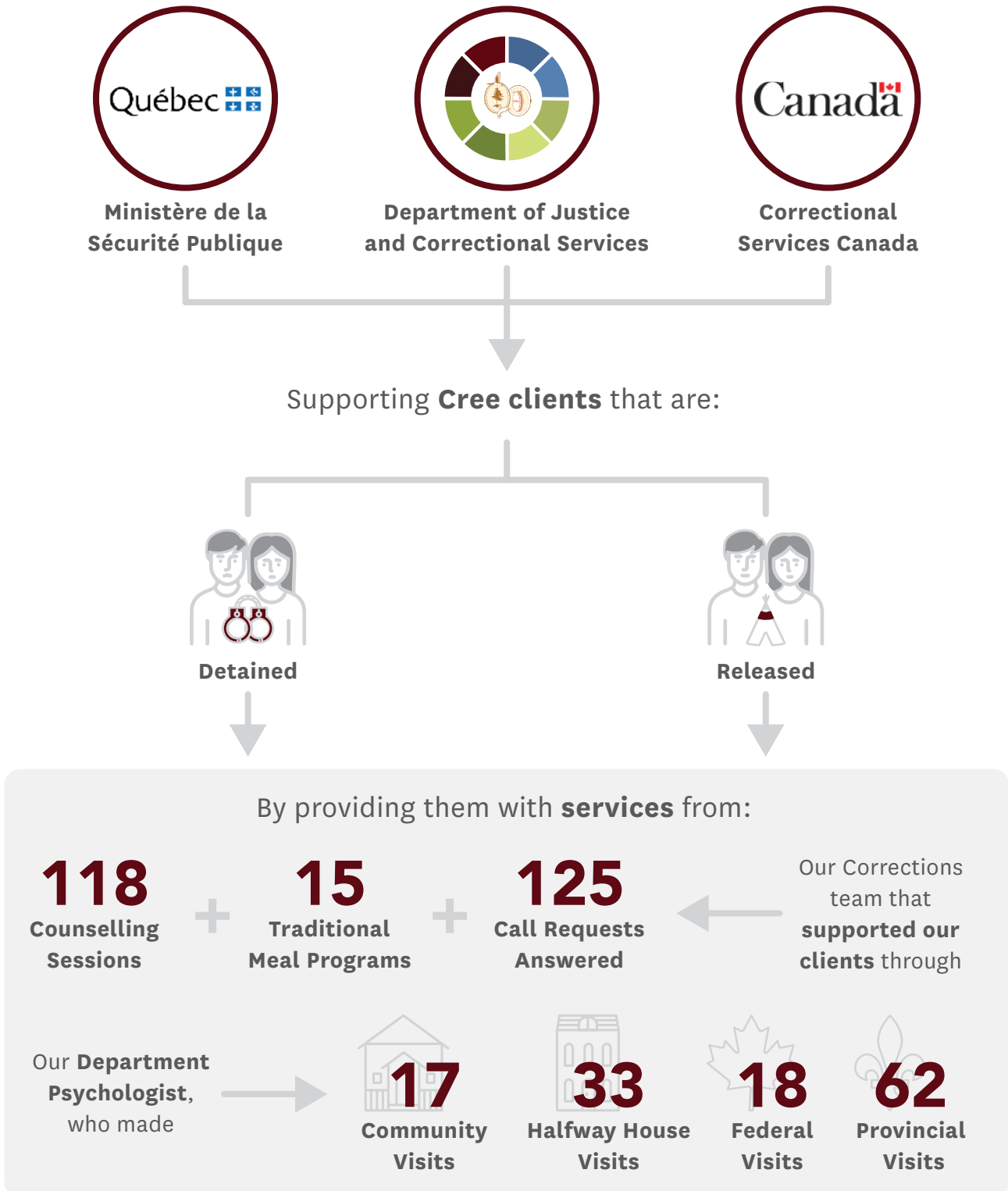


“Every child deserves a safe home.”

Domestic Violence Awareness (Featured in the 2020 Hudson Film Festival)

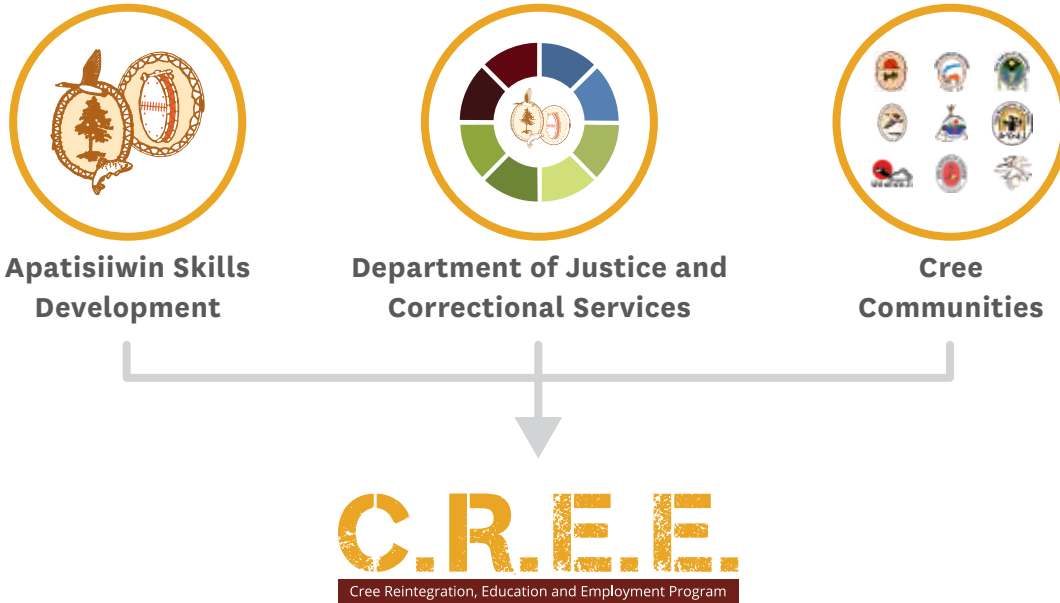
CORRECTIONS & REINTEGRATION WORK

The Corrections team works collaboratively with provincial and federal detention institutions, Cree communities and organizations, and other Cree Nation Government Departments. Our philosophy on corrections is about providing support and environments to facilitate change in individuals, help communities heal, and prevent harm from re-occurring.



C.R.E.E. SUPPORT SERVICES

The C.R.E.E. Program addresses the absence of effective community and land-based rehabilitation programming outside the corrections system by providing participants with the tools, guidance and support needed to lead productive lives.



Providing employment and training opportunities for clients in **3 phases**:



4,908
Employment hours this year

Through work placements, we are proactively helping clients **break the cycle** of reoffending by reintegrating them in **their community**. With programs like these we will be continuously fostering an **equitable, just, and ever strong Cree Nation**.

COMMUNITY TRANSITIONAL CENTRES

To further build upon services and programming, this year the Department will start building Tiny Home Communities in the Cree Nation. It will provide a transitional environment with the collaboration of various stakeholders.

The services will be given to **Cree clients** that are

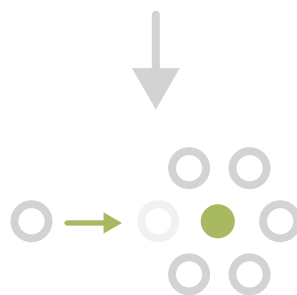


Through our various **partners**



Offering a variety of **services** such as:

- Career counseling
- Life-skills development
- C.R.E.E. Program
- Land-Based programs
- Addictions program
- Anger management
- Psychosocial counselling
- Mindfulness programs

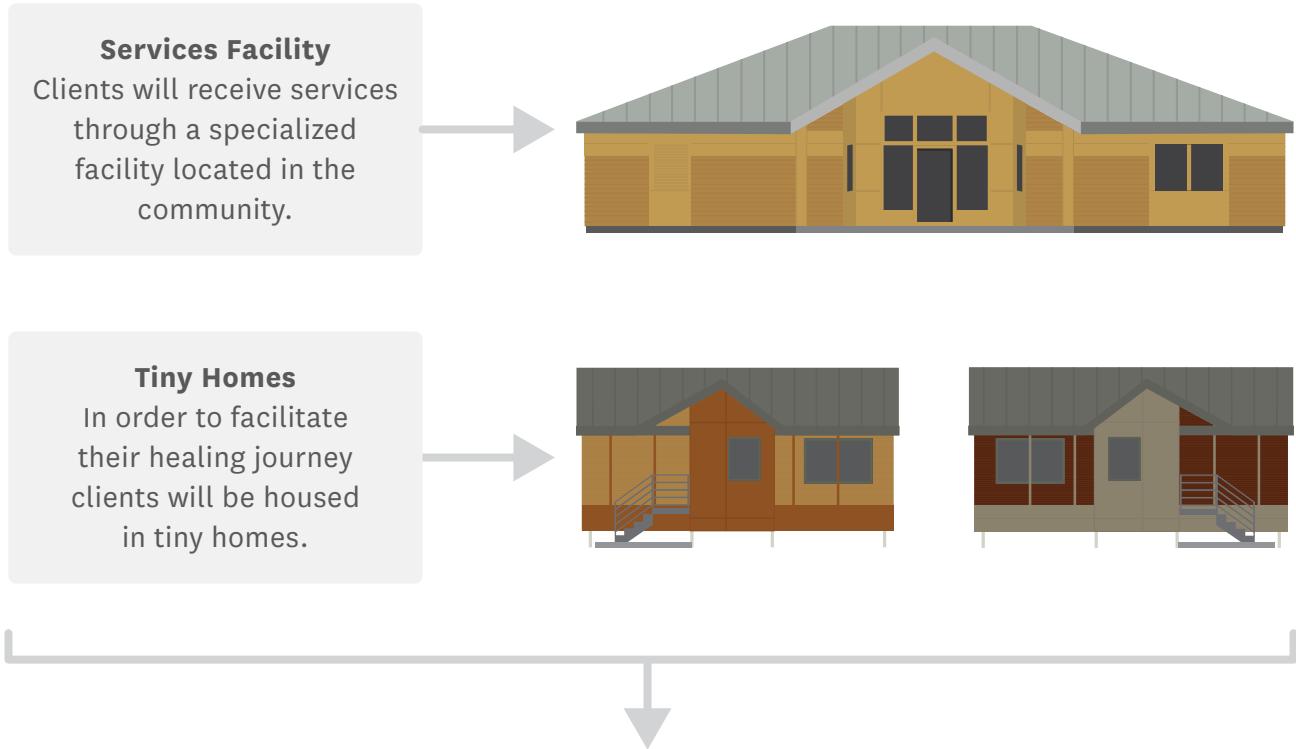


Reintegration back into Community

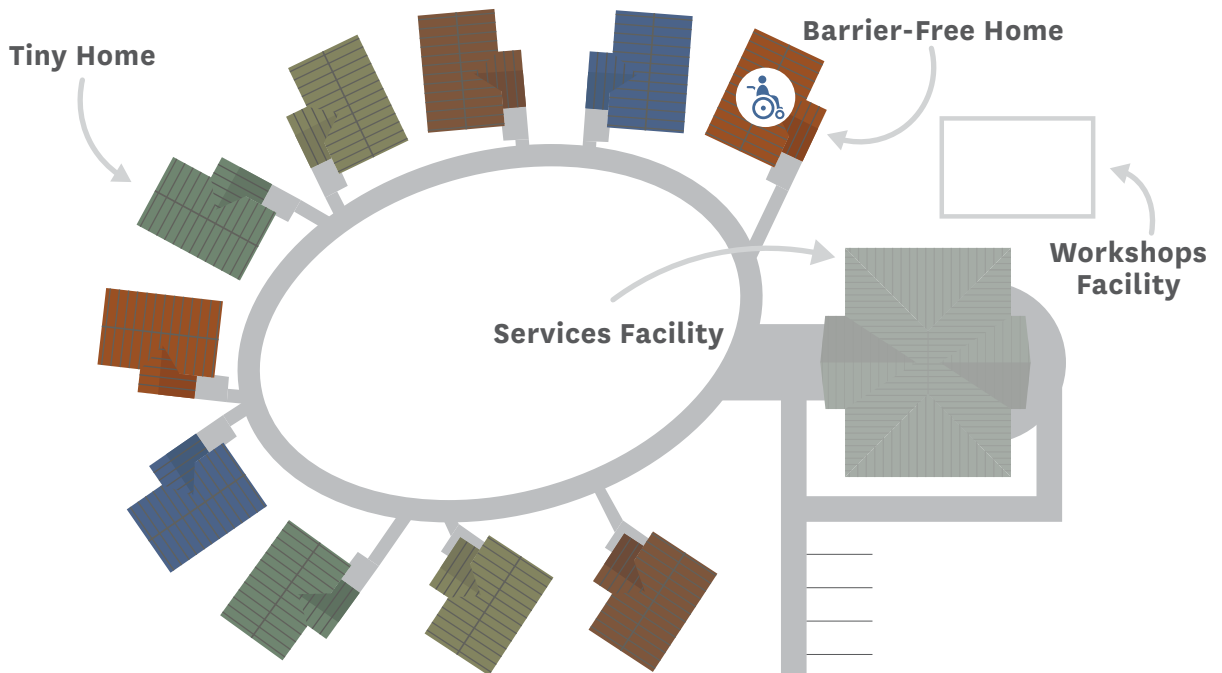
By working with various partners and by balancing traditional Cree cultural approaches with contemporary best practices, we are helping our people in their healing.

Tiny Home Community

We believe our strength will be in how we build environments that allow people to keep growing and learning.



Tiny Home Community Layout



GLADUE REPORTS

The Cree Gladue report writing process is administered by the Cree Nation itself. This year, we will expand upon the services offered to add Gladue letters into the process. These letters are like the reports but less comprehensive as a result of the level of offence they may address.

What is a Gladue Report?

It provides the social, historical, and **cultural background** of the offender

It provides a **broader perspective** than what would be addressed in court

Incarceration could therefore be reduced for an **Indigenous offender**

A Gladue Report must be written by a skilled and trained **Gladue Writer**

A Gladue Report takes

40-60
Hours to Complete

Which includes

1. Research
2. Interviews
3. Writing
4. Presentations

Our department trains **new Gladue report writers** each year in the **Cree communities** and hosts an international **human rights** student intern from **McGill Faculty of Law**.

Reports Written



We administered

39
Gladue Reports

New Cree Writers



This year we added

16
New Writers

DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATION

In the past year, the Department has been asked to be a part of some important processes in Quebec. Our goal in participating is to provide our expertise and understanding on subjects that impact our communities while also gaining further knowledge of processes in other regions of the world that might have beneficial impacts in Eeyou Istchee.

This year, **our department** had the opportunity to be part of the following **committees and events**:



Select Committee of the National Assembly

We testified on the sexual violence towards Indigenous children and youth. We promoted values and initiatives that should be adopted by Quebec publicly and privately to reduce vulnerability and human trafficking of Indigenous children.



Expert Committee on Conjugal Violence

We appeared before an Expert Committee on Support to Victims of Sexual Assault and Conjugal Violence to address the need of frontline services and workers in Quebec to be more responsive to the cases involving Indigenous women and children.



CCSA Substance Issue Conference

We also joined CCSA in the fall at their Substance Issue conference recognizing the need for more information about addictions and substance use to be mobilized effectively in some decision making in the Cree Nation to reduce dependencies.



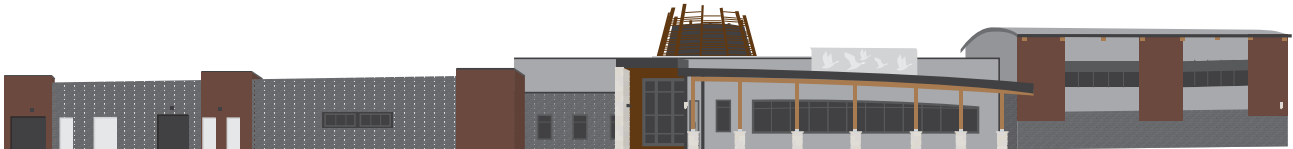
12th National Criminal Justice Symposium 2020 : Alternatives to Short-Term Custody

It was held in Montreal, and supported by the Department of Justice Canada and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. It is an opportunity for leaders in justice to discuss candidly perspectives and solutions for a more accessible and accountably criminal justice system.


FACILITIES

This year, in collaboration with the Cree Health Board, we officially opened the regional Youth Healing Center in Mistissini. The development of this facility was indicative of what could be accomplished with good people and planning together.

Youth Healing Centre



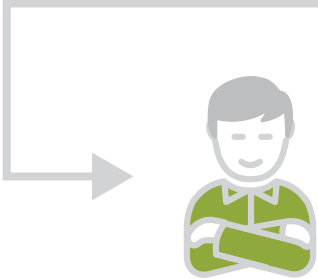
This was the result of an **ambitious** and **collaborative** effort with our partner the **Cree Board of Health**.



Our department paid for the **construction** of and now the Cree Health Board will **lease** the facility from us.

Officially Opened
March 6, 2020

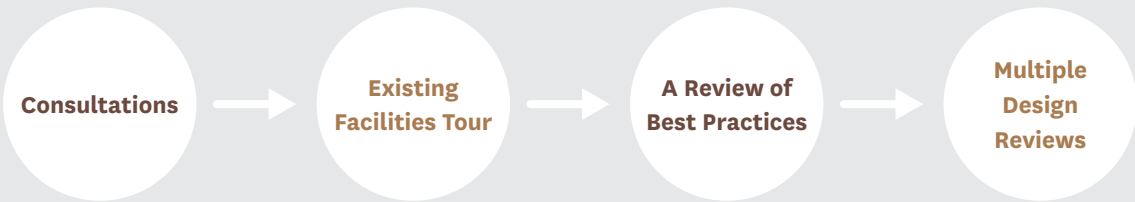
Cree Health Board will provide for **staffing** and **operations** for the facility for the **next 20 years**.



The **Youth Healing Centre** will significantly expand what can be offered for services for **Cree youth** and prioritizes keeping them in the territory. It was an example of how Cree organizations could **work together** to achieve something greater.

Development Process

The extensive process for the development of the Youth Healing Centre started several years ago, involved a series of partners, and a variety of processes, like:



COVID-19 MEASURES

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, our department put various measures in place in order to ensure the safety and health of our clients, staff, and communities.

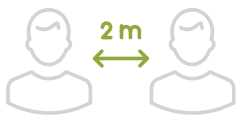
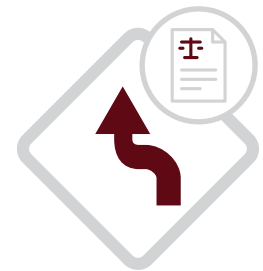


COURT ADJUSTMENTS

Hearings are held via video-conference, new cleaning and safety measures were instituted.

CASE DIVERSION

Lesser crimes are deferred to reduce the need for court dates.

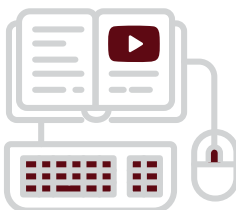
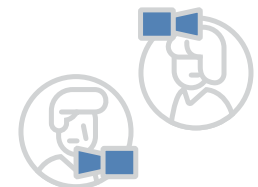


OFFICE ADJUSTMENTS

Office spaces respect the 2-meter distance, where possible, as were meeting rooms and common areas.

VIDEO CONFERENCING

Video conferencing is used as much as possible to limit the potential spread of the virus.



ONLINE TRAINING

In order to avoid travel, all training was moved to online platforms.

EVENT CANCELLATIONS

Events were cancelled or postponed to limit the potential spread of the virus.



LEGISLATION & COURT DECISIONS



Indigenous Languages

An Act respecting Indigenous languages (Bill C-91) received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019. The main purpose of this Act is to reclaim, revitalize, strengthen and maintain Indigenous languages in Canada. The Cree Nation Government adopted its own Act respecting the Cree language of Eeyou Istchee (Bill 1), which became effective on September 17, 2019.



Cannabis Regulation

In October 2019, the Government of Canada introduced regulation related to cannabis edibles for the Canadian market. The magnitude of products has increased, and while in other areas products resembling candies were introduced, Quebec did not allow such products in the Province as they are often confusing to children.



Record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis

The Government of Canada adopted various legislative amendments in 2019 (Bill C-93) to enable individuals who were convicted for possession of cannabis before October 17, 2018 to request a record suspension (pardon) without having to wait the usual delay and without having to pay a fee.



Québec legislation on laicity

An Act respecting the laicity of the State (Bill 21) came into force on June 16, 2019. Among other things, this Act prohibits certain persons in positions of authority, including teachers, from wearing religious symbols while exercising their functions. However, these restrictions do not apply to the personnel of the Cree School Board or the Cree Health Board.



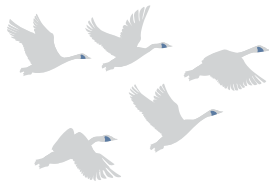
Criminal Justice System

An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Bill C-75) received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019. Bill C-75 amends many aspects of criminal law and criminal procedure. Among other things, it provides better protection for victims of domestic violence; it requires that courts take special consideration of the circumstances of an accused Indigenous person during bail hearings; and it facilitates appearance by audioconference or videoconference. Bill C-75 also amends the Youth Criminal Justice Act, including to encourage the use of extrajudicial measures.



Correctional Service

Amendments to the federal Corrections and Conditional Release Act (Bill C-83) received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019. These amendments include an obligation for Canada's Correctional Service to consider systemic and background factors unique to Indigenous offenders in the making of all their decisions regarding an Indigenous person.



Gun Control

In May 2020, the Government of Canada ordered a ban on a number of assault-style firearms, effective immediately. Gun owners will therefore no longer be allowed to sell, transport, import or use these kinds of weapons in Canada. They will however benefit from an amnesty period (until April 2022) to dispose of the prohibited firearms. Indigenous hunters will be allowed to use these firearms to hunt during the amnesty period.



Indigenous Child Welfare

An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (Bill C-92) received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019. The main purpose of this Act is to overhaul Indigenous child welfare services, referred to as youth protection services in Quebec, and enable Indigenous groups to exercise legislative authority on these matters and to enter into implementation arrangements with other levels of government. For the Crees, youth protection is already under the jurisdiction of the Cree Health Board, an institution of Cree self-governance established under the JBNQA Treaty.

Quebec is legally challenging this federal Act in Court, on the basis that Canada does not have constitutional power over youth protection matters.



Sentencing

This year, the Court of Québec rendered a sentencing judgment that supported the need to explore possibilities for Cree offenders to be detained closer to their community, consistent with promises made by Canada and Quebec in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. Being detained closer to home, Cree offenders could benefit from the healing power of the land and the support of their family and community.

In the meantime, Cree offenders who are committed to provincial detention should be regrouped at the newly built detention facility in Amos. This would make it easier for our Justice Department to provide them access to rehabilitation and reintegration programs in Cree. In this sentencing judgment, the Court directed Cree offenders to report to their local Community Justice Committee after their detention so they could receive guidance from the Committee for their probation and community reintegration.

CLOSING MESSAGE

We look forward to continuing to invest in our efforts to build our capacity and to make progress in the development of a Cree legal and corrections system. We will remain steadfast in working together to increase community safety and well-being and in our contribution to the objective of changing the national trend of over-representation of Indigenous victims and offenders in the justice and correctional systems. We are committed to using the land and our own people as a part of the key elements in a solution.

Our Department will continue to create opportunities for dialogue and development of community members of all

ages and to seek innovative ways to keep them informed on the work that we do, and how they can access opportunities to heal, learn and thrive.

We will actively engage and offer services to our youth and we believe that our focus in this area will show great rewards for the next generations of healthy, contributing members in our communities.

We will nurture our partnerships and invest in collaborative projects in our belief that together, we can achieve our goals and create opportunities for a safer, healthier and stronger Cree Nation for all. ●

