



**2014 Symposium on Science and Traditional Knowledge in the Eeyou Marine Region**

# Overview of presentation



- History of COTA and Cree tourism development
- Tourism potential of the James Bay coast & work completed to date
- Next steps



# History of Cree tourism



- Cree guides worked for government run outfitting operations in the 1950s and 60s
- During negotiations for the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in the 1970s, tourism was identified as a potential economic activity
- COTA was identified in the James Bay and Northern Quebec agreement in sections 28.4 et 28.6 in 1975.
- COTA incorporated in December, 2000 as a non-profit organization
- Eeyou Istchee Tourism became the 22<sup>nd</sup> Regional Tourism Association in Québec on July 3, 2007

# Mission & Objectives



## Mission:

To develop and implement a collective vision for a world-class sustainable tourism industry in Eeyou-Istchee in harmony with Cree culture and values, and involving a partnership among Cree communities, institutions and businesses.

## Objectives

- Implement Section 28.6 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement
  - •Provide marketing booking and promotion services, where necessary, for Cree outfitting and tourist operations;
  - •Provide business, management, accounting and professional services, where necessary, for Cree outfitters and tourist businesses;
  - •Conduct feasibility studies related to establishment or siting of individual outfitting or tourism facilities or a network of outfitting or tourist facilities.
- Industry Development
- Community Awareness and Capacity Building
- Marketing
- Communications
- Financial development

# Current projects



- DMC (Destination Management Company)
- Tourism Air Access Development Master Plan
- Product development focused on Aboriginal culture and adventure tourism
  - Diversified outfitting products
  - Entrepreneurship development and coaching
  - Coastal route tourism project

# Tourism Potential of the James Bay Coast



For many years, COTA has been working with the coastal communities to identify and develop the tourism potential of the James Bay Coast. The stories of the coastal trade route were identified in the Footsteps and Paddlestrokes project 2009 as having the potential to attract visitors.

In the summer of 2012, COTA's team hired local guides to visit the coast north and south of Wemindji. The experience was amazing, although the main focus at first was to see the polar bears, we quickly realized that it was only a small piece of the overall experience. The highlights were the local guides and their stories of the land.





# Factors for success



**Differentiation:** identifying the features that are unique to Eeyou Istchee that respond to the needs and aspirations of potential customers

**Accessibility:** travel to Eeyou Istchee (reasonable airfare, number of available seats, flight frequency) and travel within Eeyou Istchee (getting from one community to another, cost-effective transportation within the region)

**Seasonality:** operating tourism businesses for more than one season a year in order to make them profitable while respecting traditional Cree practices, including hunting and fishing





# Visitor expectations: British, German and French



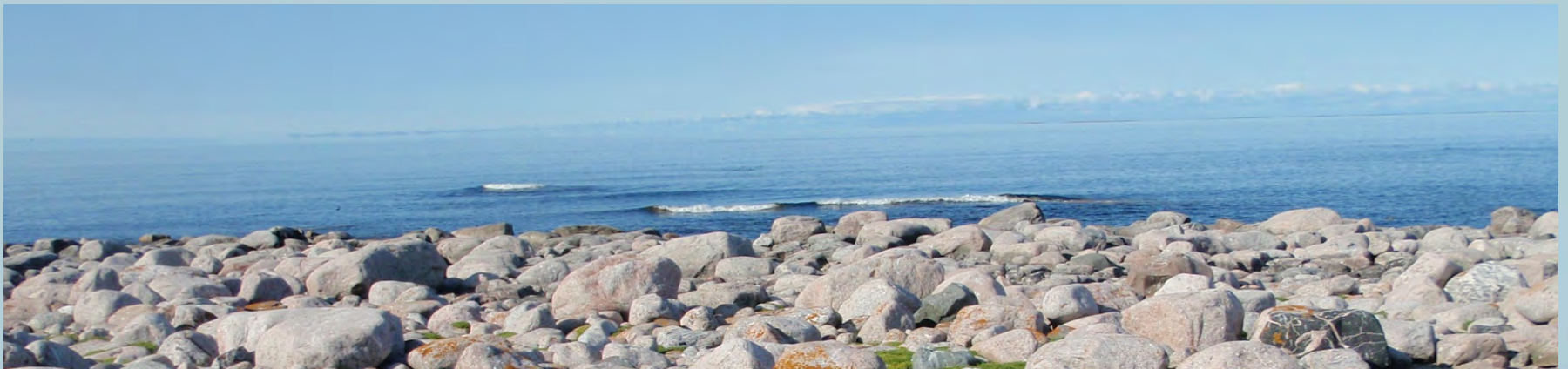
## Do Want

- “Integrate with them”
- “Learn from them”
- “See/experience how they live”
- “Understand their way of life”
- “Mutual exchange”
- “Don’t know”
- “I hardly know what there is”

## Don't Want

- Be in a big bus tour and taken to them.
- Everything staged and planned
- Fake displays and towns—museum villages just set-up for tourists.
- The markets and mass produced souvenirs.

Source: CTC , 2008



# Examples of Tourism Assets



- Wildlife viewing: Polar Bear, Beluga Whales, Seals, birds
- The Tawich Marine Protected Area
- Cree Culture and camps along the coast: summer and winter activities
- History
  - Pre-contact archeology
  - Fur-trade routes
  - Henry Hudson
- Islands and their uniqueness: geology, flora, fauna, history, shipwrecks



# Cape Hope Island Nunaaluk: A Forgotten Story



After the reconnaissance trip in the summer of 2012, we were so touched by the story of Cape Hope that we put together a film project to be able to share it with a wider audience. We worked with Elders George Kudlu , Mini Aodla Freeman, Elizabeth Mark Maiczan and filmmakers Louise Abbott and Neils Jensen to produce the film Nunaaluk: A Forgotten Story. It was officially launched December 17, 2013 in Montreal. It will not only preserve the story but it will also provide a background to share the story with tourists in the future.



# Research proposal for Polar Bear Viewing Project



## 1. Environmental research and monitoring program

- Initial assessments of polar bear health
- Ecosystem integrity
- Behavioural impacts of disturbance
- Establishment of baseline data



# Research proposal for Polar Bear Viewing Project



- 2. Collection of traditional knowledge about the islands and the coast by working with local Cree and Inuit experts**
  - Develop a detailed inventory of potential tourism sites, stories, flora and fauna, and history.
  - Identify areas where tourism development is unsafe or unwanted

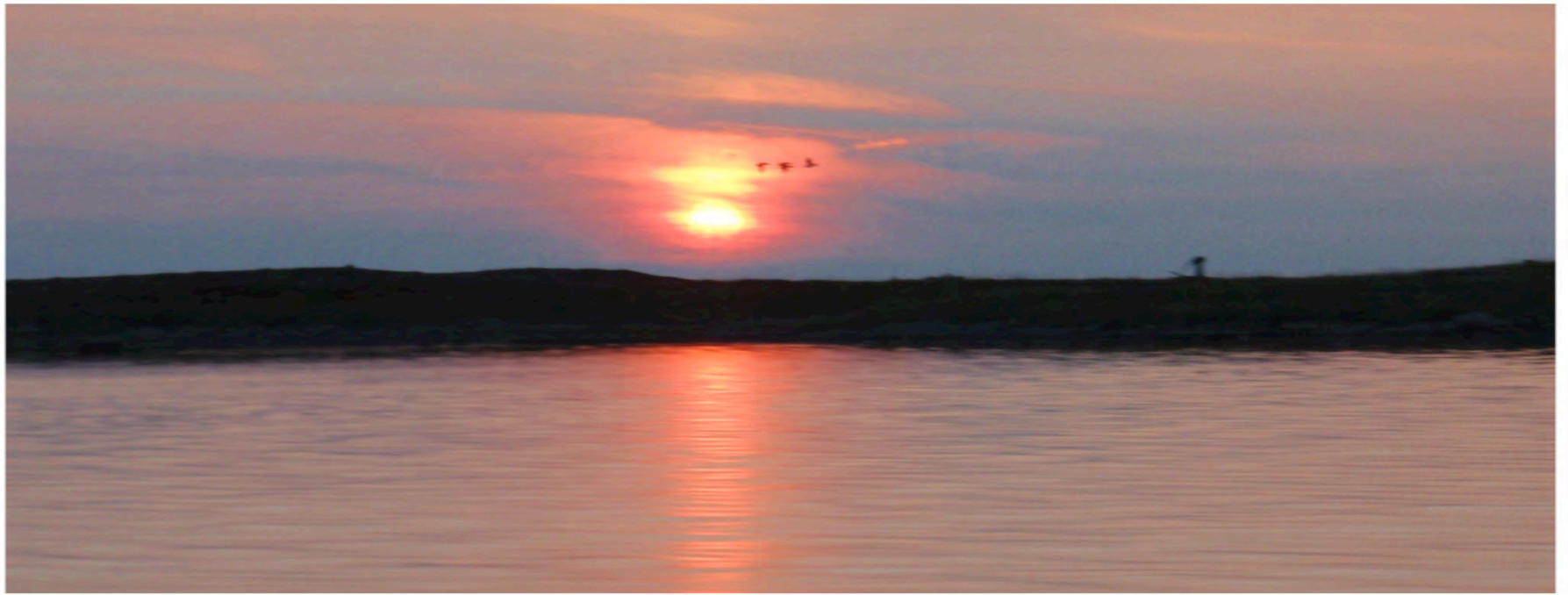


# Research proposal for Polar Bear Viewing Project



## 3. Initial assessment of the feasibility of operations

- Enhance product knowledge including weather and sea conditions; frequency, location and number of bear sightings;



# Next Steps



- Assist Tawich to identify partners for the Research Proposal for the Polar Bear Viewing Project and secure funding;
- Continue the inventory of sites along the coast with tourism potential;
- Develop sustainable tourism guidelines for both local operators and visitors;
- Participate in on-going research to determine the sustainability of the Polar bear viewing project and other wildlife viewing opportunities;
- Organize training and capacity building workshops for local communities;
- Work toward developing the tourism potential of James Bay and southern Hudson Bay as a sustainable coastal destination





