Coastal Habitat Comprehensive Research Project

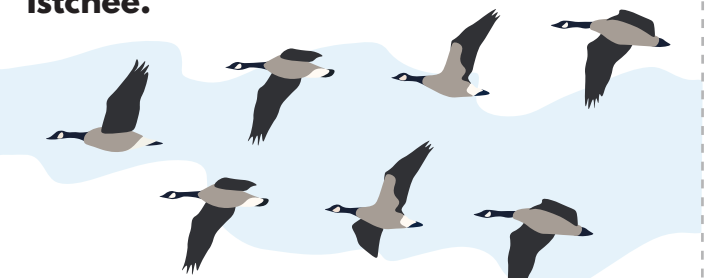
ᐊᑊ ·ᐃᑊ ᓂᔅᑐᐣᑎᒧᐣᐃᑯᔾᑯ
ᓱᒃᐸᑦᑯᐣ ᐅᑎᐣ ᐃᔅᔅᐤ ᐊᔾᒋᐣᒐᕐᐧ

Understanding Eelgrass in Eeyou Istchee

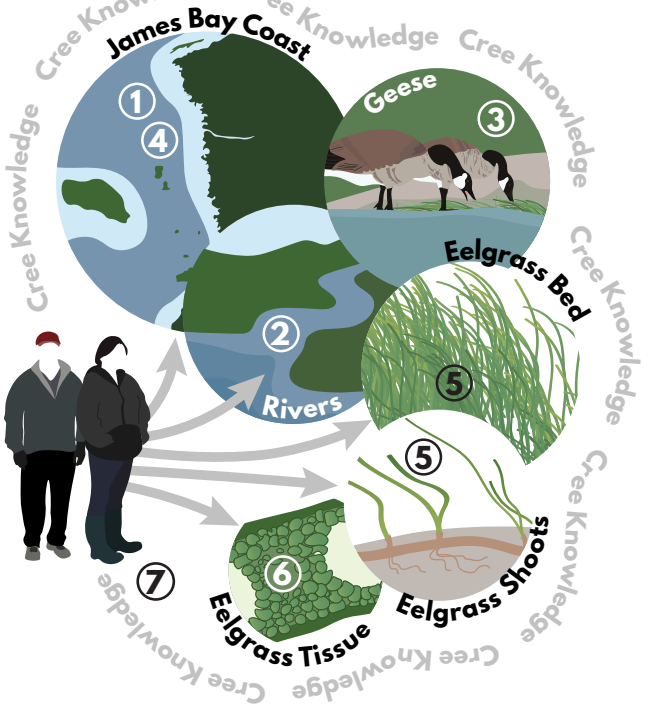
The Coastal Habitat Comprehensive Research Project brings together Cree Traditional Knowledge and scientific research to gain a detailed understanding of the coastal ecology of Eeyou Istchee.

The project focuses on Shkaapaashkw (eelgrass) and its relationship with migratory birds, especially Nisk (Canada Geese), a key traditional food species. Eelgrass health is influenced by local water parameters, including temperature, salinity, nutrients (plant food), and light, but also by large patterns in the oceans, river inputs, and weather conditions. When all the conditions are right, eelgrass can form large beds under the water. These beds are an important component of coastal ecosystems, providing habitat for fish, such as cisco and whitefish, and food for migratory birds, such as Canada Geese and Brant. Because of this, healthy eelgrass in Eeyou Istchee is important to the food security, culture, and well-being of coastal communities.

Coastal Land Users have a good knowledge of ecosystem functioning, wildlife, habitat conditions, and long-term changes of eelgrass beds. Their local expertise is central to understanding the eelgrass of Eeyou Istchee.



To better understand eelgrass, the project is studying eelgrass at different scales using different approaches



1. ZouZou Kuzyk's team from University of Manitoba and Urs Neumeier's team from ISMER are researching the coastal oceanography.
2. Paul del Giorgio's team from UQAM is measuring the influence of river inputs on the coastal environment.
3. Jean-Francois Giroux's team from UQAM is examining Canada Goose movement along the coast.
4. Brigitte Leblon's team from UNB is using satellite and drone images to locate eelgrass beds.
5. Mary O'Connor's team from UBC and McGill is measuring different eelgrass shoot attributes (density, biomass, etc.).
6. Fanny Noisette's team from ISMER is measuring eelgrass health by looking at different components in the eelgrass tissues.
7. Julián Idrobo from UBC is leading the Cree Knowledge component of the project.