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**Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)**  
**Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)**



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September 5, 2013

Mme Marcela Orozco,  
JPAC Liaison officer,  
Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)  
393, rue St-Jacques ouest, Bureau 200  
Montréal, Québec  
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**Subject :** What do you think the next 20 twenty years of environmental cooperation in North America should look like? An initial response to the invitation extended by CEC for public input – with particular reference to aboriginal/native/tribal constituencies.

Dear Madame Orozco,

I am, following a telephone exchange with Fabiana Spinelli on August 29, taking up the invitation to comment on the JPAC initiative to launch a discussion on future directions of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

I am responding to the CEC announcement because I spent some time, during the first decade of the implementation of the CEC, working quite closely with the Commission on issues which I understood to be relevant to aboriginal constituencies in the development of themes for cooperation between Canada, Mexico and the United States in areas of common environmental interests.

I took a particular interest in the NARAP initiative, and was involved, among other themes, in the mercury and dioxin NARAPs – as well as more generally in discussions about chemicals management and the use of the PRTR as a vehicle for exchanging information between jurisdictions on the release of certain environmental contaminants.

I became aware of the challenges involved in securing the involvement of aboriginal constituencies in the CEC agenda. The political and social contexts vary considerably between the Canada, the U.S.A. and Mexico, as well as within these three countries. That much was evident to me.

At various times during this earlier history of the CEC, the Joint Public Advisory Committee endorsed the objective of involving indigenous or aboriginal constituencies in CEC programme activities. I do not believe, however, that it was clear how this objective might be pursued – and who would be responsible for overseeing and evaluating implementation.

If the CEC is now committed to the development of a long-range strategy for the development and implementation of environmental strategies of common interest to the three major jurisdictions, both the JPAC and the CEC as the body responsible for administration and coordination may want to revisit the issue of involving indigenous or aboriginal constituencies.

It is not the purpose of this letter to make specific recommendations at this point either to the CEC or JPAC. What I would like to suggest, however, is that an effort be made to bring together individuals or agencies with an interest in this matter and seek their collective advice on this matter – in a manner which takes into account the diverse economic, social and demographic conditions in the three national jurisdictions. It may be concluded that there is little to be gained from adopting strategies with indigenous jurisdictions in mind. However, that conclusion – if that is the direction the CEC will take - should be based on adequate consultation, discussion – and supporting analysis and documentation.

I expect that the Cree leadership in the Eeyou Istchee territory (James Bay) in NW Québec (Canada) will take an interest in CEC's future directions, and will be willing to contribute to the analysis of options. The natural resource industries in their territory, based on hydro-electricity, mining and forestry provide ample illustrations of environmental aspects of natural resources development of potential relevance to the CEC – and to the Cree First Nation communities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to pursue these matters further.

Yours sincerely,

ALAN PENN  
Science Advisor  
Cree Regional Authority

cc: Deputy Grand Chief Rodney Mark  
Isaac Voyageur  
Bill Namagoose

