



FINAL REPORT

**SURVEY ABOUT THE AWARENESS OF LA GRANDE ALLIANCE
IN EYYOU ISCHTEE BAY JAMES**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

La Grande Alliance (LGA) serves as a pivotal entity for transportation planning and development, emphasizing Cree community engagement. An initial online survey conducted in 2021 garnered 294 responses from Eeyou Istchee residents, followed by a second online survey in 2023 with 282 respondents and an additional telephone survey with 462 Jamesians. These surveys aimed to assess the evolution of the awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the LGA in Eeyou Istchee and among the Jamesians.

Results revealed that while a majority of respondents had heard of LGA (84% in 2021, 90% in 2023), understanding of its purpose remained limited, as expected given its complexity and recent implementation. However, data comparison between 2021 and 2023 indicated an increase in awareness, with only 11% well-informed in 2021 compared to 18% in 2023. Engagement with LGA activities also notably improved from 11% in 2021 to 41% in 2023. Despite this progress, 32% of respondents were unaware of LGA's purpose, and 15% mistakenly believed it involved the construction of these infrastructures in the near term.

Significantly, Cree respondents demonstrated higher awareness and understanding of LGA compared to Jamesian respondents, with only 6% participating in LGA activities and 4% claiming to be well-informed among Jamesians. A considerable portion of Cree respondents expressed interest in learning more about LGA. These findings suggest that the efforts made to communicate information about LGA have yielded positive impacts.

However, the sample size of participating respondents in both 2021 and 2023 surveys was deemed inadequate, highlighting the need for larger, more representative samples in future surveys to accurately gauge community sentiments.

In summary, the data reveals that approximately 20% of respondents possess a clear understanding of what LGA entails, while 30% remain unaware or unwilling to engage with the topic. Over 50% of respondents express a desire for increased involvement and engagement with LGA. Therefore, there is a clear imperative to continue the conversation within Eeyou Istchee. Heightened awareness is essential to stimulate community engagement and participation in LGA initiatives. Achieving broader awareness and knowledge of LGA across the population necessitates concerted efforts to interact with all Cree members, particularly focusing on youth and land-users.

Transportation infrastructure development holds significant importance, eliciting diverse perceptions of advantages and disadvantages among the Cree communities, each distinct in its own right. Future survey initiatives should consider employing a door-to-door approach using trained youth surveyors, integrated with a probabilistic sampling method based on community membership lists and demographic factors. This approach aims to achieve greater representativeness and generalizability of survey results across the Cree population of Eeyou Istchee.

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1 CONTEXT & METHODOLOGY

Ever since the signing of the memorandum of understanding on the Cree-Québec sustainable Infrastructure Development Program the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Region in February of 2020, La Grande Alliance (LGA) has been undertaking their approach to feasibility studies directly through the lens of their stated values: Sustainable development; Improving quality of life; Cree culture preservation; and social development. These leading values serve as guidance to help achieve the LGA objectives: Improve quality of life for Crees and other residents; Ensure Sustainable development and long-term protection of the territory; Increase predictability and stability for socio-economic development; And facilitate transport of passengers, goods and materials.¹

Transportation infrastructure development in Eeyou Istchee presents both potential advantages and disadvantages for a diverse range of affected populations. Recognizing this complexity, a wide array of stakeholders and rightsholders have been included and engaged in the consultation process. Engagement efforts commenced with pre-feasibility studies and continue throughout the dissemination of study results. The communication efforts encompass various methods such as Facebook, posters, info sheets, study briefs, focus groups, community presentations, radio shows, etc. The core values and objectives of LGA underscore the importance of involving as many individuals as possible to ensure that infrastructure development serves the needs of both people and communities. Central to this approach is the dissemination of knowledge about LGA studies, as meaningful discussions cannot occur without awareness. This is an evolving process that necessitates ongoing measurement of awareness and understanding among impacted communities over time.

For these reasons, in August 2021, an initial online survey was conducted within Cree communities, gathering responses from 294 participants to establish a baseline level of awareness regarding LGA. The survey consisted of seven straightforward questions, including demographic inquiries. Two years later, a follow-up online survey was conducted, comprising 15 questions, including those from the previous survey, with the aim of assessing the evolution of awareness regarding LGA among Cree communities.

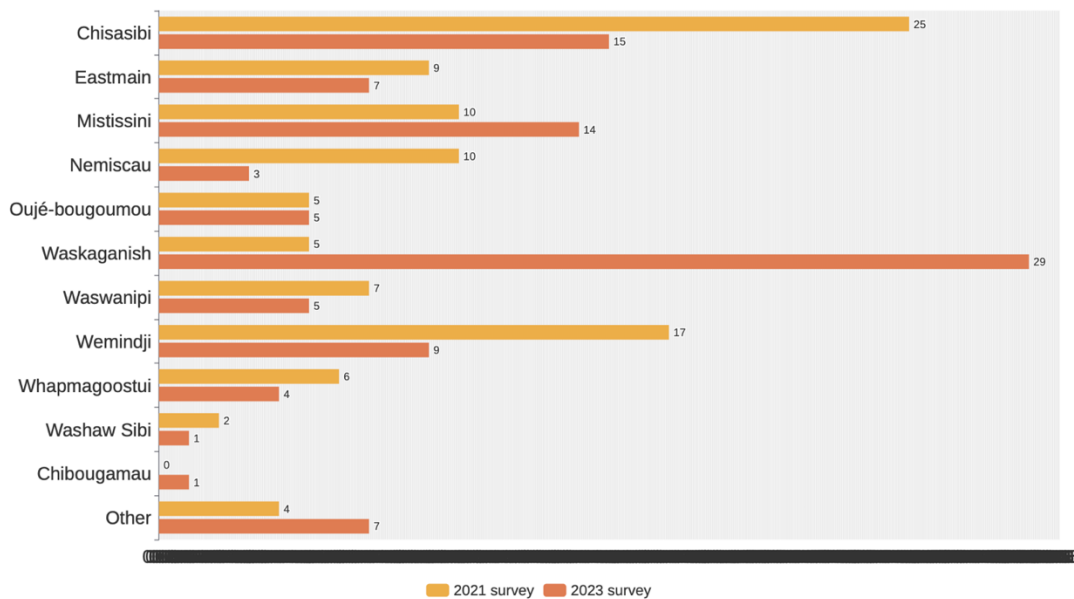
This online survey targeted 282 Cree respondents out of an anticipated sample of 578, with the aim of achieving a margin of error equivalent to 5%. Additionally, a telephone survey was conducted to gather responses from 462 Jamesian respondents. It's important to note that both surveys cannot be fully generalized to the entire population of Eeyou Istchee due to their small sample sizes. The Cree sample was not probabilistic, precluding the calculation of a margin of error. Distribution of the online survey was facilitated through the networks of community liaison officers (CIOs) and targeted Facebook advertisements. Caution is advised in interpreting the data gathered from these surveys.

¹ La Grande Alliance, proposed infrastructure program feasibility studies, executive summary, October 2023.

2 OVER TIME AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF LGA

The 2021 survey was brief and designed to strictly measure a general benchmark of the awareness of the LGA within the Cree communities in Eeyou Istchee. While the 2023 survey aimed to measure a more comprehensive level of understanding within the communities, data collected from both surveys are comparable.

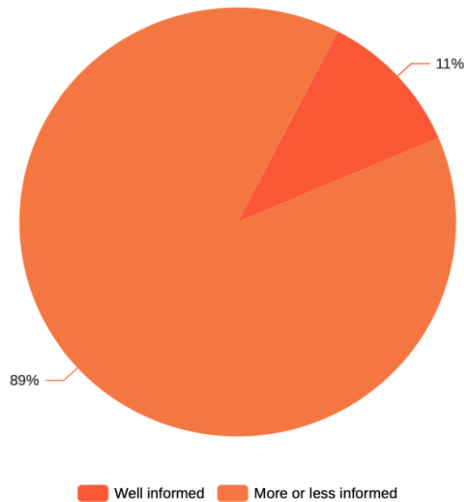
Place of residence of respondents



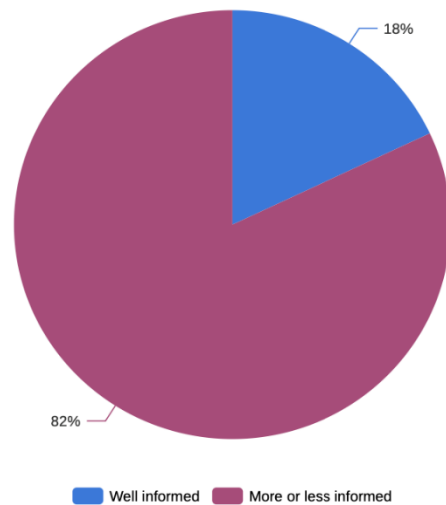
Regarding demographics, respondents from the first survey were mainly men, while respondents from the 2023 survey were mostly women. In 2021, that the greatest number of responses were collected from residents of Chisasibi and Wemindji. Differently, in 2023, Waskaganish residents really stood out in the respondents, which we will come back to later in this paper.

In terms of actual awareness and understanding of LGA most respondents have heard about LGA by some means. That benchmark slightly grew between 2021 to 2023. In 2021, 50% of Cree had a general idea of LGA in comparison to 81% in 2023, a clear improvement. Moreover, more Crees declared being well-informed about LGA in 2023, than previously in 2021. This goes to show that even though the magnitude of knowledge/awareness of the LGA has remained similar over the course of two years, the level of interaction and understanding of the LGA within the Cree respondents who knew about it has doubled.

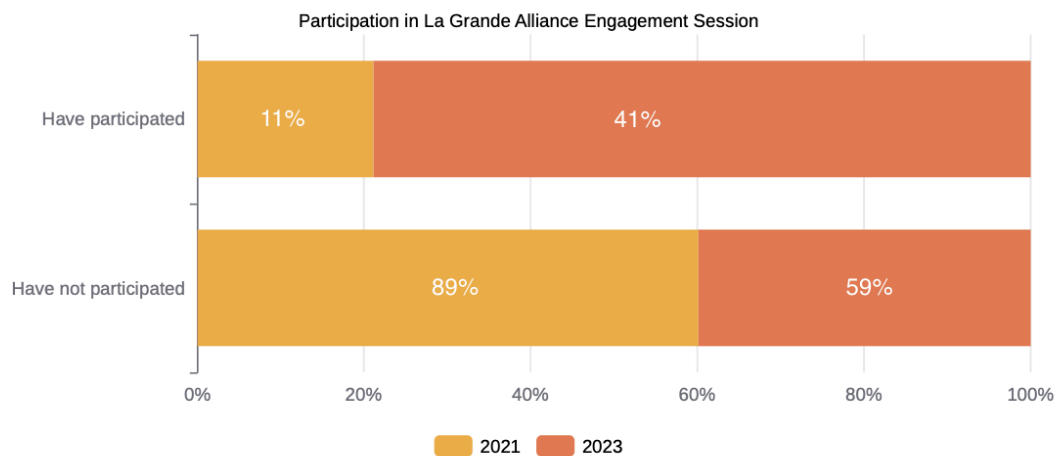
Notoriety of La Grande Alliance (2021)



Notoriety of La Grande Alliance (2023)



Lastly, an important aspect of community engagement are the actual engagement sessions on LGA. From 2021 to 2023, the number of Eeyou Istchee Crees that had participated in an engagement session grew by approximately 30%, from 11% to 41%. That is a considerable improvement that gives a general idea of what kind of outreach LGA can have within the communities over time. It sets a standard, or a benchmark, of how much LGA can engage with the community. It also explains the deeper level of understanding about LGA in 2023.



3 LGA AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE COMPARISON BETWEEN CREES AND THE JAMESIAN POPULATION IN EYYOU ISTCHEE

In 2023, as previously mentioned, a first survey circulated within the Jamesian population. This allowed to compare levels of understanding, knowledge and awareness with Cree respondents. Measuring this both for Crees and Jamesians was very important and will continue to be an important step in community engagement because it is the planting of the seed for the discussion on infrastructure development with all impacted population.

Both surveys presented the same questions, which allows a more precise comparison. However, the sample of the Jamesian survey was almost double the size of the Crees. Furthermore, as the Jamesian survey was done by telephone while the Cree survey was conducted online, differences in survey formats also slightly increases error margins. It tended to influence the way in which respondents answered the survey. For example, some questions reveal that respondents from the telephone survey suggested more answers on multiple choices questions, as it will be stated later on. Data collected from the surveys highlights key differences between communities.

In the next pages, the graphs in green are Cree respondents whereas Jamesian respondents are in red.

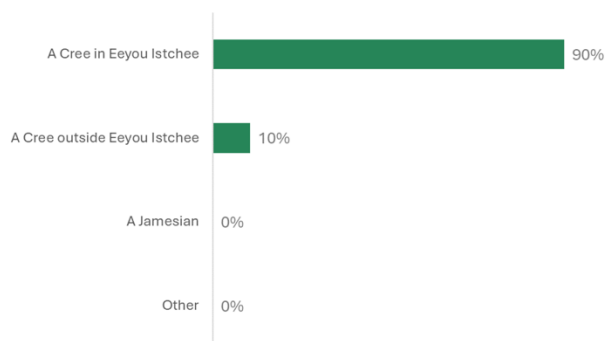
3.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

In terms of demographics, the one element that stood out and differentiated Crees from Jamesians the most, was the age of respondents. Cree respondents were generally an entire age group younger than Jamesians. This is notably a reflection of the overall younger population within First Nations communities than for non-indigenous population. In the 2021 survey, Cree respondents also proved to be relatively young. Above everything and in the case of LGA, this signifies a greater potential in the upcoming decision makers and a need for an emphasis on youth in community engagement.

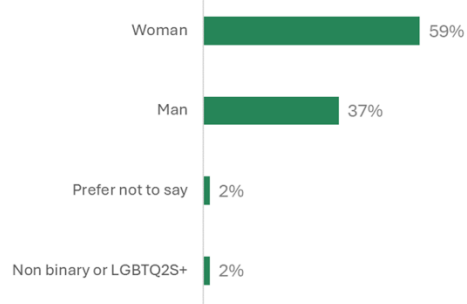
Moreover, although this signifies very little, the proportion between men and women was a little bit higher in women than in men in the Cree web survey while it was the opposite in the Jamesian telephone survey. For the Crees, the Waskaganish community really stood out in the residence of respondents, while it was Chibougamau for the Jamesians.

Green graphics are visual representations of data collected from the 2023 Cree web survey, and red graphics from the 2023 Jamesian telephone survey.

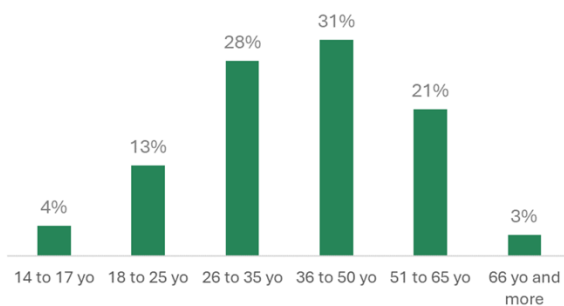
Origin of respondents



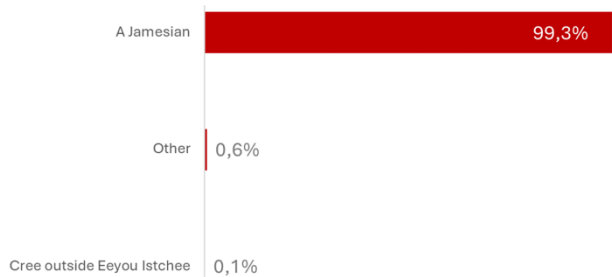
Genre



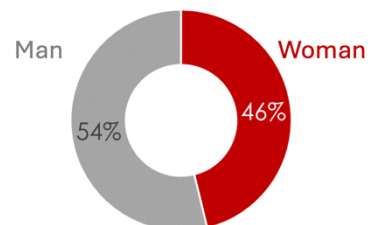
Age



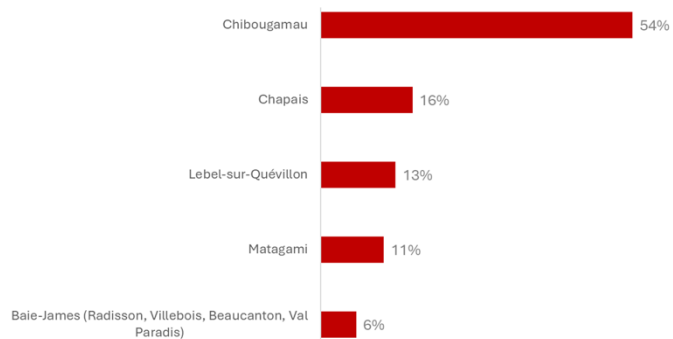
Origin of respondents



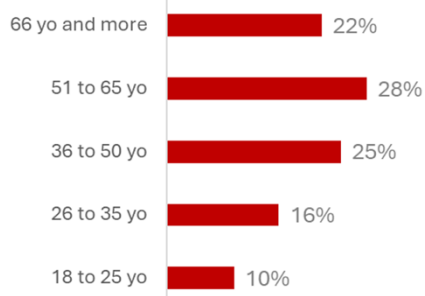
Genre



Place of residence



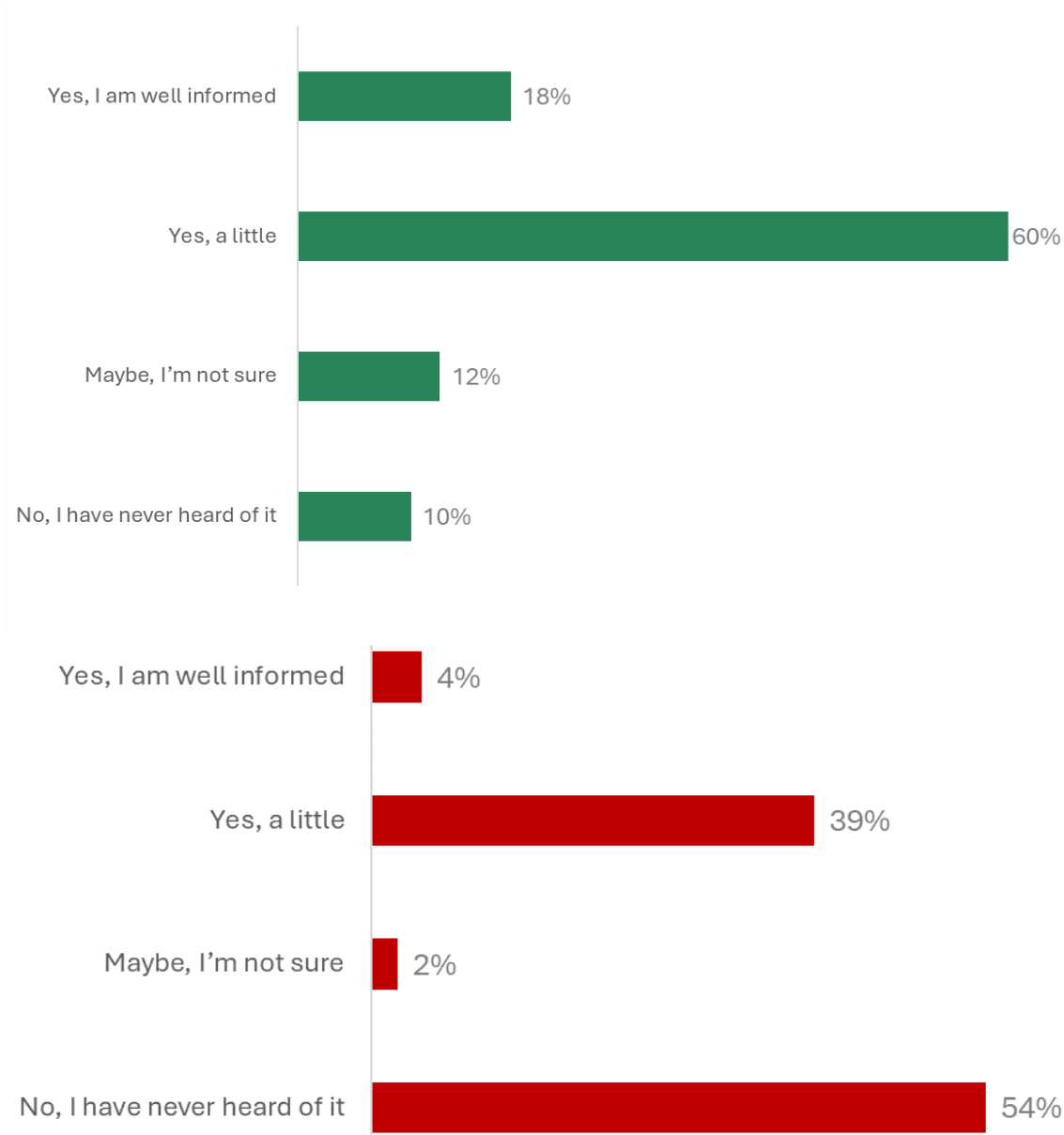
Age



3.2 NOTORIETY OF LGA

« Have you ever heard of La Grande Alliance? »

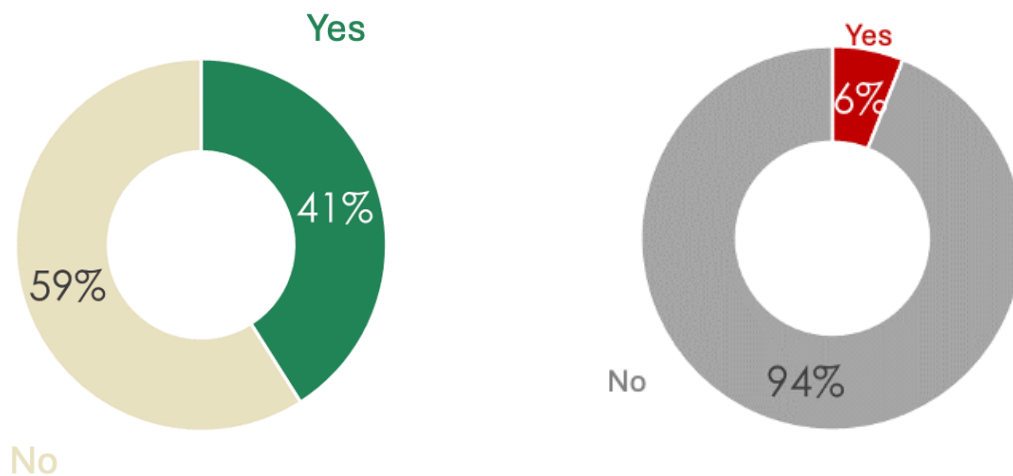
As the graphics suggest, there is a significant gap between Crees and the Jamesian population. Cree respondents were a lot more aware and declared being more knowledgeable about LGA than Jamesian respondents have.



3.3 PARTICIPATION IN ENGAGEMENT SESSION ON LGA

« Have you participated in an engagement session on La Grande Alliance? »

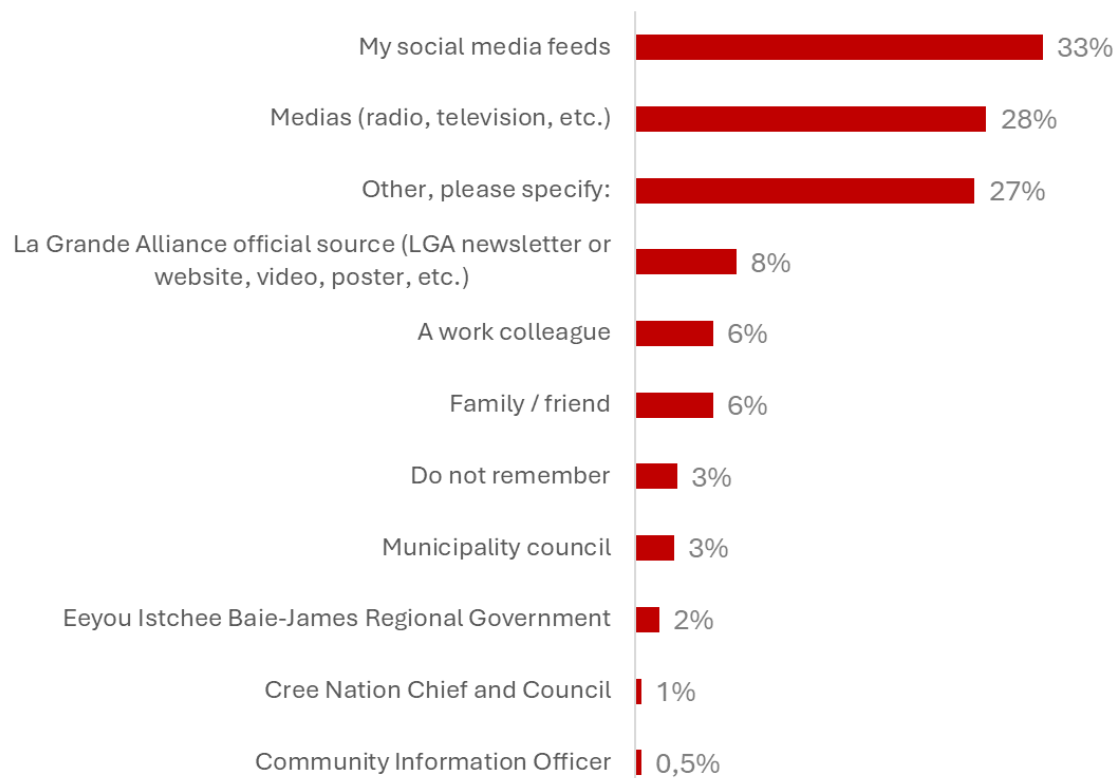
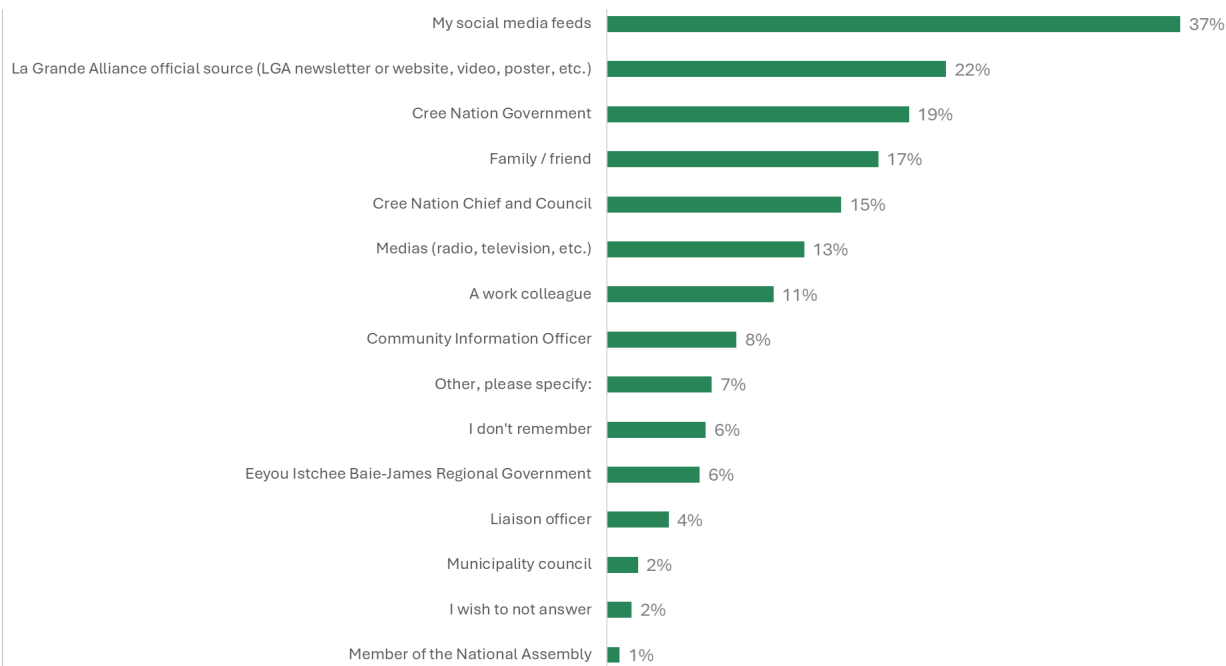
This question vividly illustrates a significant disparity between the Crees and the Jamesians. The 2021 Cree survey even suggested a higher percentage of the sample that had participated in engagement sessions on LGA. This shows that a much greater emphasis has been held on engaging with the Cree communities on the territory during community engagement processes. Whilst this is a direct reflection of the LGA values and objectives, it also shows to be the cause of a lower level of understanding within the Jamesians as well as certain misconceptions that will be explored later on.



3.4 SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

« How did you learn about La Grande Alliance? »

There were more mentions collected for this question per Cree respondent than there was for Jamesian respondents. This correlates directly to the level to which Crees were aware / had heard about the LGA. Generally speaking, social media seemed to have had the greatest outreach. Aside from that, the fact that a greater emphasis was put into engaging with Cree communities about LGA is clearly expressed through the seemingly more “official” sources, which itself is also expressed in the greater level of understanding of what LGA is for the Crees.

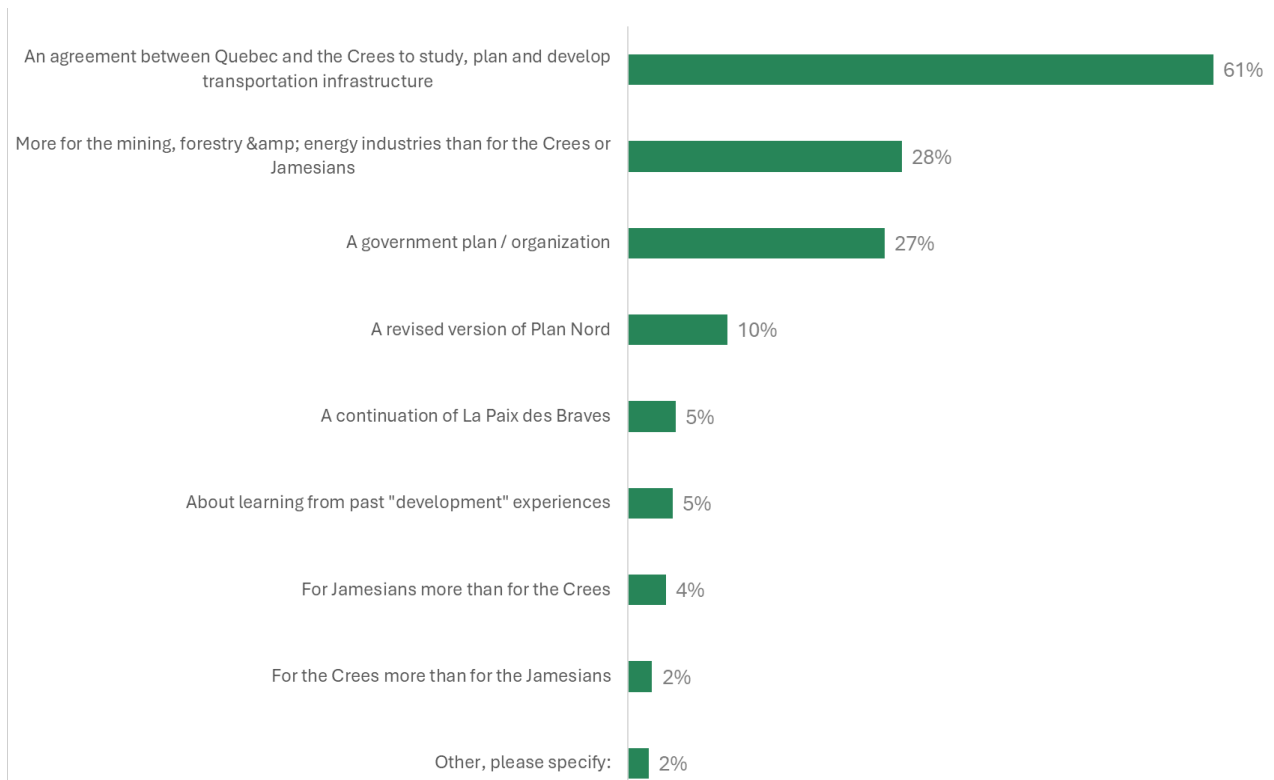


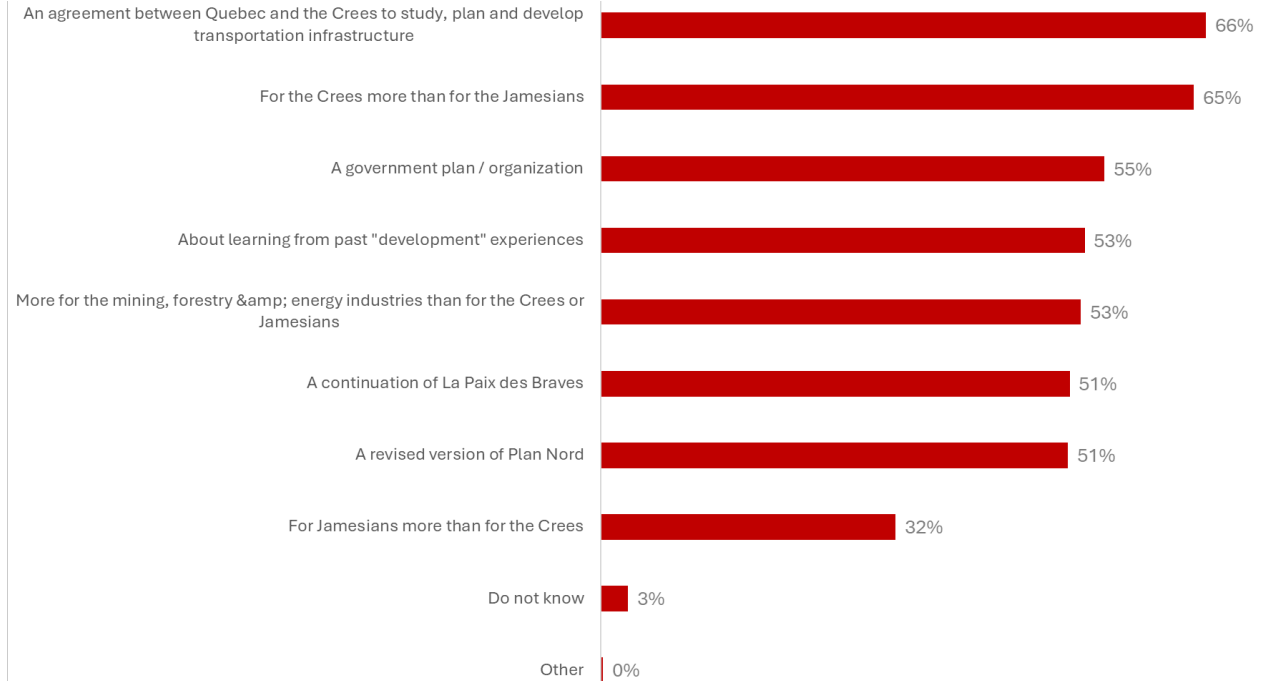
3.5 AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS

« Please tell me whether the following elements accurately describe what La Grande Alliance means to you: »

Visual representation of collected data for this question speaks out clearly how Jamesians have mentioned a lot more answers per respondent. While Crees agreed to 1.4 statements per respondent on average, Jamesians agreed to 4.3. The fact that Jamesians were surveyed by telephone might have an impact on this. This creates a strong error margin for the question, making the Jamesians seem surprisingly knowledgeable, but also quite numerous in the number of errored answers.

Differently, Cree respondents have made one answer choice stand out. Although it remains showing a pretty surface level degree of understanding, it is 61% who agreed to LGA being an agreement between Quebec and the Crees to study, plan and develop transportation infrastructure. However, the two following answer choices that received the greatest number of mentions reflect fundamental misconceptions about LGA.

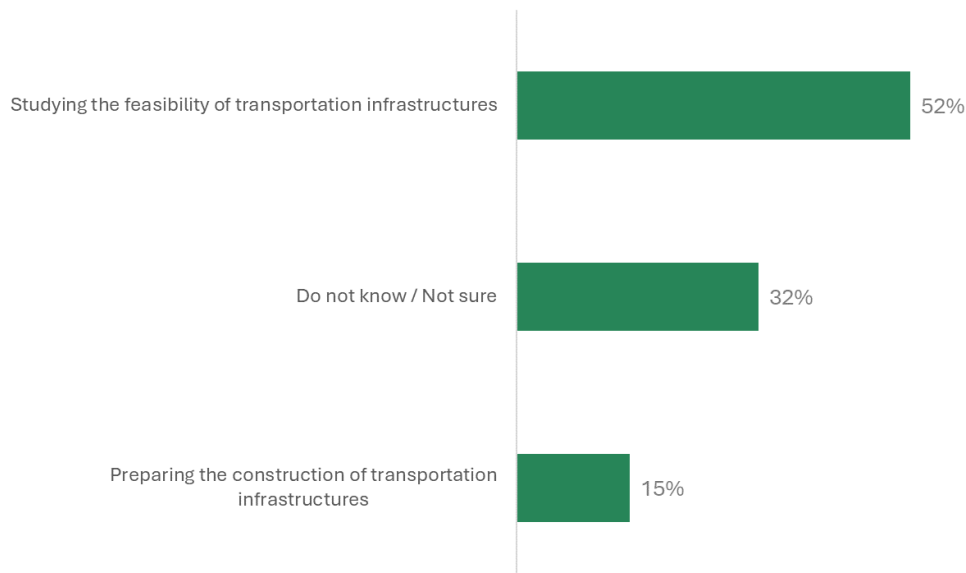


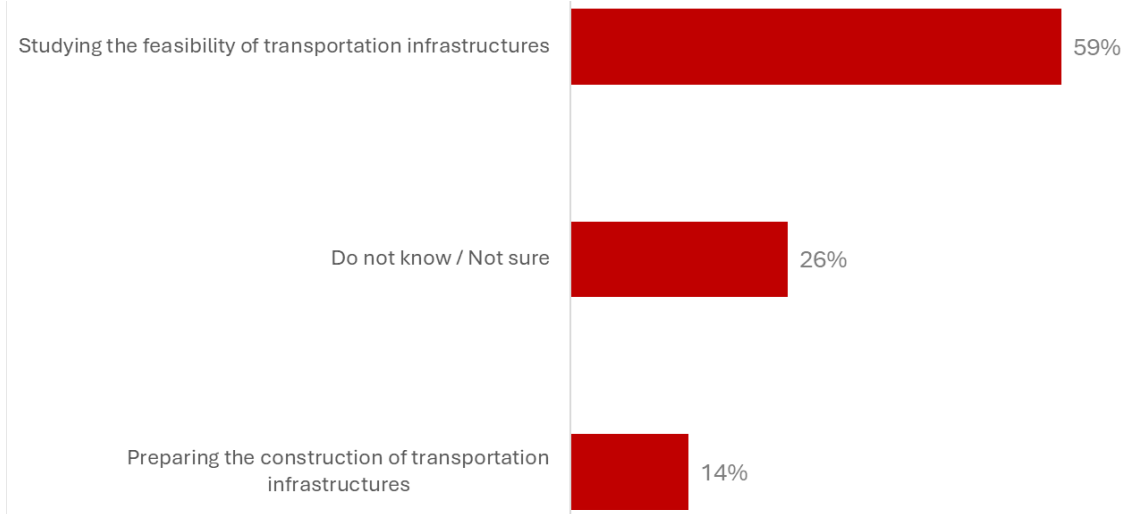


3.6 WHAT'S LA GRANDE ALLIANCE

« To your knowledge, is La Grande Alliance preparing the construction of transportation infrastructures OR studying the feasibility of transportation infrastructures? »

For this question, both Cree and Jamesian respondents had a pretty similar repartition in their answers. However, although the gap is small, it is a surprising observation that the Jamesian respondents seemed to know a little bit more what LGA is precisely doing. While 52-59% of respondents that showed adequate understanding of LGA, 15-14% choosing the wrong answer, and 32-26% of uncertainty reflects the need for continuity in the spreading of knowledge within communities on the territory. Regardless, this level of understanding is good news. Above half of both samples expressing adequate understanding of the concrete field of activity of LGA means that community engagement is fulfilling its purpose to some extent.

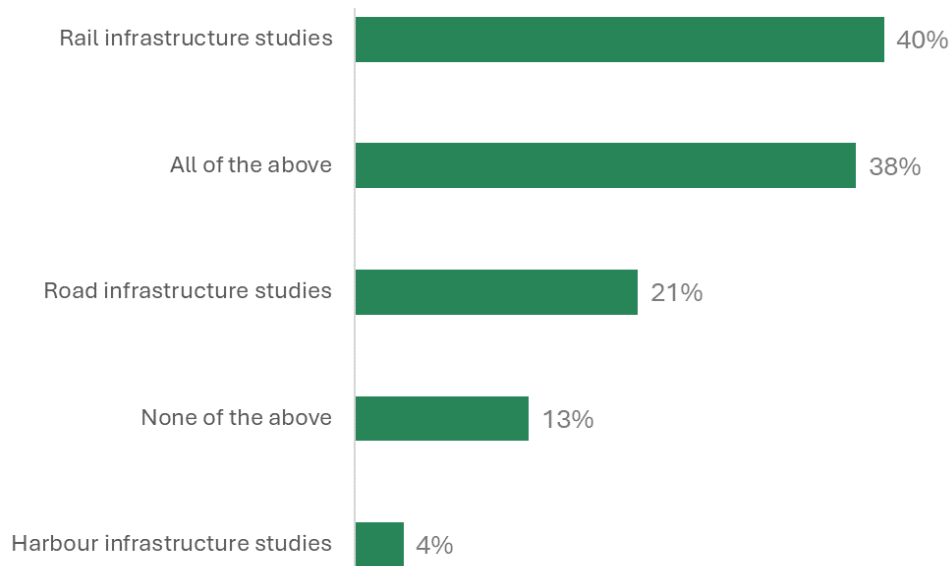


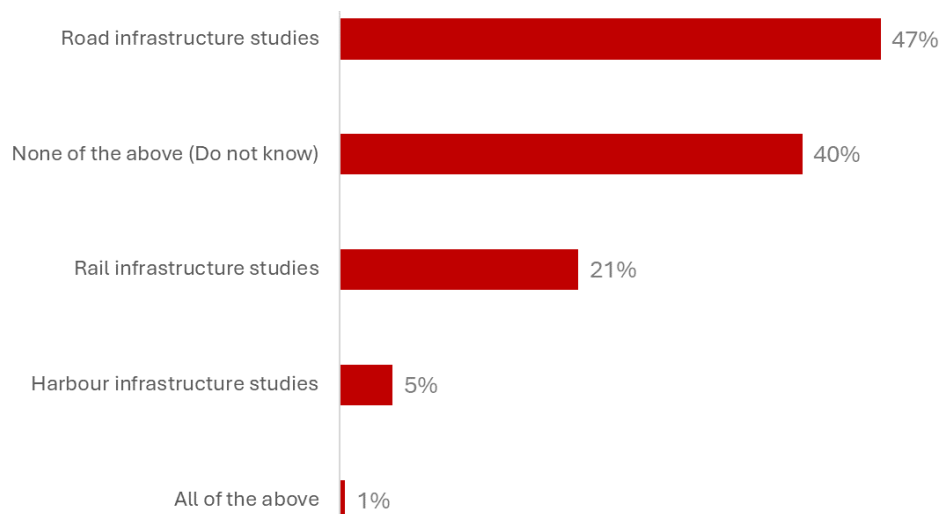


3.7 KNOWLEDGE OF LGA

« La Grand Alliance is studying different components. Tell me which ones you know best. »

Under this question, Crees demonstrated a deeper level of knowledge about the studied subjects of LGA. While one specific type of infrastructure seemed to have come first in mind (rail), the appropriate answer choice came in second in most mentioned. Much fewer respondents suspected harbour infrastructures to be studied. On the other hand, a big portion of Jamesian respondents admitted not knowing which infrastructures were being studied. Interestingly, more respondents mentioned harbour infrastructures than the right answer. Again, telephone surveying might have impacted this.

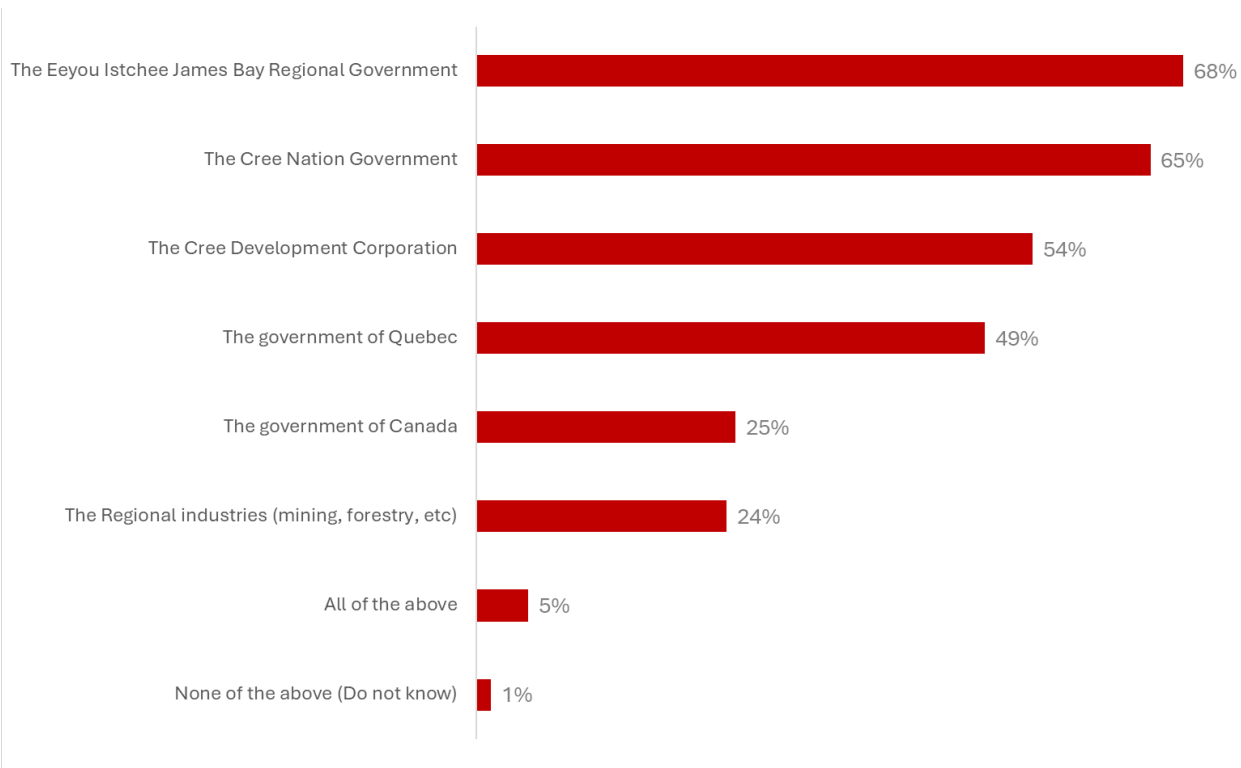
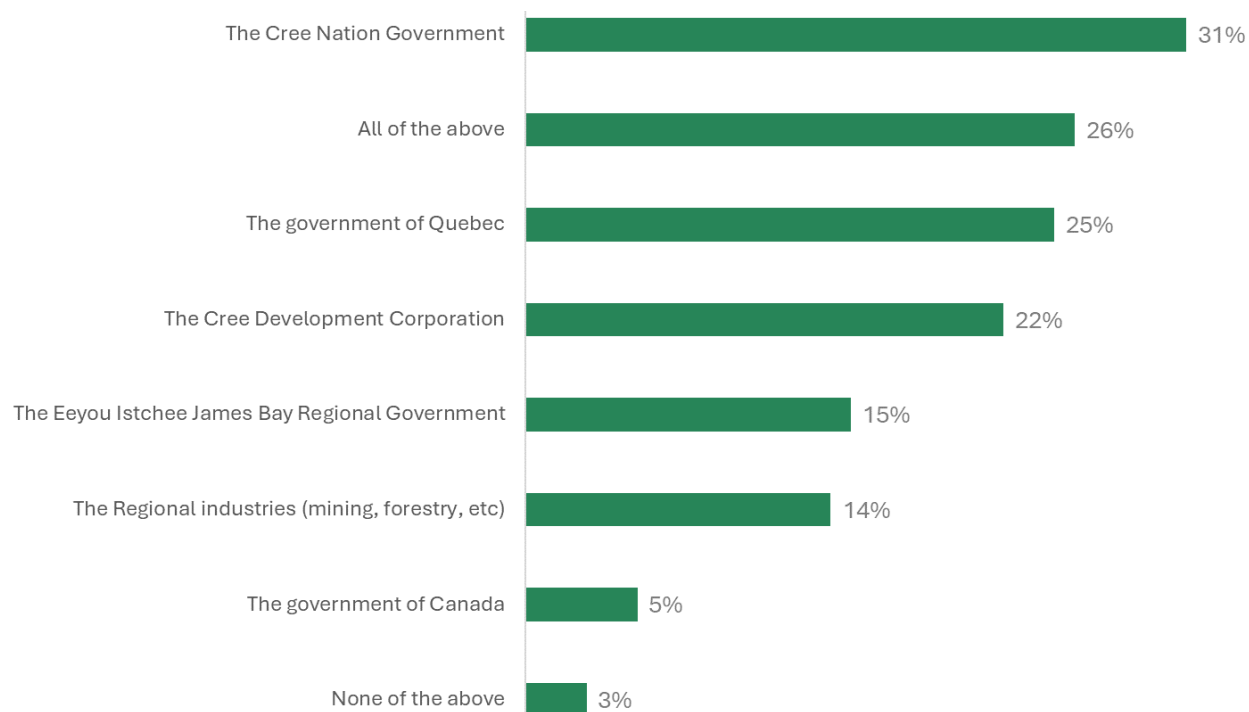




3.8 LEADERS ON THE STUDIES AND COMMUNICATION ABOUT LGA

« In your opinion, who is leading the studies and communication about La Grande Alliance? »

Jamesian respondents mentioned more answers per person. Crees tended to mention “all of the above” whereas Jamesians tended to state players individually, but more of them. For both parties, there seems to be a misunderstanding as to who is leading the studies and communication about LGA. While both parties mentioned relevant parties, the Cree Development Corporation does not seem to be distinctly identified as the one *leading* the studies and *communication*. Although certain answers could mean a simple confusion or lack of distinction between bodies and organization and what they do (the Cree Nation government and the Cree Development Corporation for example), other answers could be a source of concern. Both Cree and Jamesian respondents mentioned to relatively high rates the government of Québec and the government of Canada. This reveals a need for further engagement in informing the public. Because this misunderstanding also means confusion regarding the values and objectives of these infrastructure studies.

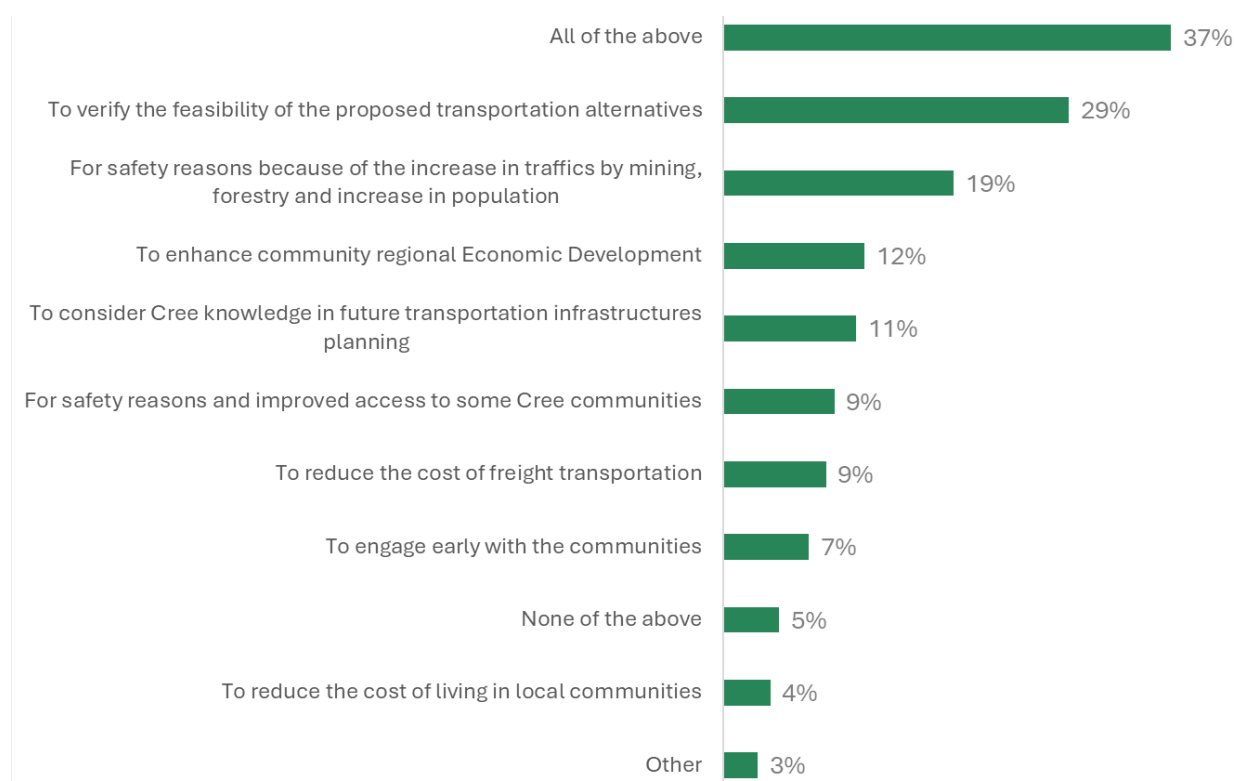


3.9 REASONS WHY LGA STUDIES ARE CARRIED OUT

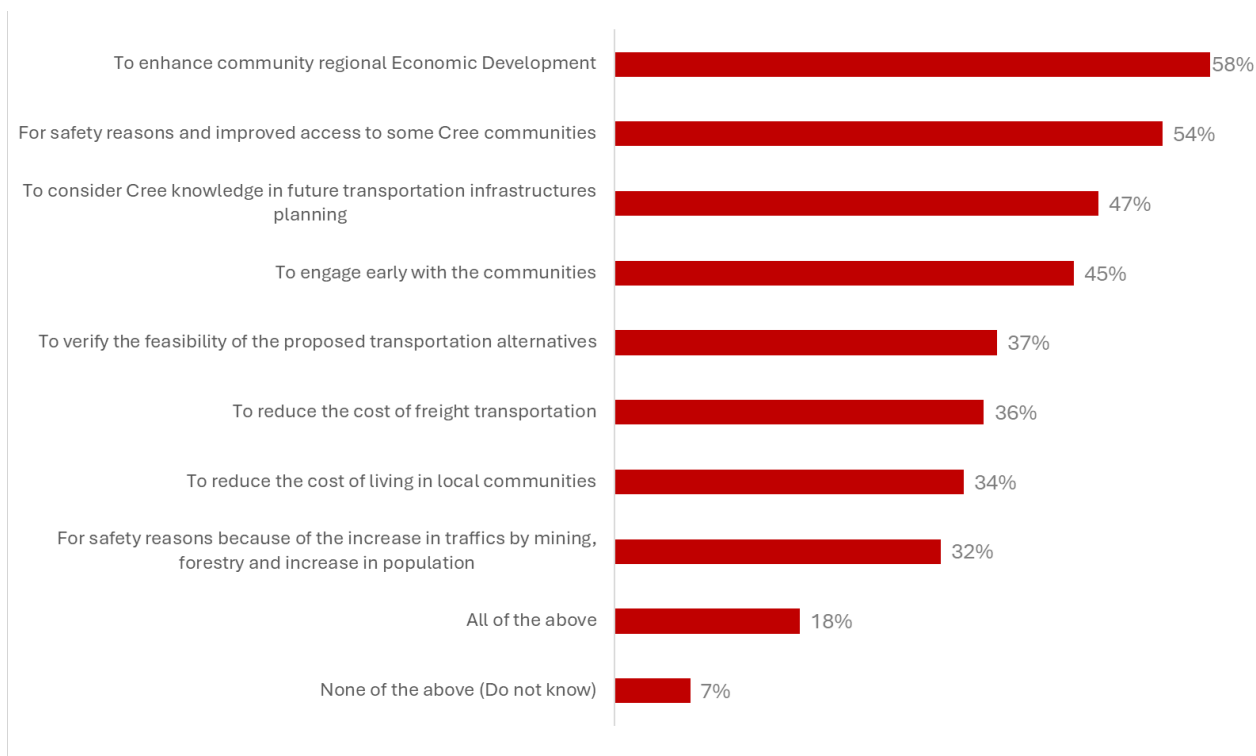
« In your opinion, why are these studies being conducted? »

Once again, Jamesian respondents brought up more mentions per person than Cree respondents have (3.6 – 1.4 per respondent). This goes to show that the telephone format of surveying might have had an impact on the way respondents answered the survey. For the crees, two answers really stood out: “all of the above” and “to verify the feasibility of proposed transportation alternatives”. A lot less Jamesians mentioned “all of the above”, but rather tended to mention multiple reasons. This could maybe be translating a kind of similar spirit.

Regardless, this question demonstrated that there was a better understanding of the LGA and its doings for the Crees. The two most answered reasons show that there is a decent general understanding, that seems to be summed up well in the choice of reasons.



Jamesians responses seem to express an attempt at understanding.

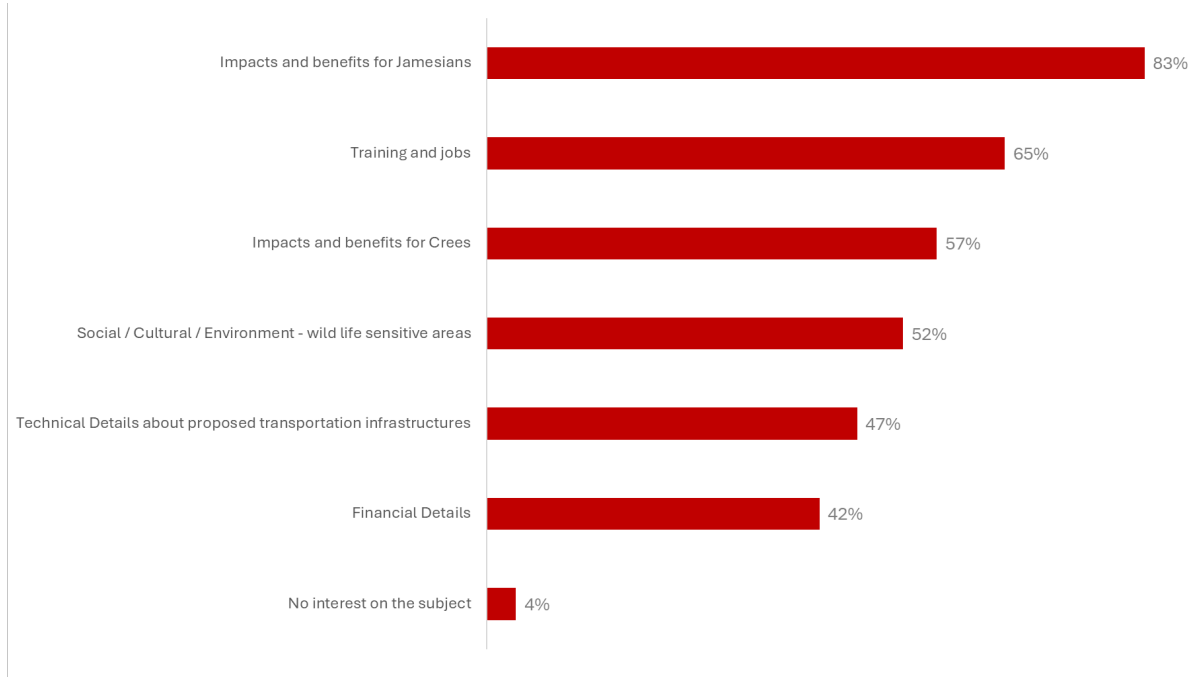


3.10 TOPICS ON WHICH THEY WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE INFORMATION

When asked the topics on which they are interested on hearing more about, subjects of interest for Crees are more detailed and technical-oriented, mentioning social/cultural/environment wildlife, sensitive areas and impacts and benefits for the Crees. Whilst subjects of interest within the Jamesian population seem to demonstrate an attempt, or an intention to understand the LGA more generally.

« What subjects from La Grande Alliance could you like to hear more or discuss more about? Rank the following items from 1 to 6. »

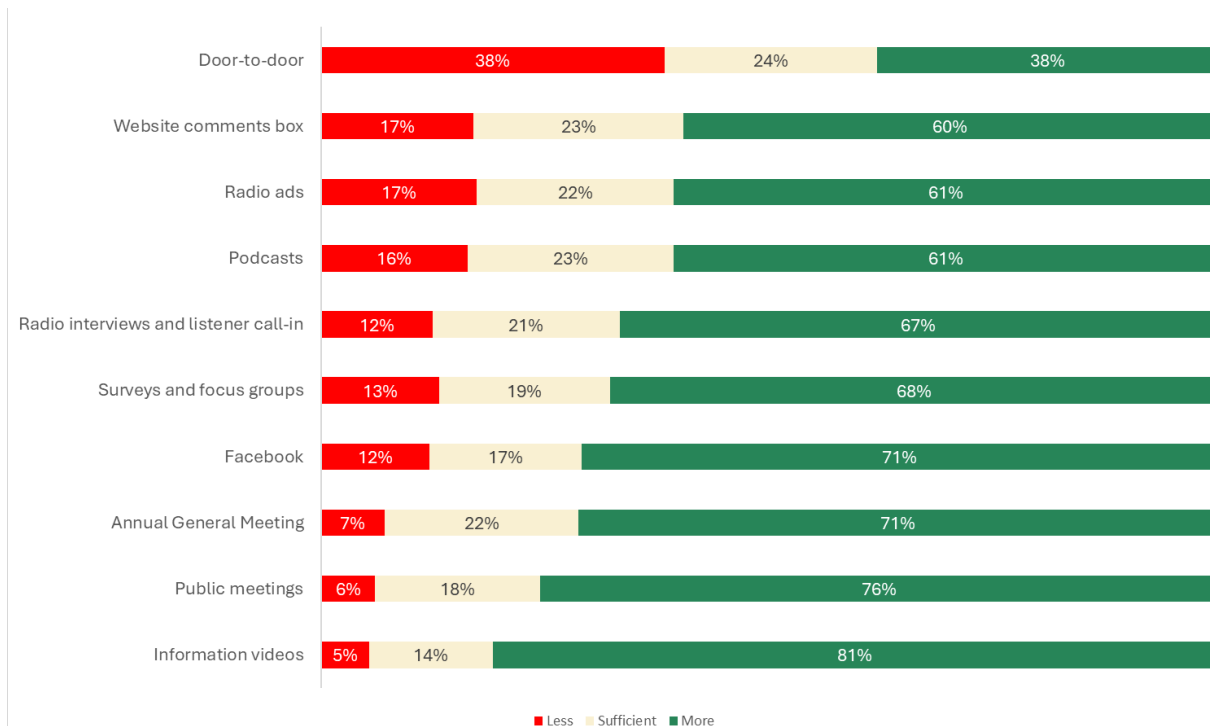
	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
n=	282	270	270	267	266	265
Social / Cultural / Environment - wild life sensitive areas	45%	18%	16%	8%	7%	7%
Impacts and benefits for Crees	28%	33%	10%	15%	7%	7%
Training and jobs	12%	14%	21%	18%	17%	18%
Technical Details about proposed transportation infrastructures	6%	13%	20%	25%	24%	11%
Impacts and benefits for Jamesians	5%	9%	14%	11%	20%	40%
Financial Details	4%	13%	18%	22%	25%	17%



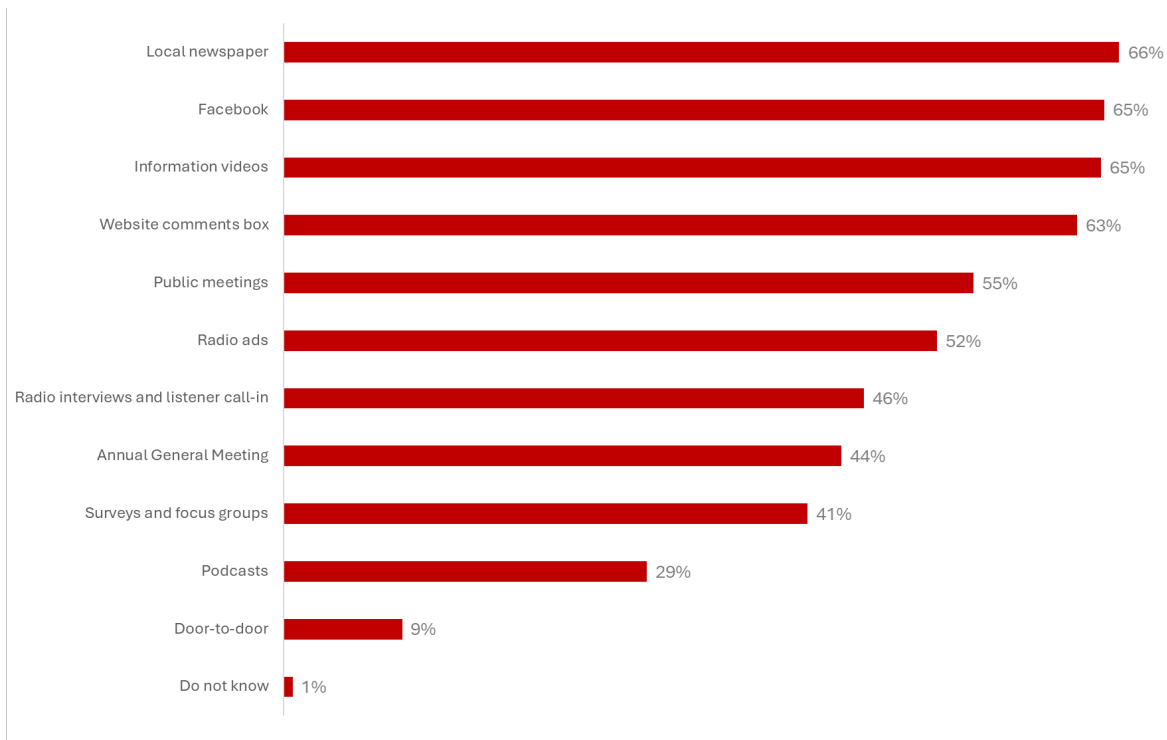
3.11 HOW TO CONVEY INFORMATION

Crees tended to want to hear about the information through sources that feel more personal and that are better designed to grasp focus and convey better understanding. On the other hand, Jamesians prioritized more generic sources that have a greater outreach, but less focus retention and a lower chance at conveying deep and comprehensive understanding. This demonstrates two things: A genuine will to hear more, as well as a recognition of the importance of the matter from the Cree communities.

« How should La Grande Alliance communicate with the public? Please rate each option: »



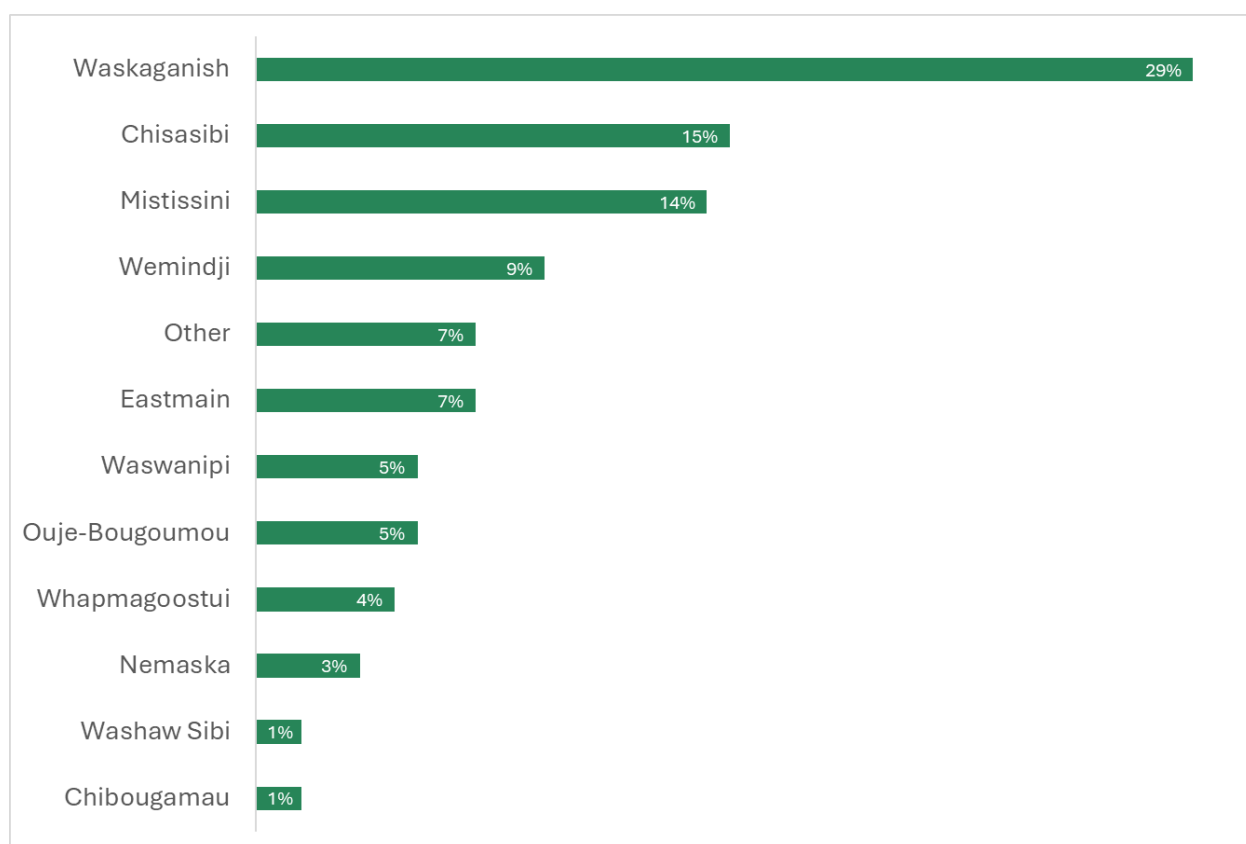
« Again, answering yes or no, what means would you like La Grande Alliance to use to convey information to the Jamesians? »



4 LGA AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE COMPARISON BETWEEN ALL CREES AND THE WASKAGANISH COMMUNITY

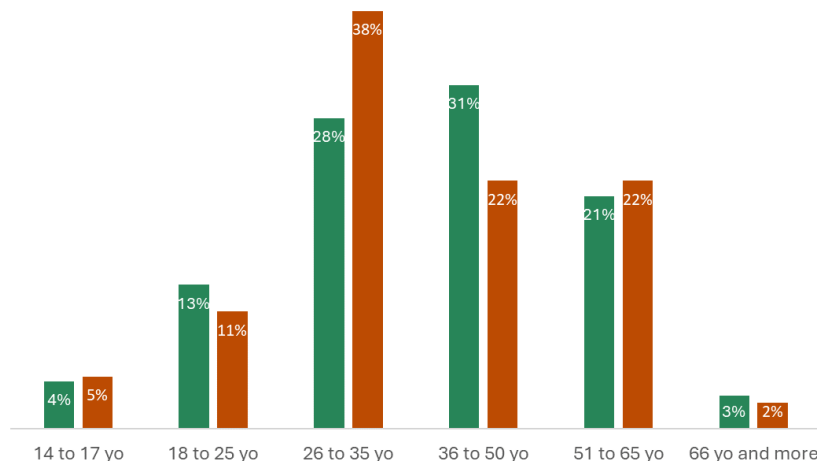
The Cree nation being one of the most populous nations in the province with approximately 18 313 residents as of 2021, Chisasibi is the most populous of all 9 Cree communities. Interestingly, in the web survey that was sent out to Eeyou Istchee Crees, it is in the community of Waskaganish that the biggest number of respondents resided. It is the third most populous community, with 2 295 residents as of 2021.

Crees of Waskaganish constituted 29% of the total respondents of the Cree web survey. We want to highlight this community compared to the overall Crees sample.

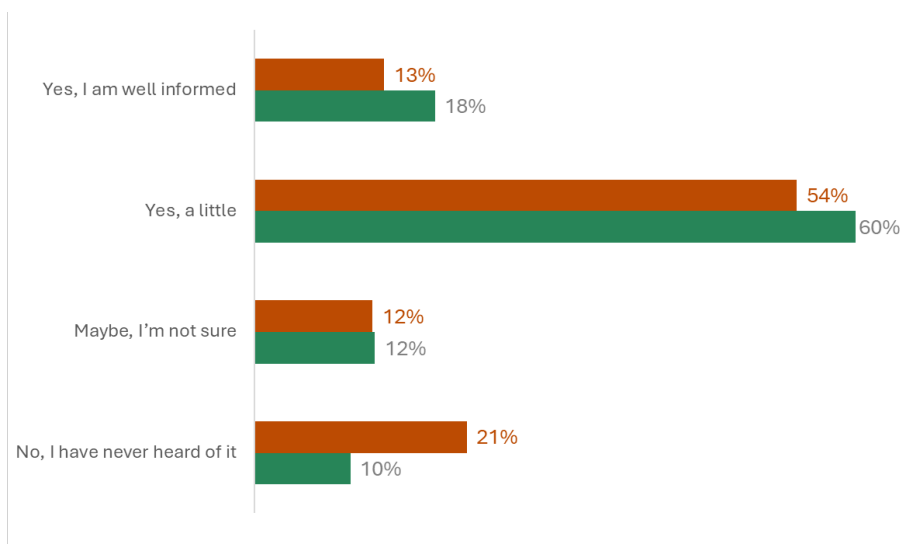


4.1 KEY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WASKAGANISH AND THE REST OF EYYOU ISCHTEE

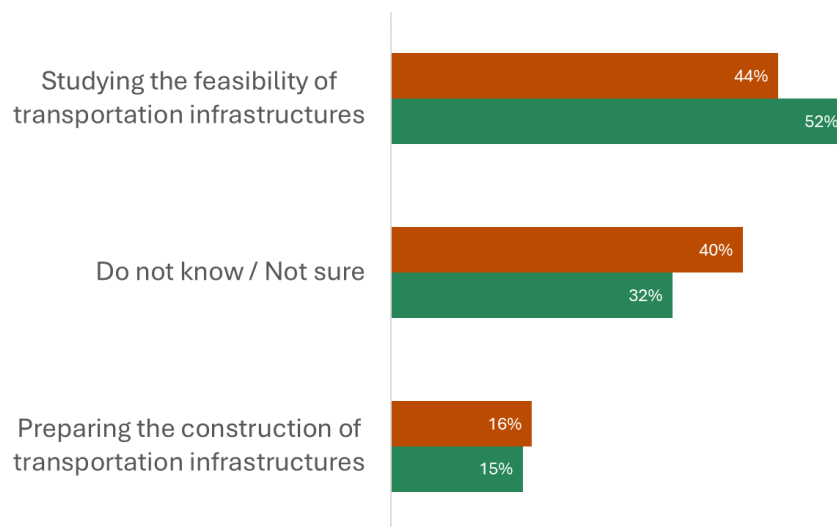
Being that the Waskaganish Crees stood out by being so numerous to answer the survey, there are a few elements that stand out from their active participation. It is to be noted that the following comparisons compare the Crees of Waskaganish to the entirety of the 282 Cree sample, including the Waskaganish respondents. To begin with, the Crees of Waskaganish were typically younger than the entirety of the sample. The community also recounts a relatively population.



Collected data also reveals that Crees of Waskaganish that were a part of the sample showed a generally lower degree of understanding about LGA. For example, in comparison to the entirety of the respondents, Crees of Waskaganish had never heard of LGA about 11% more than all of the sample.



Waskaganish Crees admitted not knowing or being unsure about the doings of LGA by 8% more than the entirety of the sample. They also were more frequent to state the wrong answer and less frequent to get it right.



To sum it up, Waskaganish Crees were, in proportion to the rest of the sample, a much larger amount to answer the survey. However, collected data demonstrated that they had a lower degree of awareness, knowledge, and understanding. What this might signal is both the need for further community engagement around Waskaganish, and an eager want and interest of knowing more what LGA is and what it's about.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Ultimately, between 2021 and 2023, there has been a notable increase in awareness and knowledge of the La Grande Alliance (LGA) among the Cree population. Significantly, a larger percentage of individuals have participated in LGA activities (41% in 2023 compared to 11% in 2021), and more Cree individuals are now well-informed about LGA (18% in 2023 compared to 10% in 2021). These findings suggest that the efforts made to communicate information about LGA have yielded positive impacts. This also led to an evolution in the perception of the LGA and the field of interest from respondents, which grew to be more detail-oriented and more directly related to the doings of the LGA. Furthermore, data from the telephone survey demonstrated that Jamesians seemed to have a lower understanding although Jamesians had significantly less interaction with and awareness of the LGA.

In summary, among the Crees, the data reveals that approximately 20% of respondents possess a clear understanding of what LGA entails, while about 30% remain unaware or unwilling to engage with the topic and over 50% of respondents express a desire for increased involvement and engagement with LGA. In doing so, subjects of interest for Crees who have already engaged with LGA, want more detail and technicality-oriented, such as social/cultural/environment wildlife/sensitive areas, the impacts and benefits for the Crees and training and jobs. Whilst subjects of interest within the Jamesian population seem to demonstrate an attempt, or an intention to understand the LGA more generally.

Therefore, there is a clear imperative to continue the conversation within Eeyou Istchee. Heightened awareness is essential to stimulate community engagement and participation in LGA initiatives. Achieving broader awareness and knowledge of LGA across the population necessitates concerted efforts to interact with all Cree members, particularly focusing on youth and land-users.

Transportation infrastructure development holds significant importance, eliciting diverse perceptions of advantages and disadvantages among the Cree communities, each distinct in its own right. Future survey initiatives should consider employing a door-to-door approach using trained youth surveyors, integrated with a probabilistic sampling method based on community membership lists and demographic factors. This approach aims to achieve greater representativeness and generalizability of survey results across the Cree population of Eeyou Istchee.