

## **Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board**

### **Submission to the Nunavut Wildlife Board**

#### **On the**

### **In-person Polar Bear Management Plan Public Hearing**

**November 2018**

The Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board has heard in the past about how harvesters want changes made in the current polar bear management system. The management of polar bears in our view, has been successful in rise of the polar bear population and that it is more than sustainable, even if frequent harvesting is practiced.

In the past, elders stated that in their days, harvesting of polar bears were infrequent and didn't come along very often. Today, we have so many polar bears that it is not possible to cache meat in the summer and expect to pick it up in the winter as polar bears will have already gotten to it. Even camping in the summer is practiced seldomly now because of fear of polar bears.

Today our method of harvesting of polar bears is using the "Male/Female" sex selective ratio. This is cumbersome to practice because if and when there are too many females are harvested even by one, it takes away the community quota without even filling it. Then, if we are lucky enough to go back to our full quota for the next harvest season, we have to ask for a credit from another HTO who shares the same sub-population. Harvesters should not have to suffer such losses just because of one female overharvest. Especially when an HTO has to go to another HTO for a credit tag.

When a family group is unintentionally harvested, an investigation ensues from the Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment. Inuit are not used to this practice because it makes them look like criminals. This has resulted in Inuit losing their culture and tradition. It can be very intimidating for a person that has never even gone to court to have to face the judge and lawyers just for harvesting a polar bear. It also hurts the affected HTO's when this happens. We as wildlife management leaders, would like this to change as we believe it does not reflect the values of Inuit, their culture, beliefs and their worth. I cannot emphasize enough on how this should not be practiced anymore. There are better ways to deal with this type of harvest, after all, it was practiced before the management system was placed and the population did not decline.

The polar bear is an icon in the views of the world and everyone is so afraid that they will disappear when the Arctic becomes ice free. Inuit believe this will not happen because as Inuit, we all know and have seen polar bears fatten up in the summer. There is ample evidence that they are able to catch ringed seals in open water. We credit *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* for this

knowledge. We also believe polar bears are able to adapt to changes in environmental conditions. They are very capable of surviving in the most harsh environments.

Another piece of information to consider is how they are portrayed in the public media such as documentaries. Narrators often see them as not able to adapt to changes in sea ice, unable to catch seals and this is very frustrating for Inuit to watch because we do not have the tools to correct these inaccuracies; we do not have resources to touch bases with movie actors, singers and song writers who often narrate and provide these messages. Often, we are not even considered when we say, there are too many polar bears and we know because of *Inuit Qaujimajatunqangit*.

It is time to change the management system because Inuit have been managing the polar bears for thousands of years. We know what we are doing and western science and modeling has become too dominant in the wildlife management system. These models make too many assumptions and do not consider Inuit Qaujimajatunqangit. Inuit need flexibility in harvesting of polar bears. The time is now to consider our own people.

I thank you for having the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board at this in-person public hearing, I can go on and on but we have to consider the timeline for other presenters.

Joe Ashevak  
Chairperson

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**Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board**