

IQRF Project Number: 25-007-02

Project Title:

Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board Educational Cards

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Summary:

This project aims to review and refine the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board's (KRWB) framework for polar bear management and develop educational material for youth across the region. In January 2025, KRWB staff conducted regional community consultations with Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO) board members in Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak, and Kugaaruk. Meetings were attended by elders and youth and varied in format and needs, depending on the HTO. Meetings focused on reviewing KRWB's draft living framework for polar bear management based on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), which stimulated discussions about polar bear management, the need to empower and support Inuit leadership in management, and the importance of supporting the role of IQ in communities for generations to come. This project supported regional coordination by providing an opportunity for HTO boards to become engaged in a regional project (rather than one or two representatives) and receive information about HTO roles in wildlife management. Due to delays in receiving additional funding, we could only review four existing prototype educational cards, and are planning for the development and review of 10 cards for distribution in 2025–2026.

Project Objectives:

The objectives of this research were to review KRWB's existing draft framework for polar bear management based on IQ and develop new educational material for youth. In the 2024–2025 fiscal year, we reviewed existing materials and conducted regional-wide

community consultations to discuss community and regional priorities, document community-wide concerns, and refine our IQ framework for polar bear management, which is a living document. We also reviewed prototype educational cards that were previously designed and solicited feedback from HTO board members, elders and youth across the Kitikmeot region.

Unfortunately, we experienced significant delays in mobilizing additional funding from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) which were to be used to contract creative consultants, include them in our consultations, and create and print artistic educational material. This additional funding and corresponding project activities will be completed in the 2025–2026 fiscal year. Our educational content development (designing and printing 10 hard-copies of educational cards for youth) will be completed accordingly.

Materials and Methods:

Prior to our community consultations, we reviewed KRWB's existing database of interviews, workshops, meeting transcripts, NWMB submissions, IQ reports (e.g., for Gjoa Haven and M'Clintock Channel polar bears), online surveys, and monitoring information to refine and simplify our graphical framework. This framework was drafted following regional workshops in 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 fiscal years, and is considered a living document to be continually reviewed and updated. We refined our framework by organizing information according to three levels: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and what it means as a core value, regional community objectives that could be organized into 3 overarching themes, and corresponding actions that would be needed to support the achievement of those objectives.

In January 2025, KRWB staff conducted a consultation tour and met with HTO representatives and staff in Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak, and Kugaaruk, along with two elders and two to five youth in each community. NTI staff attended each meeting remotely. We presented our regional draft framework based on IQ and solicited feedback from meeting members. We also presented our prototype designs of educational cards to obtain feedback from HTOs, elders, and youth, who were reviewing them for the first time. Following community visits, we revised our draft framework according to new information and feedback that was shared.

Results:

This work emerged in response to ongoing regional concerns about how polar bears are managed, a need for coordination and communication, and an overall lack of IQ inclusion and consideration in co-management in Nunavut. These concerns continue to be reported in the Kitikmeot region and have been documented by KRWB through the following initiatives:

- IQ interviews with community members in Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak, and Kugaaruk on M'Clintock Channel¹ and Gulf of Boothia polar bear subpopulations² that were submitted to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) for information.³
- Meetings hosted by KRWB with Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak, and Kugaaruk Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTO) in 2021 to review and discuss a submission to NWMB on Gulf of Boothia polar bears, in response to a Government of Nunavut Department of Environment (GN DoE) proposal to review a new Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for Gulf of Boothia.⁴
- Two regional polar bear workshops hosted by KRWB in Yellowknife, on 28–30 March 2023 (Appendix 2) and 13–14 March 2024 (Appendix 3).⁵

We reviewed this material along with meeting minutes, data from online surveys, and monitoring information to develop our initial draft framework in June 2024.

From 12–25 January 2025, our HTO visits began in Taloyoak and continued to Gjoa Haven, Kugaaruk, Cambridge Bay and Kugluktuk. Meetings took place in HTO offices or rented meeting rooms and ranged in duration from three hours to a full-day meeting. Meeting formats varied depending on the local HTO's needs and discussions, and if interpretation was required; interpretation was necessary in Taloyoak, Gjoa Haven, and Kugaaruk. Each

¹ 2021. Ekaluktutiak HTO, Gjoa Haven HTO & Spence Bay HTO. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit on M'Clintock Channel polar bears. Report to the Government of Nunavut Department of Environment. Prepared by P. Wong.

² 2021. Gjoa Haven HTO, Spence Bay HTO, Kurtairojuark HTO, Igloodik HTO, Hall Beach HTO & Naujaat HTO. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit on Gulf of Boothia polar bears. Report to the Government of Nunavut Department of Environment. Prepared by P. Wong.

³ 2021. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ), knowledge, and perspectives on M'Clintock Channel and Gulf of Boothia Polar Bears. Submission to the NWMB for Information. Prepared by P. Wong.

⁴ 2022. Total Allowable Harvest of Gulf of Boothia polar bears. Submission to the NWMB for Information. Prepared by P. Wong.

⁵ A draft report on these workshops was circulated to HTOs in June 2023 and presented in March 2024.

meeting began with a review of KRWB's two previous polar bear workshops in 2023 and 2024, and a presentation of KRWB's draft framework. The framework became a foundation for discussions and knowledge sharing. HTOs, elders, and youth were encouraged to provide input on the framework to ensure that the community's concerns and priorities were captured. Each meeting concluded with a brief presentation and review of 4 digital prototype educational cards. Meeting members were asked to provide feedback on what content they wanted to include and review colors, symbols, and designs for cultural appropriateness and interest.

HTOs shared information on their community-specific activities (e.g., by-laws and regulations) and priorities of focus for polar bears. Community members also continued to voice their concerns about IQ, their changing relationships with polar bears, and polar bear management. HTOs highlighted the importance of all materials being developed to be considered draft, living (e.g., continually reviewed and refined), and confidential so that conversations could continue beyond the meeting and additional opportunities to meet for discussions about IQ, polar bears, and management could be created. The most recent draft of the framework (February 2025) is to be reviewed by each HTO for another round of approvals, followed by KRWB approval.

Follow-up community consultations with the inclusion of creative consultants are anticipated in the 2025–2026 fiscal year to finalize the framework and draft up to 10 educational cards based on the available information, for print and distribution. Youth will be engaged following our confirmation of funding to establish an advisory group.

Discussion/Management Implications:

Our living draft framework reorganizes KRWB and HTO objectives and actions that have been voiced and requested across the region, while positioning IQ principles at the core of all objectives and actions in the region. The framework also recognizes that IQ includes information beyond knowledge of polar bears. Unlike most conventional wildlife management plans that focus on species ecology (e.g., habit, populations and health), IQ forms the foundation of this framework that includes, for example, connecting elders and youth as a focus area. While the information in the framework is well known by HTO membership across the Kitikmeot, a framework for how KRWB and HTOs could explicitly

organize and/or respond to this information has not yet been developed for polar bears, or any wildlife in the region.

Our community HTO meetings provided an opportunity for new HTO board members and youth to learn information about the history of polar bear management, and how polar bears are currently managed across the territory. These activities engaged HTOs with the intention of building momentum toward stronger regional coordination and, ultimately, HTO and KRWB leadership in fulfilling their management responsibilities. Our meetings also included youth, many of whom were unfamiliar with the activities of their HTO before the meeting and were provided with an opportunity to learn and ask questions about their leaders' roles and responsibilities. While elder voices led meeting discussions, we anticipate additional opportunities for youth to become engaged and voice their interests in our follow-up engagement sessions. Our creative content will also be designed to engage the broader community membership to ensure community members are comfortable continuing their harvesting practices, serving their membership as board members under polar bear management plans and regulations, and participating in management in generations to come.

Reporting to communities/resource users:

Meeting activities were reported to all KRWB and HTO staff and reports were circulated to them in February 2025. Updates were provided to HTO staff during monthly managers meetings over remote videoconferencing. Updates were also provided informally to KRWB (HTO chairs) on an opportunistic basis (e.g., when at other in-person meetings). Given busy travel and workloads, some HTO staff have requested KRWB support for presenting to and simplifying project information for their board members. With additional funding, we will be planning presentations to HTO boards during our routine or project-related community visits from 2025–2026.