



Submission to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

Re: Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB) request for Increase in Polar Bear Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for the M'Clintock Channel polar bear population

Dear Mr. Kovic,

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) appreciate's the opportunity to provide comments on the KRWB request to increase the TAH for the M'Clintock Channel polar bear population. The communities of the Kitikmeot region have endured hardship over the past 12 years as a result of the moratorium and reduced TAH. It is appropriate that the NWMB is addressing this issue.

In the late 1990s, Inuit first informed the Government (NWT) of decreasing numbers in this area. Government then conducted a population survey and stated that the population had decreased. As a result, a moratorium was put in place in 2001 that lasted until 2004. The communities have always expressed that they were not properly consulted. After the memorandum of understanding in 2005 was completed, a total allowable harvest of 3 was established for the population. This has had a huge negative impact in our communities.

The polar bear is a part of Inuit culture and is highly respected. Hunting polar bears not only requires knowledge of survival skills but also observing and understanding the animal and the environment. To do this successfully, Inuit must possess various knowledge including igloo-making, sled construction, proper clothing, land and ice conditions, proper harvesting of the animal, proper processing of the animal and sharing. All of these skills and practices are passed on to younger Inuit to maintain and strengthen our cultural identity.

Because of the moratorium (Taloyoak still cannot hunt in this area), and reduced TAH for Cambridge Bay and Gjoa Haven, elders, hunters and seamstresses from all these communities are unable to teach these skills to their children and grandchildren. NTI has heard that this is having a social and cultural impact in these communities and is concerned about the long term consequences.

We also acknowledge the recent effort by the Government of Nunavut to consult with Inuit and to improve survey methods to reduce the intrusive handling of polar bears. We anticipate that any new survey results will be available in the next few years to update the status of this population.

In summary, Kitikmeot communities have been impacted for over 12 years. There is a GN population survey in progress. We feel that after 12 years, it is time to consider Inuit knowledge seriously. Inuit take a long-term view of animal populations and believe that polar bear numbers can fluctuate with environment conditions and between different areas. Inuit have reported that bears move between M'Clintock Channel and Gulf of Boothia. Bears also move between other areas. Given that the population is considered to be increasing by both scientists and Inuit, we believe that a modest increase in the TAH is appropriate. We therefore support the KRWB request to increase the TAH.

Qujanamiik,