

## WMAC NS Teleconference

### December 16, 2020

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**Attendees:** **Dave Tavares** (Canada member), **Billy Storr** (IGC Representative), **Billy Archie** (IGC Representative), **Kaitlin Wilson** (WMAC NS staff), **Allison Thompson** (WMAC NS staff), **Lindsay Staples** (WMAC NS Chair), **Craig Machtans** (Canada alternate), **Mike Suitor** (Yukon Government technical support), **Matt Clarke** (Yukon alternate), **Tyler Kuhn** (Yukon member)

Meeting called to order at 1:05pm Yukon time.

#### **Agenda:**

Billy A noted a desire to discuss IRC's new research program and how IRC are accessing climate change research funds. Also want to discuss the recent grizzly bear harvest, concerned about not reaching quota (this can be discussed under GNWT's summary of harvested species).

**Motion 2020-12-01** to accept the agenda as presented. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Dave Tavares.

#### **Minutes:**

There is a typo in the last sentence of the minutes from November.

**Motion 2020-12-02** to approved the minutes as amended. Moved by Billy Storr, seconded by Dave Tavares.

#### **Action Items:**

Allison flagged some outstanding action items, particularly grizzly bear planning. The federal group working on the national management plan for grizzly bear now has a Traditional Knowledge/Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit working group. We will engage with this group in due course. Canada is looking to take a hybrid approach to integrate existing regional plans and support regions without plans.

Chanda Turner has now been contracted by WMAC NWT to update the ISR Grizzly Bear Management plan. We will be engaging with her early in the new year.

Tyler noted that it will be important to keep the YG carnivore biologist in the loop for the updating of the ISR plan.

Staff will keep Council members informed of the ISR engagement process, including community meetings. Chanda can also present to Council at a future meeting.

The flexible quota system proposed at the joint WMAC meeting still requires a formal response from Council, including input from Yukon Government regarding their position on this issue. Matt is following up on it.

Action Item 2020-12-01 Yukon will review NWT's flexible quota proposal for grizzly bears and provide feedback to WMAC NS at a future meeting.

Allison also reviewed the two action items coming out of the November meeting.

## **Chair/Member/Staff Updates**

*Lindsay Staples:*

### Chair Appointment Process

Lindsay provided an update on the evolving process for appointing a new chair for WMAC NS. John Bailey of YG, in conversation with Lindsay, described the YG public process for soliciting interest from candidates. Because the IFA is not prescriptive on this matter, the IGC could also provide a name or list of names to the Yukon Government.

Lindsay has sent a letter to Minister Frost, conveying his intent to leave the chair position and trigger the public process.

Lindsay noted that it will be important to get the notice out to people in the ISR, in addition to the Yukon public.

### WCMP Process

Lindsay has sent a letter to the Minister to support the expedition of the Cabinet process.

Tyler noted that this process will take time and we should not expect to hear from YG until late January.

### Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik Conservation Designation process

IRC wrote a positive letter about the proposed conservation designation to Canada.

Lindsay Armer will take the lead on gathering the Parties together for conversations about a potential IPCA designation. There is a 'meet and greet' soon.

John Donihee is producing a draft Establishment Agreement for January. This draft Agreement would be linked to Canada's Wildlife Act Sections 5-7, where Canada can make a contribution to the trust fund or a separate Grand and Contribution Agreement (G&C) to the Yukon Government. Lindsay expects that there will be 3-4 meetings once the draft establishment agreement is available for review.

Craig noted that Christine Cleghorn spoke to the ADM for Environment (Fed). Canada is very motivated to have the land counted in land quantum for protected areas.

Lindsay has had further discussions with the foundations, including two new groups. They will be drafting a one-page document outlining their intentions and interests. We should receive this shortly.

There is the question of counting the quantum before the quantum-eggs have hatched. There is some risk involved, and it is a question of assessing that risk. On the plus side, there seems to be no hesitation from IRC or the rest of the Inuvialuit at this point.

### Kait & Billy Archie - WCMP Engagement

After WMAC NS receives the green light to proceed with public engagement, we will circle back to the tier one and two groups (VGN, GRRB, etc.) that we've previously engaged.

WMAC NS will also be hosting the public engagement online (via the WMAC NS website). Kait has been working with YG Communications staff on getting this going.

There's also a need to bring the Plan back to the northern communities, as a final product. It's been a long time since we've had a dialogue with Aklavik as a whole (rather than just the HTC, CC and Elders committee). We've been exploring ways to do this online, since we can't travel right now. We want to make sure the Plan is accessible to everyone, and not just people who want to read 100+ pages.

After the public engagement, we'll develop a 'what we heard' document which will be shared publicly and with YG.

We want to be ready to go with this once we hear back from YG, hopefully in late January 2021.

Craig: Is the intent to do engagement with NWT communities at the same time as Yukon public engagement is occurring?

We don't want to do a re-consultation on the Plan, but we do want to ensure that folks in the ISR are engaged

Craig: If people say a bunch of stuff in an ISR meeting, are we going to change the Plan, or hoping to close this out?

The northern engagement is more of a briefing than a consultation.

Lindsay has talked to CPAWS Yukon and given them a heads up on the Plan going to public engagement and that the Council is quite pleased with where the Plan is at.

Dave: There is a distinction between bringing key organizations/stakeholders in the ISR up to speed with where we're at and briefing various communities who may be more or less looped in to the process. Be conscious about over-consulting.

Members clarified that it's important to keep stakeholders and communities up to date, but not frame it as a consultation.

Matt: reflecting on another planning process experience, outside of government, Yukon Cabinet wanted to know that a Plan they wanted to endorse was broadly supported and there would be no surprises. Recognizing in this case that the majority of Yukon hasn't seen this work so far. Would urge caution: don't imply that [for Yukon] we are looking for a one-way flow of information. So, make clear that for Yukon, we are open to hearing feedback. With the Council leading engagement, it behooves them to spread the net a little wider. Because folks in the North could say 'hey, how come you are not speaking to us.' So, this about demonstrating fair opportunity. So that's why I suggested to Kait that the Council consider other opportunities.

Billy Archie: have also been talking with Kaitlin about involving the school in Aklavik. More engagement at the community level so that young people know about how we manage wildlife in the region, know what an HTC is, know what the PCMB does, etc.

Tyler: want to make sure this does go to communities now, with the framing Craig suggested. To give context for the framework of what feedback is received from the broader Yukon review. There's a lot of people in southern Yukon that have no idea what goes on in the northern Yukon, but who may also have very strong opinions about what should happen. We can balance that opinion with what we've heard from the north, so we can justify not changing the Plan in the event that this occurs.

To summarize, the guidance to the staff is:

- For southern Yukon, we just post the Plan on the website for a 30-day comment period. In the North, we do that plus an update on where the Plan is at, where it's going, etc. and give people the opportunity to submit feedback using the online mechanism.
- During implementation we can take a more in-depth approach to education, communication and outreach.

## **Research:**

### IFA Research Discussion:

Parks Canada, Western Arctic Field Unit (Colleen Arnison presented)

*Assessing the effects of climate-induced variability on the behavior, distribution and demography of the Porcupine caribou herd (Year 1)*

This project was supposed to start last year but was delayed. It is in partnership with Heather Johnson's USGS group. The IFA funds requested won't cover the whole project but will help the larger research group meet their objectives this year. No comments from WMAC NS members.

The CWS project proposal in the meeting folder is for this project as well. The primary difference is in terms of the seasonality - Colleen's (WAFU) proposal is focusing on calving and post-calving, and ECCC is focusing more on the summer period. ECCC is requesting the full \$19,000 IFA funds for this project.

*Investigating Observed Declines in Song Bird Abundance and Species Richness within Ivvavik National Park using Autonomous Sound Recorders (Year 4)*

This is the 4th year of this project, where Parks staff are installing bird song recorders in Ivvavik to investigate songbird decline. Originally, it was going to be a 2-year project to determine if a decline was actually occurring, or if the timing of the breeding bird surveys was off. Staff installed Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) to capture migration timing and when songbirds are calling most over the course of a day. Started in 2018 and realized we need a bit more time to capture some more information - such as on weather/temperature. Put ARU's this past year, but later than normal (in July, rather than the usual May). This year we'd like to put out the ARUs one last time, starting in May (COVID dependent). This would help us figure out migration timelines, how they are changing, and when we should do our breeding bird surveys. This is the last year this is a conservation science project; going forward we will look to incorporate some type of this work into our ongoing monitoring.

Lindsay: Can you share any observations thus far?

Colleen: So far, we've found that we had the peak songbird singing time off by about 2 hours; this affects when we do our breeding bird survey recordings. We also noticed that we have a few more species than we realized. We have also captured when birds are arriving. Spring migration seems to begin around early May.

Yukon Government Projects

*Porcupine Caribou Use of the Yukon North Slope*

This is essentially the same project as last year, and supports our long-term monitoring of the herd.

*Polar Bear Population Estimate*

Identical project to what YG presented last year. We can use carryover from last year for this spring's (2021) work, and for this funding we are requesting now - we want to use these funds for March 2022 field work. This work is well-grounded in direction from co-management bodies.

*Yukon North Slope Muskox Survey and Research*

This work fits within the context of a larger Polar Knowledge grant that was received. The background and context on this work is in the proposal.

Billy A: is there a way to address hunter awareness around zoonotic diseases, including in muskox?

Mike: there is money in the Polar proposal to support education (in partnership with the HTC) and personal protective equipment for harvesters.

Billy A.: is there any concern about gaps in data due to covid-19 restrictions?

Mike: mostly not an issue, but there could be an issue with polar bear sampling and having a missing year of data

Billy S.: this is a reminder of the importance of continued monitoring. We need to be able to detect things early.

Mike: the budget presented does not use up the full IFA research fund allocation for Yukon. Mike has been talking about potential climate change research projects with Aklavik HTC but is not ready to present a proposal yet.

Billy A.: what were harvest numbers for caribou out of Aklavik?

Mike: best guess is approximately 700-800 range.

Billy S: I would say more like 900-1000.

Lindsay: Please summarize the carryover of unspent funds:

Mike: Last year (2020-21): \$117,000; but we can spend some of that if we can do polar bear field work this spring. But there will still be more carryover. More proposals to come.

*Wildlife monitoring and Inuvialuit student internship on Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park*  
Last year the work didn't happen, but hopeful for this summer. Same project as in past.

Organization	Project	Cost (IFA \$)
Parks Canada	Assessing the effects of climate-induced variability on the behavior, distribution and demography of the Porcupine caribou herd (Year 1)	\$15,000
Parks Canada	Investigating Observed Declines in Song Bird Abundance and Species Richness within Ivvavik National Park using Autonomous Sound Recorders (Year 4)	\$15,000

CWS	Assessing the effects of climate-induced variability on the behaviour, distribution and demography of the Porcupine caribou herd (Year 1 of 5) – late-summer field program on Yukon North Slope.	\$19,000
Yukon (Parks)	Wildlife monitoring and Inuvialuit student internship on Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park	\$7,000
Yukon (Environment)	Yukon North Slope Muskox Survey and Research	\$36,000
Yukon (Environment)	Polar Bear Population Estimate	\$50,000
Yukon (Environment)	Porcupine Caribou Use of the Yukon North Slope	\$56,000
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$198,000</b>

**Motion 2020-12-03** to notionally\* support the proposals as presented. Moved by Dave Tavares, seconded by Billy Archie.

\*Council will meet with the AHTC in January to discuss these projects and finalize these recommendations.

*IRC Research:*

The IRC approach to research seems not to be informed by what is occurring on the co-management and IGC fronts. For example, this issue came up when IRC was reviewing the WCMP; they were unaware of the research that occurs on the Yukon North Slope and the processes that support that research. Lindsay intends to raise the issue at the JS board meeting next week.

Billy A: part of the issue is how large pots of funding are distributed in the North. Further, the Inuvialuit Research Council from the IFA remains unimplemented. We need to do better to work together.

Billy S.: having a research arm or centre on the Inuvialuit side of the Arctic would help with this issue.

Tyler: Yukon is now working with IRC on a genome project, mobilizing knowledge of genomics to support wildlife management and conservation in the Arctic. (this project is also outlined in the IRC research summary for 2020-21).

The Council discussed researcher/biologist capacity in Aklavik and if there is the ability to leverage any of these research proposals to increase capacity in the communities. This conversation ties in to the discussions about the IPCA-related Fund; the Foundations are interested in hearing how the fund could be used.

*Research Assistantship*

Jessica Norris is an Inuvialuit beneficiary and early career researcher who is starting her master's work in January 2021. Jessica will be supervised by Murray Humphries at McGill University doing muskox research. She will be residing in Whitehorse for the duration of her studies. Jessica provided a project proposal and 'about me' document which are in the meeting folder. Kait prepared a briefing note on how the Council could support Jessica's work. Jessica is really keen to work with Aklavik, and reach out to the community as soon as possible, in a covid-safe way. One benefit for the Council and Aklavik is that if we can provide extra support to Jessica, she can

model through her work how to do community-driven research right - how much funding is required, how many meetings, etc. Staff are proposing the Council could commit \$15,000 this fiscal (January until March 31, 2021) which would help cover Jessica starting to engage the community.

**Motion 2020-12-04** to support Jessica Norris to March 31, 2021 with a Research Assistantship worth \$15,000. Moved by Matt Clarke, seconded by Billy Archie.  
Meeting adjourned at 3:59pm.

No motion to adjourn.