**WMAC NS Winter Meeting**

**Whitehorse/Aklavik**

Monday November 29, 2021

Attendees: **Jennifer Smith** (Chair), **Billy Storr** (IGC member), **Michelle Gruben** (IGC alternate member), **Tyler Kuhn** (YG member), **Marc Cattet** (YG alternate member), **Mike Suitor** (North Slope Biologist), **Colleen Arnison** (Canada member), **Kaitlin Wilson** (Staff), **Allison Thompson** (Staff)

Meeting was called to order at 9:55am.

Jen introduced our new alternate member for Yukon Government, Marc Cattet. The Council did a roundtable of introductions. Jen noted that we are still awaiting a new IGC appointment, but Evelyn has been reappointed as an IGC alternate member.

1. **Agenda**

**Motion 2021-12-01** to approve the agenda as presented. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Colleen Arnison.

1. **Minutes**

Jen would like to make a few adjustments to the section on the Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik agreement and Plan signing.

**Motion 2021-12-02** to approve the September minutes once amended. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Colleen Arnison

1. **Action items**

Kaitlin walked the Council through the action items.

*2018-08-01 Staff will draft a contract for some legal research on jurisdiction and how UFA and IFA line up on regulations (bylaws) and authorities (IGC vs YFWMB) under the Yukon Wildlife Act*

* This action is tied to a newer action from 2021 (2021-09-01). Lindsay Staples was working with John Donihee on developing a scope of work as of fall 2021. This item will be revisited during Lindsay’s presentation to the Council.

*202-03-04 Staff to liaise with the JS about the existing policy on half vs full day payments and the need to account for the time IGC representatives spend working on Council business.*

* Retired; the Council has adopted IGC’s policy in practice - it will be considered in the (draft) Operating Procedures.

*2021-09-02 Staff to facilitate a comparison of the old EISC guidelines with the new EISC guidelines. Specifically, look at the screening process they have outlined for the Yukon North Slope and if they align with WMAC NS’ understanding of the IFA.*

* This action item will be discussed with WMAC NWT (briefing note included in meeting package). WMAC NS has been sending a letter to EISC notifying them of Council-approved, IFA-funded projects. Parks Canada and YG have not been putting projects through pre-screening. External researchers have been submitting to pre-screening. Mike noted that this process is encumbering, time consuming, and redundant. For now, WMAC NS will proceed as in the past and see what comes up at the joint meeting.

*2021-09-09 Mike to investigate the possibility of providing AHTC with the next season’s grizzly bear tags as early as March 1st.*

* Mike is prepared to implement this policy.

1. **Chair update**

*Staffing:*

This will be Allison’s last meeting. Allison will remain on a small contract to the end of the fiscal year to support the staffing transition. The hiring process will have to shift our focus and will affect what tasks staff are able to take on. Our HR consultant has been supporting the development of a job posting and updated descriptions. We are aiming to get the posting out very soon. Council members have already put their names forward for the hiring committee. We likely won’t have new staff in place until February 2022, at the earliest.

*WCMP:*

The Plan continues to move through approval processes. The Yukon 30-day government-to-government engagement process will conclude on December 3rd. YG will have to take the Plan back through Cabinet for a final approval - Feb/March is likely for sign off. YG is also considering merging processes for Plan signing and Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik signing. Also included in this package would be a bilateral funding agreement with Canada to implement this work. Canada wants to sign last. IRC is near signing, but would like to have the bridge funding for Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik from Canada in place at the same time.

Gwich’in Tribal Council has responded recently to WMAC NS, indicating that they have no further concerns about the contents of the Plan.

The Chair has had positive conversations with YG representatives to advance the Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik agreement. Jen and Lindsay were able to travel to Aklavik to meet with community reps to finesse the program component of the agreement. There is also a negotiation meeting planned for January 5-7, 2022. Lindsay will provide further information on Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik in his update on Tuesday.

Jen noted that WMAC NS wrote to Aklavik HTC, CC and Elders committee requesting that the community representatives for Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik remain the same moving forward. This request was approved.

*JS Board:*

The organizational structure of the JS is being revised and new staff positions have been proposed (including a biologist for the IGC and social scientist for WMAC NWT). These positions are largely funded by surplus. There are a number of new Board chairs, too. The 42 Directors meeting for HTCs has been shifted to February 2022.

1. **North Slope Migratory Caribou Biologist Update**

Mike provided a presentation to the Council.

*Caribou:* The PCH had good calving and early calf survival this year. They traveled to the YNS via the coastal plain (different from usual route further to the south). This year, the herd started migrating back west a few weeks earlier than usual. Many caribou migrated west via the coastal plain, which is also unusual. The camera collar program continues - the next step is to classify activities. Based on the collars, it appears the entire herd tried to cross the Dalton highway (and pipeline that runs adjacent to it) but were unable to.

*Muskox:* Jessica Norris (Inuvialuit Master’s student) joined the muskox composition survey. The field crew observed poor recruitment this year. The YG crew observed signs of the orf virus on some muskox, from Shingle Point westward. None observed in the Richardson Mountains.

Can fish have orf? Saw char this summer with, white crusties around its eyes, in the Babbage River (sample was taken and shared with DFO). No. Orf is specific to the sheep and goat family, including muskox.

Laurence completed her Master’s looking at muskox-caribou interactions. She found that muskox and caribou, while inhabiting similar landscapes, are using the habitats differently and not competing. Laurence also investigated muskox impacts to vegetation on the YNS; she did not find long-term impacts to habitats due to muskox grazing.

Camera collars are part of the plan for this coming year for caribou. We will be focusing on the quality of the vegetation and how that relates to where caribou move. This supports some of the questions that the community of Aklavik has posed in recent years.

*Canadian Mountain Network (CMN) Project - Ecological Livelihoods and Porcupine Caribou Herd Summer Range:*

The Indigenous Knowledge Coordinator position is partially funded by the CMN funding (external funding may come through other channels).

Thematic group descriptions have been drafted for the project. Participation will be supported with honoraria.

**Action Item 2021-12-01**: Mike to circulate ecological livelihoods project thematic group descriptions for Council consideration and nominations.

Mike and the project team are looking for other sources of funding (like CINUK) to fill in funding gaps. The CINUK proposal was submitted, with WMAC NS feedback incorporated and WMAC NS as a partner.

1. **IFA Research Proposals**

Kait provided an overview of the IFA research project proposals that have been submitted thus far. WMAC NS will meet with Aklavik HTC in the new year to discuss HTC feedback on the proposals.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Organization** | **Project** | **IFA Research Funds** | **Total Project Cost** | **WMAC Recommendation** |
| Yukon Government (Parks) | Wildlife monitoring and Inuvialuit student internship on Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park  |  $ 7,000.00  |  $ 14,000.00  | Recommend to proceed |
| Canada (Parks Canada) | Dall's Sheep summer survey in INP |  $ 15,000.00  |  $ 56,000.00  | Recommend to proceed |
| Canada (Parks Canada) | Porcupine caribou vegetation sampling along the North Slope (multi year + partnered) |  $ 15,000.00  |  $ 50,250.00  | Recommend to proceed |
| Canada (CWS) | Species at Risk Monitoring: North Slope birds |  $ 19,000.00  |  $ 69,438.00  | Conditionally recommend to proceed (pending further discussion of methods in March 2022) |
| Yukon Government (F&W) | Porcupine Caribou Use of the Yukon North Slope |  $ 82,600.00  |  Many money  | Recommend to proceed |
| Yukon Government (F&W) | Northern Richardson Mountain Sheep Survey |  NA  |  $ 70,000.00  | No IFA ask, internal request to YG |
| Yukon Government (F&W) | Richardson Mountain moose survey |  $ 35,000.00  |  $ 77,000.00  | Recommend to proceed |
| Yukon Government (F&W) | Polar Bear Population Estimate |  $ 50,000.00  |  $ 130,000.00  | Recommend to proceed |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **TOTAL COST** |  **$ 223,600.00**  |  **$ 466,688.00**  |  |

*Polar bear population estimate (YG):* YG ask is $50,000 (heli time, fuel) for March 2023 field work. Annually, YG is spending close to $130,000 per year on polar bear field work (field work occurred in 2019, 2021 and is planned for 2022). We are hoping to bring a community member into the field for March 2022, covid dependent. March 2023 could be the last field season.

*Richardson Mountain Moose Survey (YG):* the YG ask is $18,000 for a March 2023 survey. It will be important to communicate with harvesters prior to the survey to ensure there is no interference with harvesting activities.

*North Richardson Mountain Sheep Survey (YG):* This survey has been done every three to five years since the 80s. There is no request for IFA dollars at this time, but there is a request for internal YG dollars. Mike wanted to give Council an update as this work has been funded through IFA dollars in the past. June/July 2022 will be five years since the last survey (June/July 2022). This is in synchrony with the sheep work in Ivvavik National Park. The work is in line with the draft plan for sheep (even though this plan has never been finalized).

*Porcupine Caribou Use of the Yukon North Slope (YG):* Asking a bit more this year ($82,600). This project has many partners. This is a multi-year proposal with different stages for each year and is linked to Parks Canada’s caribou proposal and in collaboration with USGS.

Are you increasing the total number of collars or simply replacing those that are already out? Guidance from PCMB is to maintain a certain sample size (90-100 females and 20-25 males), as per the Harvest Management Plan. We are maintaining that sample size with this purchase.

*Wildlife monitoring and Inuvialuit Student Internship on Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park (Yukon Parks)*: Part of this work is to integrate the YG Parks monitoring with the work being done in Ivvavik. The other half is bringing an Inuvialuit student into the field. Colleen noted that it would be good to discuss this work with Cameron before implementing it. Parks Canada will also have Inuvialuit field staff - there could be some overlap here.

*Porcupine Caribou Vegetation Sampling Along the YNS (multiyear & partnered) (Parks Canada):* This project is in partnership with YG and USGS; the methodology is the same as what Mike presented.

*Dall’s Sheep Summer Survey in INP (Parks Canada):* The last time this survey was completed was five years ago. At that time, more sheep than expected were surveyed. There is a lot of heli-based field work planned for the coming field season, so Parks is looking to overlap work, including working with Trevor Lantz and the Canadian Mountain Network project.

*Species at Risk Monitoring - North Slope Birds (CWS):* Presented during the CWS update on Tuesday.

It was noted that the IFA project proposals are highly collaborative and reflect conversations and priorities that have been had at the WMAC NS table and with partners (e.g. PCMB) over the years.

No comments from Council members on the project proposals (with the exception of the CWS one which hasn’t been presented). Mike (and others) will stay in touch with the HTC to give them a heads up about survey timing. The HTC can notify members.

**Motion 2021-12-03** to recommend the Yukon Government wildlife research proposals as presented for 2022-2023 (*Polar bear population estimate ($50,000), Richardson Mountain Moose Survey ($35,000), North Richardson Mountain Sheep Survey ($18,000), Porcupine Caribou Use of the Yukon North Slope ($82,600), Wildlife monitoring and Inuvialuit Student Internship on Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park ($7,000)*), subject to AHTC presentation and support. Moved by Billy Storr, seconded by Colleen Arnison.

**Motion 2021-12-04** to recommend the Parks Canada wildlife research proposals as present for 2022-23 (*Porcupine Caribou Vegetation Sampling Along the YNS (multiyear & partnered) ($15,000), Dall’s Sheep Summer Survey in INP ($15,000)*), subject to AHTC presentation and support. Moved by Michelle Gruben, seconded by Tyler Kuhn.

**Motion 2021-12-05** to notionally recommend the CWS wildlife research proposal (*Species at Risk Monitoring: North Slope Birds ($19,000))*, conditional on Craig presenting further details of the proposed project. Moved by Billy Storr, seconded by Tyler Kuhn.

**Action Item 2021-12-02** WMAC NS to schedule meeting with the HTC to present IFA research proposals.

**Action Item 2021-12-03** staff to send a letter to EISC on the recommended IFA projects, once WMAC has met with the AHTC

1. **Discussion Items**

*Society Status for WMAC (NS)*

Kait presented a briefing note on the possibility of WMAC NS pursuing society status (briefing note and legal memo included in meeting package). Staff have been working with a Whitehorse-based lawyer to answer questions about society status and protection against liability (signing contracts, travel, etc.). The legal memo explained that WMAC NS holds legal status as an administrative body, flowing from the IFA. The lawyer noted that there is limited legal liability currently. The small risk that does exist could be mitigated with members signing an indemnification agreement upon joining the Council. The lawyer further recommended that incorporating as a society could increase liability. Council was comfortable with the legal advice provided.

**Action item 2021-12-04** Based on the legal advice received on society status options, staff will request draft language for an indemnification agreement and circulate it.

1. **Member Updates**

*Michelle (IGC):* there was a late freeze up so people were still harvesting beaver in early October (150 tags). People are concerned about caribou and whether or not they will come back near Aklavik this year. People are starting their traplines. The activities on the Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik agreement and program are very exciting.

*Billy (IGC):* People are really aware of climate change these days. Freeze-up was really late which made fishing under the ice really difficult or impossible. Billy has been spending a lot of this time focusing on Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik, which is exciting.

Has the country food program to harvest Richardson Mountains muskox received a lot of uptake so far? One person harvested muskox but not as part of this program. Not sure about uptake for the country food program. It’s a lot of work to harvest a muskox compared to the funding offered.

Is the beaver program the same as the previous GNWT program? Yes. The previous samples are also still sitting in the freezer, unprocessed. For this current program, harvesters just need to show a photo. There should be more funding before the end of the fiscal year. About half of the 150 tags have already been used.

People have been concerned about the quality of the liver and eggs for loche in the Babbage River. Could this be connected to other diseases?

Jen provided some more information about the Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik negotiations. YG is now holding weekly meetings with Canada to advance discussions on their end. There is a lot of momentum right now, with this project and the CMN work.

Meeting adjourned at 3:53pm.

Tuesday November 30, 2021

Attendees: **Jennifer Smith** (Chair), **Billy Storr** (IGC member), **Michelle Gruben** (IGC alternate member), **Tyler Kuhn** (YG member), **Marc Cattet** (YG alternate member), **Mike Suitor** (North Slope Biologist), **Colleen Arnison** (Canada member), **Kaitlin Wilson** (Staff), **Allison Thompson** (Staff)

Meeting called to order at 9:02am.

**Member updates (continued)**

*Tyler (Yukon Government):*

* WCMP government to government consultation ends Dec 3rd.
* Yukon Wetlands policy is in an advanced draft form and YG has received comments from the Council. These were joint comments from IGC and WMAC NS.
* Marc Cattet is the new Yukon-appointed WMAC NS alternate member.
* There are new Off Road Vehicles (ORVs) regulations in effect - WMAC might be interested in understanding where ORVs can be restricted. One of these areas is the alpine. Michelle noted that many folks do use ATVs on the North Slope and there is some concern about the lasting effects. EMR can do a presentation if there is interest.
* There is an off-shore oil agreement in the works between Canada, Yukon, IRC, and GNWT.
* Species at Risk - No critical habitat identified for bank swallow on the YNS
* Tom Jung and Mike Suitor are involved in an international arctic beavers working group

*Craig (CWS):* Craig provided a summary of Species at Risk Act update. There is also a summary table included in the meeting package. Barren-ground caribou - meeting with the NWMB about listing is occurring soon. Wolverine Management Plan work will likely begin in 2022, led by the Northern Region - this will likely follow a similar approach as Grizzly Bear. Snowy owl will be assessed by COSEWIC.

Allison noted that for Bank Swallow there is an action to complete more research on northern distribution, which could include the YNS.

Hudsonian Godwit - there is a clustered population in the Mackenzie Delta. The research proposal put forward to Council for IFA research funding intends to look for evidence of godwit on the YNS. CWS is working on survey methods currently but these birds will be difficult to find. It may be that CWS decides prior to the field season that the survey is not feasible. Qikiqtaruk will be installing audio recording units (ARUs) in 2022, so this could help with confirming presence. CWS is working with Parks Canada, as they have ARUs in place, as well.

Billy noted that there are fewer song birds, but lots of robins in recent years. There are also lots of bumblebees in Aklavik.

Michelle is in support of getting more data about the godwit.

Craig will bring back more details about the methods at the March meeting.

**Action item 2021-12-05** Craig will present more details about the proposed CWS *Species At Risk Monitoring: North Slope Birds* research project in March 2022.

*Colleen (Parks Canada):*

* Parks is in a research planning phase, with lots of funding requests in place (Supplemental funding for Porcupine Caribou work, Dolly Varden mark-recapture project, cultural heritage project at Clarence Lagoon) through Polar Continental Shelf funding.
* Working closely with IRC to hire beneficiaries with Parks Canada - how can this be streamlined? What are barriers to applying for Parks jobs? Jen noted that WMAC NS would be glad to receive any lessons learned.
* Craig was able to connect CWS and Parks staff working on ARUs to have a broader discussion about methods.

1. **Staff Updates**

*Kait - Porcupine Caribou/Harvest Study (briefing note in meeting folder)*

Under the Porcupine Caribou Harvest Management Plan Implementation Plan (PCHMP-IP), WMAC NS supports the “collection of rigorous and verifiable [Inuvialuit] harvest information” for the Porcupine Caribou Herd (PCH). Harvest monitoring is also aligned with WMAC NS’ IFA mandate. There have been two iterations of the Inuvialuit Harvest Study (IHS) and a third version is being considered (the study is currently paused). In the meantime, WMAC NS has drafted methods for gathering PCH harvest information through focus groups; this project is ready to be deployed (dependent on IGC and AHTC support). This is a complex and sensitive situation, as WMAC NS does not have direct responsibility to report harvest data to PCMB (the responsibility lies with IGC).

A report on the Inuvialuit Harvest Study was released in 2020. This report contains a number of recommendations for improving the Inuvialuit Harvest Study (revisit objectives; improve understanding of community and organization needs; clarify objectives and guidelines; regularly review the program). The report was completed by Catherine Pinard and part of her work involved meeting with Aklavik. Catherine also completed an internal report for WMAC NS in 2017 on the IHS which concluded that the IHS was not collecting harvest data in a way that satisfied the PCHMP-IP reporting requirements.

Michelle noted that the recent iteration of the IHS had some inconsistencies in reporting of harvest numbers. The Aklavik HTC has discussed this matter and are concerned. More people have been out on the land during covid-19, but harvest data are not being reported.

Billy noted that, as the PCMB representative for IGC, it’s his responsibility to convey the Inuvialuit harvest data to PCMB. Right now, Inuvialuit are the only group not reporting harvest data to PCMB. This is a concern.

According to Gilly McNaughton (the Traditional Knowledge Coordinator at the Joint Secretariat), she’s working with HTCs to collect harvest data for Porcupine Caribou from April 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022; Gilly will then aim to prepare harvest data for the 2022 PCMB meeting. The method that AHTC will use to gather data is to go through the HTC membership list and prioritize active PCH harvesters for interviews (green for active harvesters, yellow for casual harvesters, etc.). Based on who was interviewed, the AHTC can then provide an estimate of the total harvest. This information will go to Gilly at the JS and then hopefully Mike Suitor and Marsha Branigan will be looped in to assist with verifying the estimate.

Billy noted that with the upcoming hire in Aklavik supervised by WMAC NS, this person could potentially contribute to collecting PCH harvest data.

WMAC NS’ focus group methods aim to address concerns about harvester fatigue and obtain a reliable harvest estimate. This method emphasizes a communal approach to estimating harvest. If WMAC NS wants to proceed with this method, HTC and IGC support are needed.

Billy noted that a focus group may not capture the total caribou harvest. It was noted that the focus group would target the top 2-5 harvesters in the community who hopefully would be aware of the total caribou harvest, collectively. Billy noted that when caribou are close to town, folks come in from different communities and we are not always aware of how many caribou were taken.

The focus group is a pilot study so it would be used to test the method and ideally compare with the IHS (or Joint Secretariat harvest data collection) methods.

Billy noted that we want to get away from using the term ‘superharvester’.

Michelle noted that when we collect harvest data, the harvesters are sharing their information. They are provided an incentive for participating, such as a gas card, which helps them continue to harvest.

How to proceed? WMAC NS has a responsibility to support good harvest data collection for PCH. There’s a broader consideration of harvest data needed for WMAC NS to make good decisions. At this time the focus is on the PCH (for quota species we receive harvest data from GNWT through the tag system, e.g. grizzly bear).

At this time, the JS does not have a harvest study coordinator in place (the hiring process was paused).

Craig asked if there is any opportunity to ‘gamify’ harvest reporting - shift it online and provide rewards for harvest reporting. This could help us go beyond the basic ‘need to know’ - we could understand who is trying out harvesting, who went out and didn’t get anything, we could collect environmental observations.

Is there a timeline for implementing the new IHS (v3)? Embarking on a similar project, with different methods, at the same time as IHS v3 is launched, could create some confusion.

The JS is looking for feedback on the 2020 IHS report. WMAC NS could provide feedback and, in the meantime, run the focus group.

With the focus group, is there a risk of creating tension in the community by having a small group of people reporting on the harvest of others? How would that be managed? WMAC NS have discussed this previously – it is a potential issue, which is why a meeting with the AHTC needs to be the next step, if we are to pursue this approach.

Catherine Pinard is currently working on a project with Yukon University to look globally at how agencies manage wildlife populations in the absence of complete harvest data - e.g. can we incentivize harvest data reporting? Can we manage without complete data?

Kait’s thoughts on the focus group: it’s an interesting way to explore community decision-making around harvest. She’s still feeling out the relationship between this proposal and the larger harvest study. These two pieces could end up meeting very different purposes, with both being useful and sustainable long-term.

The harvest study program is in a state of uncertainty with long-term funding and objectives. We want to ensure we maintain good relationships.

Next Steps on the focus groups / IHS conversation:

* IHS review:
	+ Flag with WMAC NWT for a joint conversation
	+ Billy supports requesting an objective-setting workshop for the IHS
	+ The ideas discussed here can be discussed with AHTC (and maybe JD Storr and Dennis Arey) with the idea to inform the IHS review
	+ Billy will request that JD Storr bring this topic up to IGC; Billy and Jen can include this as a follow-up item in their IGC update
* Focus groups:
	+ Council supports following up with the Yukon U group on their harvest work, holding exploratory discussions (e.g. special meeting with Aklavik HTC), but not planning to actually implement the focus groups at this time.

**Action item 2021-12-06** Send a letter to WMAC NWT outlining the WMAC NS approach to IHS engagement and suggest discussing at a joint meeting.

**Action item 2021-12-07** Staff to proceed with exploratory discussion regarding the focus group methods (Yukon University and AHTC).

*Allison - Polar Bear Updates (Briefing Note in Meeting Folder)*

* The Inuvialuit-Iñupiat joint commission met in August 2021 - GNWT brought up the potential for collaring some bears to improve study results, but this was not supported by the I-I group.
* PBTC - just had their fall teleconference, defence of life and property (DLP) kills in the eastern arctic is a big topic of conversation and human-wildlife conflict will be central at the 2022 meeting
* PBAC - relationship with PBTC has been a topic of discussion; Canada is preparing for the 2022 CITES meeting, there is potential that a proposal could be put forward to uplist polar bears (past proposals have not succeeded due to Inuit lobbying), Canada is working on a draft NDF report and a draft report on the sale and trade of hides; it would be wise for Council to consider how WMAC NS will engage in the CITES process (IGC will be discussing the Inuvialuit approach at their December meeting and will give the WMACs guidance)
* Range States - proposal to amend the 1973 range states agreement; since the signing, rights of Inuit have been recognized to a greater extent, the proposal is to better acknowledge the role of Inuit in the work of Range States and elevate the profile of Indigenous knowledge in Range States work
* Indigenous knowledge in Integrated Population Models Project:
	+ Report received from modellers on the methods and IK literature review; interview protocol in the spring
	+ The workshop has been postponed to September 2022 in order to do a thorough review of the methods and to buffer covid issues; the modeller (Eric) is okay with this adjusted timeline
	+ As some the workshop funding was tied to the current fiscal year, there is a deficit of about $80k - there is a request in to the JS for some supplemental funding; request to WMAC NS to provide an additional $15k-$20k

**Action Item 2021-12-08** Marc will review the IK report by mid-January; staff will reach out to Aimee Schmidt to gauge interest in reviewing.

*Companion Reports*

These are complete now and are ready to be launched once the WCMP is released.

*Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy*

Kait has reviewed Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami’s Food Security Strategy and highlighted areas where the strategy aligns with the WCMP and WMAC NS’ mandate, generally. Having this review paper will help us consider the Strategy, and national Inuit guidance for food security, while conducting other WMAC NS works.

1. **Presentation**

*Lindsay Staples - Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik Agreement Update*

* The Agreement has been drafted and is going through a final revision before being circulated to the Parties (goal: Mid-December)
* A couple key sections in the agreement have posed challenges:
	+ What does Establishment mean? For the Yukon, concern has been expressed over the optics of establishing a new area, as opposed to implementing an existing arrangement from the IFA. It is true that we’re implementing an existing IFA arrangement, but for donors, we need to prove the novelty of this arrangement (why does it warrant new funds)? The key selling point for the trust fund is legal security for the conservation of the area and that qualifies Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik for designation as ‘protected’ lands as under the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity.
	+ The Parties need to find middle ground on in this area
	+ The Agreement speaks to financial commitments by the various Parties to support conservation programming. To date, Yukon has not wanted to take on the legal burden associated with Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik and its funding. We’re working with Yukon to craft the agreement in a way that is acceptable to Yukon.
* The financial sections are being worked on currently: 1) total amount of funds; 2) the trust structure for holding those funds. A trust lawyer (Michael Flatters) is working on these sections right now, to ensure that committed funds will be reserved exclusively for Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik. He will look at IRC’s trust structure and also provide wording for John Donihee to include in the draft agreement.
* WMAC NS received $106,000 in additional funding from the JS to supplement the Nature Fund project; this will cover additional legal work and meeting costs.
* Jen and Lindsay will meet with the Deputy Minister of Environment (Manon Moreau) on Dec 6th.
* Package for cabinet in early 2022: WCMP, Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik Establishment Agreement, bi-lateral funding agreement between Yukon and Canada, Compiled Companion Reports, and a one-page Declaration that Yukon can sign and that identifies the land as qualifying for Canada’s target of 17% of lands as Protected Areas
* The bi-lateral agreement will fall under Canada’s *Wildlife Act -* Yukon contributes the land, Canada contributes funding
* The programming and infrastructure for implementation of the Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik Agreement is being worked on actively and costed out.
* Lindsay is looking to meet with the Foundations in mid-December, to gather feedback that can be conveyed at the Jan 5-7, 2022 Meeting of the Parties.
* Lindsay wants to hold a WMAC NS teleconference in mid-December to review the draft Agreement before it is provided to the Parties
* Tiered approach to trust management (Community organizations - Councils (WMAC NS, IGC, others?) - Trustees)
* Lindsay has been thinking about the role of WMAC NS as we move into implementation; further discussion to be had.

When does the Trust money start to be applied? Donor money can be parked in the Trust immediately, but Canada’s funding would likely arrive in a few years.

**Action Item 2021-12-09** Lindsay to present at a WMAC NS teleconference in mid-December to review the draft Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik Agreement before it is provided to the Parties.

*Role of YFWMB and public consultation on proposed regulations*

Lindsay will work with John Donihee to create a scope of work. John wrote a piece in 2017 on the status of HTC bylaws. There is no current legal standing for a YG Minister to accept a TAH.

How to enforce HTC bylaws in a small community, without creating conflict or isolating people? This is where YG enforcement can come into play.

Marc noted that YG is assessing how it approaches regulation changes, as the current way it is done is not actually in line with the UFA. As such, it would be a good time to include this discussion of the IFA and regulation changes. Marc will circulate the relevant legal opinion.

Tyler suggested having multiple parties requisition the legal opinion together. Jen noted that the Council does bring parties together.

**Action Item 2021-12-10** Mike and Lindsay will collaborate on the scope of work for John Donihee, as Mike and Kirby Meister have done some thinking about giving force to regulations.

**Action Item 2021-12-11** Lindsay will circulate John Donihee’s 2017 legal work on the status of HTC bylaws in Yukon.

*Jessica Norris - Modelling Environmental Drivers of the YNS Muskox Population*

* Jessica has been completing her coursework with McGill
* She has been successful in receiving funding and awards
* Currently pulling together environmental data
* Potentially using a population modelling program that is already used in Greenland
* Planning to speak with HTC in January

Billy extended a welcome to Jessica to visit and share her project with the HTC and community.

1. **Finances**

Allison provided an overview of the IP budget. We are about half way through the year and just under 50% spent. We can also draw from this budget to provide honoraria for Inuvialuit participation in the upcoming hiring processes (Program Manager and Aklavik term hire).

**Action Item 2021-12-12** Kait to create a mini-budget for staffing costs in Aklavik (e.g. office costs and training), to be presented to Council in March.

**Action Item 2021-12-13** Allison will move the Nature Fund reserve money out of the Operational Reserve and into a line item of its own under special projects.

**Action Item 2021-12-14** Chair and staff will develop a multi-year budget for carryover.

**Action Item 2021-12-15** Staff to work with Lee to assess the relocation cost in the HR manual and provide some additional context for the $8000 cap.

Polar bear funding ask:

1. Ties into management via better population estimate
2. Ties into WCMP priorities and could be extrapolated beyond polar bear
3. Better estimate can help with things like CITES uplisting proposals
4. Can build community support and participation in abundance estimates

Parks Canada funding, tied to this fiscal, can be used for task 4 of the project.

Mike is in support of this project as it brings different knowledge types together and it becomes a model for doing it better for future work.

Colleen acknowledged that this really is the best time to do this work, as the next time polar bear population modelling is completed will be a decade out.

IFA research is science-focused and there is no similar IK funding, which is why it is important to consider it under the Council budget.

**Motion 2021-12-06** to accept the following amendments to the 2021-22 WMAC NS core budget:

* commit $25k under ‘polar bear IK research’ for the IK in IPMs workshop, to be spent in the new fiscal year, with an additional conditional contribution of $35,000 if additional funds are not secured
* approve $3,000 for staff recruiting and $8,000 for staff relocation
* increase the Chair transition/EYNS support contract by $15,000
* increase ‘plan communications’ budget to $7,500
* Support a contract for Allison to March 31, 2022 in the amount of $7,000
* Commit $10k to support the completion of the ISR Grizzly Bear Management Plan

Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Michelle Gruben

**Motion 2021-12-07** to adjourn. Moved by Colleen Arnison, seconded by Billy Storr.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45pm.

Wednesday December 1, 2021

Attendees: **Jennifer Smith** (Chair), **Billy Storr** (IGC member), **Michelle Gruben** (IGC alternate member), **Tyler Kuhn** (YG member), **Marc Cattet** (YG alternate member), **Mike Suitor** (North Slope Biologist), **Colleen Arnison** (Canada member), **Kaitlin Wilson** (Staff), **Allison Thompson** (Staff)

Meeting called to order at 10:34am.

**14. Review Agenda for the day**

Council will review the Nature Fund budget first, then we will discuss upcoming meetings, and aim to discuss the CINUK/CMN projects and thematic groups. The joint meeting is after lunch.

**15. Finance Update - NatureFund Budget**

Allison updated the Council on the state of the budget, what needs to be spent and what can be carried into the next fiscal year. Because legal costs are going to be more expensive, some funds have been shifted from the layout and printing line item and the community tour. WMAC will have to find these funds elsewhere (from our core budget or elsewhere).

Jen noted that it is important to cover costs for Inuvialuit participants who aren’t otherwise compensated for their time. That said, we also recognize that the RPs for the AHTC and the ACC have spent a lot of their time supporting this work. We are considering a small contribution to their budgets for these efforts. Colleen and Billy are in support of this approach.

**Action Item 2021-12-16** staff will rework the Nature Fund budget to accommodate support for the HTC and ACC contribution.

**13. Correspondences**

*Letter confirming meeting with Manon Moreau* - discussed during Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik update

*Letter from Diane Gunter* - WMAC NS had requested delaying the YNS conference until we can hold the conference in person; YG will pass this request on to Canada.

*PCH Local Knowledge from Aklavik -* Council has received two knowledge summaries from WMAC NWT resulting from their community tour. These bring together recent observations on the PCH that could be useful for herd management, PCMB, Mike Suitor, the IHS discussion, etc.

**Action Item 2021-12-17** Consider formalizing the PCH local knowledge gathering/sharing process with WMAC NWT, including the possibility of WMAC NS staff participating in the Aklavik community tour meeting.

*WMAC NS letter on Quota rollover system to WMAC NWT -* no response; we will follow up

*Co-management & IGC submission to new ANWR scoping process -* submitted. No updates on the situation right now; the bill passed the house and is now in the senate under debate.

*YG wetlands policy & WMAC NS feedback -* The policy applies on the YNS but functionally, we have Qikiqtaruk, Ivvavik and the Withdrawal Order which applies conservation across the Board. The chances of implementing the Policy on the YNS are therefore slim. We requested that the policy acknowledge the IFA and highlighted some of WMAC NS’ recent work bridging IK and science (e.g. with land classifications).

**17. Upcoming meetings**

*December 6-10, 2021 - ArcticNet*

*December 17, 2021 @ 11am (or 2pm or 3:30pm) - WMAC NS teleconference*

* Discuss draft Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik Agreement

*January 5-7, 2022 - Meeting of the Parties, Whitehorse*

* Discuss draft Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik Agreement & Trust Agreement
* Not full Council; representatives from the Parties, including Inuvialuit Representatives

*January, 2022 (Date TBD) - Joint WMAC NS and AHTC*

* Discuss proposed IFA Research Projects for 2022-23

*February, 2022 (Date TBD) - Inuvialuit Harvest Study workshop with IGC, AHTC, WMAC NS*

* Discuss desired objectives for IHS

*February, 2022 (Date TBD) - PCH focus group preliminary meeting with AHTC*

* Preliminary discussion with HTC about the proposed focus group for PCH harvest data

*February, 2022 - IGC & 42 HTC Directors Meeting*

*March 22-24, 2022 - WMAC NS March Meeting, Whitehorse*

*July, 2022 - WMAC NS Summer Meeting*

* On the land meeting in Sheep Creek is proposed
* Parks Canada is either flying in on the 10th or 16th of July 2022 - they will know within 2 months and communicate to WMAC NS staff
* There will be a helicopter on the ground July 12th-18th, and then the helicopter gets moved to Qikiqtaruk July 18 or 19 - possibility for a day trip to Qikiqtaruk
* Explore possibility to bring Megan Lennie to the meeting to contribute to her video work

*Sept 19-21, 2022 - WMAC NS Fall Meeting, Whitehorse*

**Action item 2021-12-18** staff follow up with Colleen about dates for a trip to Ivvavik, and maybe Qikiqtaruk as well, in July 2022.

**Extra Agenda Item: Discussion with Mike Suitor on the CINUK and CMN projects:**

* These projects are related through the theme of Porcupine Caribou Herd summer use, change, and how these relate to livelihoods
* Goals:
	+ Annual gathering (on the land) and phone call/zoom check-in(s) through the year
		- The researchers and communities come together to discuss the project
	+ Thematic groups: wildlife, IK, vegetation
		- Want to have inclusion from: communities, academia, government, co-management/IGC on each group
		- Want to keep the groups bounded to 5-6 each
		- Mike will join the wildlife thematic group :)
		- IK thematic group will include folks focused on completing the IK component of this project
		- “Job descriptions” will be shared with the HTCs for participation in the thematic groups; honoraria will be provided for participation
		- Will there be a *Livelihoods* working group? How does that fit in? It will be a more holistic approach, and IK is also holistically part of all the three thematic groups
		- We need to spend more time thinking about the livelihoods piece - this will likely be part of the initial meetings and gatherings. This piece is largely driven by community engagement and input.
		- Timing of the thematic groups? As soon as possible. There is a job description for the IK coordinator being developed; we hope to recruit in February
* CINUK - Shifting Seasons
	+ In September, Council had a presentation from Isla Meyers-Smith. WMAC NS submitted substantial comments on the CINUK proposal. The proposal was submitted in November with the Council as a partner
	+ This project was geared toward filling the gap left in funding we didn’t receive from CMN
* These projects are tied to the Aklavik position that the JS has provided funding for. That person will be the eyes and the ears on the ground in Aklavik for the WCMP and also stay informed on the CMN and CINUK projects, updating HTC and WMAC NS. The CINUK funding helps get people on the ground and CMN helps coordinate and facilitate.
* IK coordinator: we are hoping that this person is already community-based, on the ground in the Mackenzie Delta.
* The Council has funding secured for one year of a staff member in Aklavik; the Council could consider supplementing this funding out of its surplus budget.

**Action item 2021-12-19** Kait and Mike to collaboratively plan for the WMAC NS Aklavik position and CMN IK coordinator.

**Motion 2021-12-08** to adjourn the meeting. Moved Billy Storr, Seconded by Tyler Kuhn.

Meeting adjourned at 12:07pm.