



Kaniqliniq Hunters and Trappers Organization

Written Submission

Polar Bear Management Plan

1. Introduction

The Kangiqliniq Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO) is a Designated Inuit Organization created for the community of Rankin Inlet under article 5.7 of the Nunavut Agreement. The HTO has a broad mandate to manage Inuit harvesting practices in the Rankin Inlet area while promoting conservation and safety of hunters.

The community of Rankin Inlet was established around the Rankin Inlet Nickel Mine which was operational from 1957 to 1962. Families from around the Kivalliq came to work at the mine. Collectively, current members of the KHTO have come from communities throughout the Kivalliq region as many have come to work for the prospective Meliadine Mine which is located approximately 30 km west north west of the community. Hunters in Rankin Inlet make up the membership of the HTO. Members harvest polar bears specifically from the Western Hudson Bay (WH) sub-population which is what our recommendations are based on.

2. Comments and Recommendations

2.1 Manage Western Hudson Bay Sub-Population at a Lower Abundance Level

The KHTO recommends managing the WH sub-population at a lower level than the 1400 bears identified in the MOU. Maintaining such a high population stresses the ecosystem and endangers humans due to increased bear and human interactions. Biologists who have conducted scientific surveys have never observed the bear population at a higher level, and abundance surveys were not conducted until the mid 1980's well after conservation efforts and total allowable harvests had been implemented. This gap in conservation efforts and research has created a false high for the baseline population upon which conservation efforts and management goals have been based on. The KHTO is pleased that the NWMB noted this in their recent decision to increase the TAH of the Western Hudson Bay sub-population.

2.2 Public Safety is a Top Priority

KHTO feels that the understated goal of Polar Bear management is public safety. By managing the bear population, you decrease the chance of human and bear Interactions. This decrease in interactions will go a long way to not only ensure public safety but, also, would decrease Inuit's fear of polar bears. Historically, bears were not animals to be feared but animals to be respected. Increased interactions and the habituation of WH bears have created a public fear of polar bears.

2.2.1 Increase Public Bear Safety Training

The Kangiqliniq HTO recommends the Government of Nunavut increase bear safety training in public schools. Traditionally bear safety was taught at a really young age, when hunters lived on the land. Due to the relatively recent introduction of public schools, the KHTO feels that there is a generational gap of bear safety.

2.3 Reduce Penalties for defense Kills

The KHTO supports a sex selective harvest. The KHTO understands the importance of maintaining a healthy female population. Where the KHTO is concerned is when defense kills happen. The penalties involved with defense kills of female bears exacerbates safety issues as hunters and campers fear being penalized for defending life and property from problem bears. The KHTO recommends that in the case of defense kills, that penalizations should remain at 1 credit regardless of the sex of the bear

3. Further Comments

3.1 Holistic Approach to Conservation

The KHTO believes that a more holistic approach is needed in the conservation of the WH ecosystem. While the KHTO notes that the goal of the polar bear management plan is the conservation of bears, the HTO feels not enough emphasis is placed on conservation of different animals within the WH eco-system. It is important that the entire ecosystem is healthy in order for bears to be healthy.

3.2 Concern with Manitoba Polar Bear Tourism

The KHTO is concerned with the habituation of bears in Manitoba caused by the polar bear tourism industry. The KHTO feels that the habituation of bears to humans before they have reached Nunavut communities exacerbates the amount of human and bear interactions as the bears no longer fear humans. The KHTO recommends that the Government of Nunavut's Department of Environment work with Manitoba's tourism industry and government to establish best practices pertaining to bear deterrence programs and tourism regulations.

3.3 Administration of Defense Kill Tags and Credits.

Item 4 of page 49 of the Draft Polar Bear Management Plan states, "When a beneficiary kills a bear, the tag will come from that person's home community if that community has a TAH in the population that the bear was harvested from. Otherwise the nearest community must provide a tag."

The KHTO feels that it would be more appropriate that the tag come from the home community. IQ says that WHB bears is a "sink" for Foxe Basin Bears, this has also been noted through genetic studies of polar bears. In the case of a defense kill bear of the Foxe Basin region, the KHTO feels it would be sufficient to remove the tag from the home community of the hunter.

3.4 Harvest Risk Assessment

The KHTO does not support the implementation of the Harvest Risk Assessment that NWMB recommended to the GN in the decision on the WH total allowable harvest adjustment in 2018 (and which the GN accepted). Section 1.2.2 of the NWMB governance manual states that NWMB's mission is "conserving wildlife through the application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and scientific knowledge". The KHTO feels that through implementing the harvest risk assessment the NWMB would undermine very pertinent traditional knowledge that has been shared to the NWMB. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit cannot accurately be implemented into a predictive model.