



Makivik Concluding Submission to the NMRWB Public Hearing on Beluga Management in the NMR

January 23, 2020

Makivik would like to thank the NMRWB for an opportunity to provide closing submissions to this public hearing. We would also like to thank the other parties for their submissions and comments. Makivik has listened attentively.

Nunavik Inuit are witnesses when beluga travel through Arctic and northern waters and are deeply concerned by the increasing threats caused by humans that they face such as climate change, pollution, and shipping. Given these pressures on beluga, the failings and gaps in management and enforcement must be addressed quickly. Otherwise, Nunavik Inuit fear that the situation will only worsen. The challenge the Wildlife Board faces is how to ensure that this happens, while protecting the Inuit rights to harvest and our inherent right to self-determination.

Nunavimmiut have expressed widespread dissatisfaction with current management regime. Yet, we have heard this week that there is also some hesitation about abandoning a government-imposed system that is the only type of beluga management system that many hunters have ever known. Arguing for higher Total Allowable Takes may be all that Inuit dare hope for in the face of the Minister's ultimate decision-making authority. Makivik stands by our initial submission and maintain that Inuit-led beluga management is the only path forward. Nunavik Inuit are the ones who need to be responsible for the design and implementation of the new system, and who need to be held accountable for its outcomes. As we have already stated, nobody stands to be more affected by the loss of the beluga than Inuit. To be successful, this system must be founded on Inuit approaches to wildlife management, including knowledge transfer of Inuit harvesting methods, values, and conservation.

We have heard multiple times during the hearing of the financial hardship suffered by Nunavik hunters due to the quotas being imposed. When the cod fishery collapsed in Atlantic Canada and a subsequent moratorium was imposed in 1993, there were millions of dollars given to the fishermen whose livelihoods were negatively impacted. However, since beluga quotas were imposed in 1985, no financial support has been provided to Nunavik Inuit. Nunavik Inuit are entitled to similar compensation for lost harvesting opportunities, or for having to travel great and dangerous distances in order to provide for their families. Makivik expects that the Government of Canada will, in an effort to achieve a limited form of reconciliation, provide compensation packages to Nunavik Inuit hunters who have borne the brunt of inequity.

What is absolutely clear to Makivik is that the status quo is not acceptable. We have read the submission by DFO and have heard the department's responses to questions during this hearing. We

do not believe that their proposed approaches are in the best interest of Nunavik Inuit or beluga. We view their expressed opinions, or lack thereof, on self-determination and Inuit-led management to be inconsistent with stated objectives of the federal government. Equally, the inference that any Inuit-led beluga management system would need to be validated by DFO scientists and managers is both paternal and insulting. If we are to move towards true reconciliation as a country, we need to see these words translate into real changes at the ground level that have a meaningful impact in our lives.

Makivik believes it is untenable for the department to propose different solutions to essentially the same issue with different groups of Inuit across Inuit Nunangat. Makivik wants equity for Nunavik Inuit. If a 4% annual exploitation rate is acceptable for Cumberland Sound beluga then the same standard should apply to Nunavik Inuit for Eastern Hudson Bay beluga. If a voluntary non-quota limitation is acceptable for Sanikiluaq, then it also should be acceptable for Nunavik communities. We heard from NTI that the imposition of harvest quotas is viewed as a last resort in Nunavut. In Nunavik, despite nearly 40-years of management, DFO Quebec has invested little or no effort in exploring or implementing alternatives to quotas or TATs for Nunavimmiut. This is especially concerning considering the evidence presented at the hearing; there is significant uncertainty in the data and results underpinning DFO's harvest recommendations. This uncertainty is great enough that we feel the data and the conclusions drawn from them are unreliable as a basis for these recommendations, and the imposition of harvest restrictions on Nunavik Inuit. In particular, the egregious bias in the genetic data modelling will lead to further and further decreases in the recommended EHB TAT if samples continue to be taken from the Eastern Hudson Bay Arc. Makivik strongly recommends that all samples collected in the Eastern Hudson Bay Arc be excluded from the genetic mixing model until such time as these biases can be addressed. Until then the continued imposition of a TAT is unjustifiable. We have witnessed the damage caused by these restrictions on Inuit community relations, and on the beluga hunt itself.

Makivik, however, recognizes that the shift to an Inuit-led management system will not happen overnight. Many of the parties currently do not have the capacity to transition to this approach and are understandably cautious about taking on this responsibility. With this in mind, Makivik is proposing the following:

- For a one-year period, the limited continuation of a TAT for EHB beluga.
- This TAT should be based on a much higher exploitation rate
 - For example, if we were to apply the 4.1% exploitation rate that is currently used and acceptable for Cumberland Sound, it would translate to a possibility to harvest 131 EHB per 12-month period
 - Of this 131 EHB, at least half should be allocated to the Eastern Hudson Bay Arc communities to be harvested proximate to their communities

- That a separate management regime be adopted for each area of Nunavik. For example, a separate regime for Ungava Bay, Hudson Strait, Northeastern Hudson Bay, and the Hudson Bay Arc, and that management committees, such as the one proposed by the Umiujaq LNUK, be established for each area, and fully supported by DFO.
- For Ungava Bay, we propose that there be no TAT but instead a voluntary closure that would be based on further discussions with the affected communities and the creation of community bylaws and/or hunt plans.
- For Hudson Strait, a return to the assumptions of 10% EHB in the spring and summer, and 20% in the autumn, pending a more thorough reanalysis of the genetic data, and the removal of the current biases.
- For the Mucalic and Little Whale Estuaries, re-opening of the hunt, subject to the development of hunt plans that ensure a coordination amongst communities, minimize wastage and encourage the transmission of Inuit knowledge. These plans should be developed by the regional management committees and approved by the NMRWB.
- In turn, Makivik will commit to working with and supporting the LNUKs and RNUK to build capacity and establish community hunt plans that will serve as the basis for the phasing out of the TAT. Makivik expects DFO to provide the full financial support to undertake this effort

We are entering a new phase of Inuit governance. We are mobilizing and uniting to build a brighter future for Nunavik Inuit. Self-determination is essential to this future. The Canadian courts have been reticent to articulate what is included in the constitutionally protected inherent right to self-determination. The only clarity that has emerged is that the right of governance over traditional activities of cultural importance to an Indigenous people is a constitutionally protected right. If Canada does not recognize the right of Nunavik Inuit to self-governance over the beluga hunt and support us as we work to overcome a nearly 40 year-old colonial management regime, then we are left with the impression that there is no right to self-determination in Canada and that it is, finally, “just politics”.