

**NUNAVIK BELUGA PUBLIC HEARING**

**NMRWB/EMRWB**

**January 21-23, 2020.**

**KUUJJUARAAPIK**

**Submission on behalf of the Cree Nation Government**

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**January 10, 2020**

**1. Introduction**

The following text is being submitted to the NMR WB and to the EMR WB on behalf of the Cree Nation Government in connection with the public hearings on beluga management scheduled to take place between January 21 and 23, 2020, in Kuujjuaraapik.

It is the intention that the Cree Nation Government, and the Québec Cree coastal First Nations, will also be represented at these hearings, in accordance with the provisions of the Cree-Inuit Overlap Agreement and the EMR and NMR land claim agreements.

The Cree Nation Government shares the concerns raised in the documentation circulated to support these hearings. We understand that the existing procedures for establishing and then implementing rules for setting the Total Allowable Take (TAT) are proving problematic for the Nunavik Inuit, and therefore also for the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board and for Makivik.

The objectives of the CNG in this file are to take a constructive and supporting role in discussions, and to contribute in so doing to the development of a workable and mutually acceptable approach to beluga management, and to the evaluation of different management options.

## **2. The nature of the Cree interest in beluga.**

The coastal (Québec) Cree population is not involved to the same extent as the Nunavik Inuit in harvesting marine mammals in general, including beluga. However, it has a shared history with the Nunavik Inuit in the earlier (mainly 19<sup>th</sup> century) commercial hunting, which contributed to bringing down the regional populations of beluga to the levels which are now of concern.

The Cree do have a limited Guaranteed Level of Harvest for three beluga pursuant to the provisions of Section 24 of the JBNQA, an allocation which can – following discussion - be re-allocated from time to time, if appropriate.

The Whapmagoostui and Chisasibi Cree have an interest in working with the Nunavik Inuit and with Nunavut on beluga management issues. There appears to be a smaller but distinct regional sub-population in James Bay, roughly centred in the waters to the west of Cape Hope Islands. The coastal Cree communities do have an interest in conservation measures -and the acquisition of relevant ecological/biological information on this sub-population.

## **3. Awareness of Inuit concerns.**

The Cree of Eeyou Istchee, like the Nunavik Inuit, are parties to the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee (HFTCC), which was involved in beluga management decisions from the mid-1980's until the Inuit offshore land claim settlement took effect in 2007. Since then the Cree Nation Government has a shared interest with Makivik in the coordinated implementation of their respective offshore land claim agreements, with particular reference the area of over lap between these two settlements –

between the La Grand estuary in the South and the Naskapoka Islands in the North. Collaboration between the Cree and the Inuit is an important issue, and responsibility, which we take seriously and intend to pursue in the course of the implementation of these agreements.

As a result, and without going into details in this note, we are generally aware of the frustrations which have been expressed over the years by the Nunavik Inuit. Some of these concerns are inevitably linked to the migratory routes followed by the beluga, and the relationships and needs of the Eastern Hudson Bay and Hudson Strait communities.

We recognize these difficulties, but also believe that efforts should continue to seek consensus about the setting and periodic review of TAT's – including the possible option of a regional approach – distinguish Eastern Hudson Bay from the Hudson Strait. It is in the Cree interest, in other words, to support the building of consensus about management objectives and their implementation.

#### **4. Importance of collaboration and sharing experience, Cree and Inuit.**

Whatever the outcome of the discussions in January at the beluga management meeting, it is most important that we seek agreement on future working relationships between the Cree and Inuit – at the Board level, and at the level of Makivik and the Cree Nation Government.

We recognize that Makivik, the RNUK and the LNUK's are already faced with a complex consultative and decision-making process.

However, for Cree representatives to play an active and responsible role, they will depend on timely and reasonably accurate information on the progression of harvests during the hunting season - for different Inuit settlements. At the moment, we do not believe that we have in place adequate mechanisms for the

flow of information to the relevant Cree bodies, especially the EMR WB, but also the CTA and CNG.

We are therefore interested in seeking agreement on a mechanism which will ensure that the relevant Cree parties are able to track the TAT-implementation process, and the use of non-quota limitations. If we are to understand the Inuit concerns and respond to them, we will need the relevant information for a timely response.

### **5. Revisiting and assessing the existing management regime**

We understand that one possible outcome of the Kuujjuaraapik meeting – and indeed a desirable outcome – is that there will be a thorough review of the existing TAT system with a view to developing a common approach (Inuit – Government) for future reviews of triannual agreements.

The Cree Nation Government sees itself as an interested party in this process, and would like to be able to contribute – in a manner consistent with its own interests and experience.

That said, and given the informative and comprehensive information which has been circulated ahead of the Kuujjuaraapik meeting, we will continue to follow discussions with interest. We will be available, as appropriate, to participate in continuing discussions.

**Alan Penn**  
**For the Cree Nation Government**  
**January 10, 2020**