

Quebec-NMR-EMR Polar Bear Management Plan Cree Consultations

Chisasibi - September 5, 2017

Consultation Team:

Mark O'Connor (Makivik)
Guillaume Szor (Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs)
Félix Boulanger (Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board)
Sam Iverson (Canadian Wildlife Service)
Aurélie Bourbeau-Lemieux (Cree Nation Government), conference call

Attendees:

Charlie Fleming (Inuit elder, Chisasibi)
George Kudlu (Inuit elder, Wemindji)
George Natawapineskum (Wemindji LEMR officer)
Sanford Diamond (Waskaganish LEMR officer)
Bill Jolly (Cree elder, Waskaganish)
Fred Tomatuk (Cree Trappers Association)
Brandan Moses (Eastmain LEMR officer)
John Lameboy (Chisasibi EMR officer)
Noah Snowboy (Cree elder, Chisasibi)
Christopher Napash (interpreter)

Aurélie Bourbeau-Lemieux: Introduces the context of this consultation. This Management Plan is for the entire region of Nunavik + James Bay (including mainland). For Eeyou Istchee, this means the South Hudson Bay population. EMRWB, CTA and Christopher NapashG did a short TK study last winter to document Cree knowledge so that it could be integrated in the management plan. Topics included importance of the species, sightings locations, knowledge, etc. Map of TK is posted on wall. Most data is from past 5 years, though some dates back 10-20 years. Encourages everyone to look at map and discuss the information included. Do the Cree wish to hunt polar bears, or is more a matter of defence of life and property?

Many stakeholders are involved in making this plan (Aurélie Bourbeau-Lemieux provided a quick overview of all the organizations involved). She invites Guillaume Szor to make the presentation about the plan and then encourages open discussion by the participants.

Guillaume Szor: He specifies that we are not here to discuss quotas, those will be dealt with separately. Management plan is about more than just quota. It defines a goal and guiding principles. It presents an overview of what we know about the bears. It explains how bears have been used/managed in the past. It identifies existing threats (current and future) and proposes actions that will serve to address these threats going forward.

In 2011, the polar bear was listed under Species at Risk Act (SARA). He explained CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and that lack of formal polar bear management plan in Quebec has been raised as a weakness in Canada's system). In 2012, the Minister of Environment requested a management regime in Quebec (for all populations). Management plan will serve to protect trade and will be a tool to ensure consistent management both offshore and onshore. The Plan will provide a framework for decision-making and actions.

Guillaume Szor explains the drafting process and steps taken so far. A draft of the front end has been written and they consulted Inuit communities this winter, and now they are here to meet with Cree/Inuit representatives in Chisasibi. The draft management plan will be revised based on the comments collected here and they will write the back end. The final draft will be validated this fall or winter. He goes on explaining different decision-making process for JBNQA and NILCA/EMRLCA.

The guiding principles and goal of the management plan that we come up with are presented to participants and asked them to tell us what they think about them. Current and over the next 10 years.

Threats identified so far:

- Hydroelectric
- Natural resource and infrastructure development
- Shipping
- Tourism
- Pollution/contamination
- Climate change
- Parasites/disease

Management aspects to consider:

- Research
- Human dimension
 - o Harvest
 - o Changing communities
 - o Defence of Life and Property (DLP)
- Inter-jurisdictional and international considerations

Reviews the objectives of management system and questions that we had developed for each.

- Acceptable abundance, mandatory reporting, harvest restrictions, if there was a quota, then based on what? Other approaches, flexibility, etc.
 - o Fred Tomatuk: in JBNQA there is GLH (Guaranteed Level of Harvesting) of 4 for the whole Cree territory, if there is an allocation to each community then we will be over the GLH
 - o Many questions about the role of GLH and what it means in offshore environment and with regards to the quotas that have been established (or in voluntary agreements). Sam Iverson provides some clarification about the GLH. Guillaume Szor provides background information about the quotas that were established in past -- 2 voluntary agreements + SHB (South Hudson Bay) decision, as well as likelihood of new decision after survey results are available next year.
- Research: how much do people know about it, how much confidence they put in it, how to improve, what kind of research to people want to see, what information they are lacking.
- Wise use and stewardship: the relationship changed compared to past, food security, importance to sell on the international market.
- Minimize human impact on bears without compromising safety: more issues of bears coming into to communities/camps, it has changed compared to the past. It's now more dangerous, are there programs that could help? How about the change in health of bears, the impacts of climate change.

Next step is agreeing on concrete actions that we can commit to going forward. For each of the concerns that are raised or addressed in the management plan we will identify short-, medium- and long-term actions that will be implemented to address them.

He asks everyone for their input and reminds them that this is not the last opportunity to share information. They can also go back to their communities to get feedback, access all documents on EMRWB website and get back to us afterwards.

Bill Jolly: His trapline is in Charlton Island. They are the most affected by polar bears over there. There were not many bears back in 1948, they rarely saw them back then. It's in 2009 that they really started appearing in his area. They usually arrive in March/April in Charlton. In 2017, they saw more bears than in previous years. Most of them seem to coming from the Jack River area towards East Coast of James Bay – they drove them back into the offshore. They went spring hunting at their goose camp, and had a bear looking into the cabin window while he was sitting a couple feet away at the table. He went out with a gun, the bear was standing about 50 feet away, he shot the ground in front of the bear but it kept coming (had no fear). He didn't know what to do because didn't want to kill it. So he shot in the back of the polar bear and it ran off into the ice.

About five years ago, a polar bear also came into the blind where his grandchildren were hunting. There was an older person there with them, if not, the bear would certainly have killed one of the children. He cannot leave young people behind anymore to hunt because of the bears. That particular bear was stalking them, it went downwind from hunters and crept towards them in the ice ridges. The goose camp was relocated to another island as a result.

The polar bear is extremely resilient. They're able to adapt to difficult conditions. Even if there is 4 feet of snow, they can still walk on top of it. He has personally witnessed how adaptable they are to their environment.

Sanford Diamond: On April 24, 2017, they encountered the first 4 polar bears (female with 2 cubs being chased by a male). The female got away. We notice that more and more polar bears coming towards the mainland. Families that go out to Charlton are normally there for trapping in Feb/March then go back in April/May for goose hunting.

George Kudlu: "I am Inuit, I like polar bear meat. Now I know where to get it!" He is concerned that so many bears in Churchill are being drugged and handled before coming back here, in James Bay area. They can sense that polar bears are not the same now. Inuit do not want to eat polar bear anymore because they have been drugged.

Now we have quotas, every Inuit community has a quota now and there is a fine of \$250,000 and 6 months in jail if you kill a polar bear. Pulling names out of a hat to decide who gets to hunt is not the Inuit way.

He has lived in James Bay for 25 years now. He started seeing bears in James Bay around 1996 and they are seeing more and more and they come closer. They are not sure what they are allowed to do in the event that there is a bear that comes into camp. Nobody likes to see bears very close to them,

This animal is dangerous. Tourism is a dangerous business because tourists don't know how to deal with the bears. There are more and more bears here now, but we don't know what to do with them

anymore. What should we do about problem bears? If we kill it, what are we going to do with it (eat the meat? Sell the skin?). Inuit up north are saying that even if there is a quota, people need to be allowed to kill them if they destroy the property. Here in James Bay we are still learning how to live with this new partner. We need to discuss what our options are. If a polar bear walks into your place, are we allowed to kill it? Or somebody else will get killed.

He has seen bears recently in Cape Hope Islands (a female with 2 cubs), he has a camp there.

Christopher Napash: Cree have similar issues with black bears here in Chisasibi. There can be up to 11, even 20 bears at the dump together. Cree are not keen to eat bears from around town because they are concerned about contamination from the dumps in the meat. The same is true for polar bears, if they are using dump sites we should be concerned about whether or not meat is good to eat.

Fred Tomatuk: Cree people have refrained from killing black bears near dumps because they aren't going to eat them. That results in local increase of population and compounds the issue. The issue about tagging/drugging is true for Cree as well. As soon as an animal has been touched by a human, they are not considered wild anymore (even geese that have been banded).

Sanford Diamond: About the incident this spring in Charlton Island with Shecapio family. A female bear came into camp and got shot. A cub was there and the family fed it, they had good intentions to help it. But it already had human interference, the cub was responding to a human voice. It was clear that cub would remember that connection to humans: the only alternative was put it down or send it to zoo.

George Kudlu: There are several kinds of polar bears. There are different neck sizes. Some have a very long neck, some have medium necks, some very short necks. The ones with a long neck are listening carefully, they're easy to scare because it isn't sure what's going on. For the ones with medium-length neck, you need to let him know that you are there before shooting. It's hard to scare them because they keep coming at you. If you try to shoot it and you miss, they will come at you and may try to kill you with its paws. The short-necked ones are very sensitive, they stand on two feet like a human. The ones with medium and short neck are dangerous.

There is open water now in James Bay all year round. Seals can get away from the polar bears more easily now, they gather more. So polar bears are hungrier, some of them are starving in winter. They have started hunting for bear cubs instead of seals now. Polar bears are out in May now, at same time as goose-hunting season, which can be dangerous. So, it's important not to sleep in your blind when goose hunting out on the islands. They are very strong, can tear anything apart.

It's a good thing we are here to discuss this so we can come up with a plan that ensures nobody will die from polar bears. They are so strong, they can do a lot of damage. We have to have a rifle all the time. We need to know what will happen if we shoot a bear in self-defence. Need to be sure that nobody is going to get a big fine or jail time if they shoot a polar bear in DLP.

Fred Tomatuk: Important for public meeting to make sure that we aren't letting people be redundant otherwise the meeting will never end. Everyone will have a story to tell and want to tell it. But need to get at some of the other issues also.

Sanford Diamond: There is a trend, we have a growing number of polar bear incidents. For instance, a polar bear pushed the camp door open during the night, the hunter had to scare it off with his rifle.

Fred Tomatuk: We see the trend, like Mr. Jolly said, in 1948 there was no bear in Charlton, now there were 11 of them at some point.

John Lameboy: is it true that there is a law against sending polar bears to the zoo?

Guillaume Szor: It's not a law, but there's an agreement between Quebec and the Inuit.

Christopher Napash: Are there consequences if someone kills a bear in DLP? (Sanford: when it happened this spring, this question came up. The answers from everyone was: no, because the bear was killed for defence.

Guillaume Szor: it is important that people know that they are allowed to make DLP kills, but at same time we can develop tools and find ways to avoid DLP kill.

Sam Iverson: George's concern about being fined for DLP kill, is that widely held as true? If so, it's important to inform hunters in Management Plan that is not the case.

George Kudlu: Why are they all over everywhere? There are issues with polar bears for communities everywhere, not only in James Bay. All Inuit communities have issues with polar bears, this is a big issue for everybody. We need to hear from more Inuit about this subject. We need to take some time to talk about this and figure out the answers to some of these questions. There is a lot more work to do on this subject. It feels like we are discussing for nothing since we don't know where we are going. It feels like we are not going to accomplish anything.

Bill Joly: Global warming has affected polar bears via by ice conditions, lack of ice has not been good for the bears.

Christopher Napash: People no longer pursue bears actively like they did in the past. Back then even the Cree were eating polar bears. Inuit were more aggressive in their pursuit of polar bears. But today, even some of the Inuit don't eat polar bear anymore (mainly younger generation).

John Lameboy: Not sure if there is any correlation, but seems like the number of problem bears increased when people switched from tents to cabins.

EVENING SESSION

Consultation Team:

Mark O'Connor (Makivik)
Guillaume Szor (Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs)
Félix Boulanger (Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board)
Sam Iverson (Canadian Wildlife Service)

Attendees:

John Lameboy (EMR local officer)

Christopher Napash (interpreter)
Fred Tomatuk (CTA)
Daisy House-Lameboy (Deputy-Chief)
Mina Fireman
George Fireman
Gary Chewanish
Natasha Bates

- John Lameboy introduces the consultation team.
- Felix introduces the context, the reason we are here, goal of the Management Plan is to keep a healthy bear population for the future and allow people to continue hunting in the future. He mentions traditional knowledge interviews that EMR officers did last year.
- Guillaume makes presentation (same as earlier in the day)
 - o Poaching is raised as a potential threat to the polar bear
 - o Damage to cabins / threats to Cree and Inuit should be addressed in a management plan
 - o Cabins act as attractants that draw polar bears in

Objective 1: Establish a management system based on available information to ensure long-term persistence of polar bears

Natasha Bates: Does the quota system in Nunavut work? She has heard that there are complications (in one year in Sanikiluaq, a single person's name was picked for all of the bears that they were allocated that year). Has the quota system helped to maintain the population in Nunavut?

Sam Iverson: Nunavut uses a flexible system that is based on maximum sustainable yield. It has allowed them to maintain harvest at levels at a rate that has been sustained. So from that perspective it works, but there are issues related to allocation.

Natasha Bates: Possible difficulty applying quotas in southern communities, because there aren't that many bears around (she spends more time inland than on the coast though) so it would be tough to manage them with a quota. Her Cree side feels that it would be weird to set a quota for a species that is not being overharvested and that has always been harvested based on traditional values. Implementing a quota would go against who they are as a people (same for Inuit). Her non-native side (her father was non-native) sees why there would be a need for these kinds of measures. Inuit would certainly be more affected by quotas than the Cree would.

At international level, she can see that there is a huge pressure on the Inuit who hunt bears more and who depend on sale of hides as part of their income. Inuit communities don't have all the options that the Cree communities have (like Income Security), so the ability to sell a polar bear hides for thousands of dollars is a huge deal. They went through a similar situation with seals a few years ago, with a lot of pressure from international organizations.

Natasha Bates: is the population stable?

Sam Iverson: last population estimate shows stable population. It's important to note that most surveys have been based on aerial survey of the Ontario coast which can lead to some differences in observations between local hunters and the broader scale of SHB.

Fred Tomatuk: reiterates story from Bill Jolly that there were no bears around in the 1940s.

John Lameboy: last time a polar bear was killed in Chisasibi was 5-6 years ago.

Natasha Bates: If elder mentions that there is something wrong with an animal (sick, etc.) then that animal must be killed, but it shouldn't be used. It should be burned.

Fred Tomatuk: Inuit have a belief that they should never talk about the polar bears. Cree have many spiritual beliefs related to black bears, so I assume that it would be the same for Inuit and polar bears (reiterated by Ms Bates: polar bears for Cree are viewed akin to people).

Natasha Bates: Cree are thankful for what they get. Nobody overharvests, they only take what they need. Humans need to lead a sustainable life. Everything we do comes back to us. We need to act sustainably in all facets of our lives.

Sam Iverson: Quota is often big issue because it's the only thing we feel can be managed in light of all other stressors that are acting on a population. So the management plan would have to address these other factors (climate change, shipping, infrastructure development, etc.) so that the pressure does not target only harvesters, who would then have to compensate for other mistakes made in other areas.

Objective 2: Collecting traditional and scientific knowledge on polar bears to inform management decisions

Natasha Bates: is there research taking place in this area (Chisasibi)

Sam Iverson: there is a little (aerial survey) because Inuit in Quebec are opposed to handling. But there is more along the Ontario coast and in the WHB population where bears are actually handled and collared.

Guillaume Szor: there are surveys usually on a +/- 10-year rotation, but there has not been much else in terms of research in the area lately.

Daisy House-Lameboy: what is the purpose of the research? Are they declining?

Guillaume Szor: it is meant to keep track of the number of bears, the main objective is to make harvest recommendations and see how healthy the bears and the populations are.

Daisy House-Lameboy: What are the Inuits feel about the issue, do they want to continue harvesting, or is there a decline in harvesting?

Guillaume Szor: For the South Hudson subpopulation, the harvest is fairly stable, like the population. Outside Quebec, there is only one community (Sanikiluaq in Nunavut) that harvest quite a lot. In

Nunavik, there are only three communities that harvest in the SH subpopulation: Inukjuaq, Umiujaq and Kuujjuarapik and there has been some variations.

Mark O'Connor: It has been relatively consistent in Nunavik communities in the last years. Inukjuaq is a polar bear hunting community, the polar bear are present there in the winter and they have a more of a hunting tradition. They harvest much more than the two other communities, 20 to 30 bears on average per year.

Natasha Bates: What do they do with the bears they harvest, eat the meat, use the skin, sell the skin?

Mark O'Connor: Yes, it's a combination of all of these uses. There has been some decline in meat consumption among the younger generations. The market price has also gone down, so more skins are used locally.

Some discussions followed about the fur markets. The prices have been very low in the last years.

Fred Tomatuk: I have heard random draw for tags that are then sold to sport hunters? Does that happen here?

Mark O'Connor: Not in Nunavik, because unlike in Nunavut, polar bear sport hunting is illegal in Nunavik.

Christopher Napash: There have been a lot of changes in wildlife communities. Goose migration changed, moose is moving north, caribou have exploded now coming back down to normal levels. Many fish are no longer around. It used to be very rare to see a polar bear, today they are almost common. There are even sightings inland where no one had ever seen a polar bear. Invasive species are arriving in the region. Some of the local rivers have walleye and pike now, where they never existed before. We no longer have many of the shorebirds that they used to have. I wouldn't be surprised that polar bears are also affected by some of these changes.

Fred Tomatuk: Who decides where the aerial surveys are done? Is there input from the communities? When is the best time to do the surveys?

Guillaume Szor: Yes there is input from the communities, wildlife boards, hunters' associations. Surveys are usually flown in the fall when bears are stuck on land, but it depends on the area.

Questions about bears that have been handled and traces of chemicals. Guillaume Szor mentions the 45-day period / 1 year recommendation from Health Canada, but recognizes that Inuit (for cultural reasons) still won't eat it.

Mark O'Connor: Since the 1980s, there has been an agreement between the Quebec government and the Inuit that polar bear wouldn't be handled and drugged by the government or on the Quebec territory, and it has been respected, but polar bears travel across other jurisdictions and we cannot control what is done elsewhere.

Guillaume Szor: We do use biopsy, where we shoot a dart from a helicopter, and that dart samples a piece of skin, which provides DNA to identify the bear.

Natasha Bates: Cree would tend to support the Inuit in these concerns (mutual respect for the Inuit community). Cree aren't going to ask for collaring work if they know that the Inuit are opposed.

Mark O'Connor: Traditional knowledge is more integrated as part of decision-making now. In the past there has been a lot of focus on scientific studies. When the Nunavik Wildlife Board was working on establishing quotas, they gathered a lot scientific knowledge from experts but they quickly realized that they could not make these decisions without consulting the communities. Since then, they have done a more extensive report on traditional knowledge related to polar bear and a report should be ready soon.

Sam Iverson: It is now a legal obligation for the federal government to consider equally scientific and traditional knowledge when making decisions.

Christopher Napash: Is this considered a full consultation, how is this type of meeting viewed? What are other opportunities to consult the communities?

Sam Iverson: There have been discussions about coming back to the communities and seeking information directly from the hunters.

Daisy House-Lameboy: It is important to hear from the Cree experts (i.e. elders) in this type of work. Because some of us have never seen any polar bear, they know more than we do.

Guillaume Szor: This tonight is just a part of the consultations in the Cree communities, but we rely a lot on the CTA to continue to gather input for us in the upcoming weeks. There is also a few other ways that people can use to provide comments or questions.

Felix Boulanger: The EMR local officers in coastal conducted interviews last spring with hunters and tallymen on their knowledge and experience related to polar bears. There was lots of interesting information.

Gary Chewanish: Ice conditions have changed now, so it's harder for them to hunt seals in this area. He has heard from many people that they are now eating bird eggs a lot. Has the impact of polar bears on bird populations been studied?

Sam Iverson: He provides some background information on why polar bear was listed as species of special concern in Canada, it is because of reduced ice cover leading to habitat loss and less access to seals. So the theory that they would feed less on seals led to the prediction that they would feed more on bird eggs and other alternative food sources (like charrs). He provides insights about the impact of bears on birds gathered during his PhD, but notes that there is a lot of debate about ability of alternative prey sources to meet energetic needs. Alternative preys were always there, bears might be using them more now because they need the extra calories. There is lots of debate about this.

Mina Fireman: Ice cover decrease in the north is pushing bears further south, towards the islands and the coast. Polar bears appear to increasing in James Bay, we need to explain people what is happening further north (ice conditions, etc.) that is pushing the bears south.

Christopher Napash: Apparently there is more muskox on some islands, maybe they will be a food source for polar bears.

John Lameboy: The polar bears are made for catching seals on the ice, with the climate change, why aren't they sticking to the ice up north and heading south instead? There is so much more bears than before in James Bay.

Guillaume Szor: It may have to do with ice dynamics, where ice melts last, but there is a lot we don't know.

Natasha Bates: There's also the impacts of hydroelectric projects. For example, La Grande River never freezes up in winter, there is no more big ice-outs in spring. I know that this has impacted turbidity, salinity, etc. What impacts has this had on polar bears? Ice out in the Bay was particularly bad this year – elders have never seen anything like it. Do polar follow the seals, do seals follow the fish, etc.?

Christopher Napash: A few years ago, a bit of ice was still connected to landfast ice but otherwise lots of open water. He was canoeing and stopped in that area to count seals, over 30 seals basking on that small ice patch. Usually we're lucky to see one seal at that time, so this was an odd event (likely due to spring ice conditions) but perhaps these types of events draw in lots of bears. Most young Cree never ate seal, in the past (i.e. 40's and 50's) the Cree also hunted seal and ate lots of it, but stopped when they were warned about mercury or PCB.

Gary Chewanish: One elder said that seal population decreased after Hydro projects, because the water is dirtier.

John Lameboy: Also seals live in salt water, so less salt water (because of rivers diversion) means fewer seals.

Natasha Bates: What happened to those seals? If you want to manage polar bears, you also need to learn more about their habitat and food sources, so it would be good to do more research about seals, water quality, etc.

Christopher Napash: Last year, sea ice was completely gone within a week. We went to a camp by ski-doo and came back one week later by boat. I can only imagine how hard it is for polar bears to find ice in those conditions. In past elders used to travel on ice until late June. Now they are lucky to use ski-doo during goose break.

Natasha Bates: (to FB) Those bears that you saw on the islands near Wemindji, were they healthy?

Felix Boulanger: They had average body conditions (not skinny but not fat), but they should be fat at this time of the year.

John Lameboy: About the climate change, it's not only the ice, but summer water levels are also very low this year (extremely low levels here in Chisasibi).

Natasha Bates and Gary Chewanish: We want to be recognized & cited in the report for the information that they have shared with us. For a long time, it was always taken for granted that this information was open for anyone to use. Sometimes it was used against us. We were silenced for a long time but we want to take back our voice, to validate the research. We like to change that trend and make it known

that this information came from specific people. We also want to emphasize that the elders are vital to your research, they are vital to us and to our culture.

Guillaume Szor: What we did in Inuit communities was writing the consultation report, then send it to each community to have it validated. That's what we want to do here too, send the report to the CTA to make sure the information we gathered is accurate.

Mark O'Connor: The plan is to finish the draft this fall (end of November) and to come back for more consultation to validate it before it can be accepted. There are a few more steps that we need to go through, but we have to get back to you before it becomes official.

Guillaume Szor: What was expressed during this consultation will be integrated in a report, which will be sent to CTA (EMR officer) for validation.

Natasha Bates: There are not enough people here this evening to share their knowledge for this to be the only information we take away from the Cree. Are we satisfied with this level of consultation? It's a grain of sand compared to the rest of the community.

Objective 4: Minimizing effects of human activities and reducing human-bear conflicts

Sam Iverson: Nunavut and Manitoba now have polar bear deterrence programs that are well developed, to minimize human-bear conflict. We could look at the best practices they developed and try to implement them here (polar bear patrol, etc.). It is hard to predict whether we expect to see more bears in the future, but we have seen an increase, and a recommendation could be to pursue these kinds of programs.

Christopher Napash: One concern I have is that there are lots of cabins along the coast, and people have a tendency to leave canned foods, dried goods behind. Might be an attractant to bears, since I have heard that bears can smell food even through cans.

Sam Iverson: Human-Bear conflict is seen as a conservation issue by the international community because it can lead to killing of a bear for defence of life or property. So prevention is positive for human safety and bear conservation.

Natasha Bates: Camping and living on the land is part of who we are. We're not going to stop doing that because the international community gets upset over a few bears killed in self-defence. She mentions as an example of the PETA campaign concerning seal hunt a few years ago. It might be good to have an awareness campaign of some sort to provide some education about polar bear safety. Raise awareness with the community about how to react to polar bears coming to their camp.

Christopher Napash: We are part of the same ecosystem as polar bears, so we need to learn to live with them. Polar bears are territorial, so are humans, so we need to live within certain boundaries. We need to create that balance with polar bears. We need to create the rules that will become the law of the land with regards to managing this resource. We have never needed to put our traditional laws into writing in order for them to be recognized, and this is what we are doing now. Once you put rules on paper, they're going to be there for the future. I don't think our elders ever envisioned a day where we needed laws on how to co-exist with the animals. We have to co-exist together because if they don't exist then

we cannot exist. We are tied in together. Concerning the guaranteed levels of harvest, if we are setting quotas, are they based on high harvest levels or low, or average?

Sam Iverson: In James Bay Agreement (section 24), there is a reference to a minimum guaranteed harvest for the Inuit of Nunavik (62) and the Cree of Quebec (4), based on the conservation principles (i.e. as long as the population can handle it). Based on the current estimate of population, we are at a point where the maximum number of bears that can be hunted is around 45 in total for Southern Hudson Bay, and 3 for here (2 and 1 per year alternating Ontario and Quebec). Historically the population estimate was not accurate, but it does set a baseline. Any comments on this subject are welcome, concerning the allocation, etc.

Mina Fireman: Is it a seasonal hunt, when are polar bears primarily harvested?

Mark O'Connor: Primarily in the winter (February to March, when the ice is solid), because the hides are better in winter.

Mina Fireman: How are the other subpopulations doing?

Mark O'Connor: Davis Strait (DS) and Foxe Basin (FB) populations each had a survey 10-15 years ago and they both showed highest populations recorded. We are waiting for the latest numbers as a survey is taking place now.

Guillaume Szor: Other populations are generally stable or increasing.

Some questions about wolves and possible competition from wolves (killing seal pups). There are lots of wolves around now. Is the rise of other predators taken into account when we manage polar bears? Interspecies competition? There are many interactions within the ecosystem.

Questions about the perspectives and objectives of different management plans in different regions.

Mark O'Connor: In Ontario, it's a recovery plan, so the goal is to increase populations. In Nunavik, the communities are saying there's already too many bears, so we're looking more at maintaining population. The biggest impact that we can control is harvesting and we have to try to work together with Nunavut, in spite of political boundaries.

John Lameboy: Would the Inuit be interested in coming to Eeyou Istchee to hunt polar bears?

Guillaume Szor: It would also be interesting to know if some Cree would be interested in hunting polar bears other than for defence.

Sam Iverson: The plan has a 10-year horizon, so it will be important to set a good framework this time around so we are able to adjust as needs arise. Polar bear was listed primarily because of anticipated decline, but most Inuit did not agree with that decision. They consider there are plenty of bears now and they haven't started declining, we should list them when they're actually declining. It's important to be ready in terms of management for potential changes (e.g. bear distribution, feeding behaviour, etc.)

Natasha Bates: I would be good to have some flexibility in the allocation of tags (i.e. Inuit allowed to hunt in James Bay and vice-versa if Cree have too many defence kills). It is important that the system we can come up with represent the sharing that occurs between Inuit and Cree (similar to what happens to

caribou). It would need to be well structured so it doesn't end up being like when the southern nations come here to hunt caribou and leave carcasses everywhere, important that any exchanges reflect mutual values. We need to foresee negative sides (e.g. people hunting caribou here then turning around and selling it).

Mark O'Connor: Legally, a quota has been established by the Minister in the Overlap Area - it has not been enforced for a number of reasons- and it involved an allocation to the Inuit, an allocation to the Cree and a mechanism that allows a transfer of tags from one region to the other.

Mina Fireman: In the past, in my parents' generation, it is said the caribou were gone for 50 years, and food was scarce for that generation. Then the caribou herds came back. Is it possible that the same is happening with polar bears? That they would be moving from one place to the other for some time? We need to consider this option as well. We need to hear from the elders to learn about this type of thing. Is there a population cycle in polar bears? We need to study the natural cycles, not just the polar bears, but all the animals and their habitat.