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Brief communication

The Joint Management Concept

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In Canada, public attitudes are evolving toward acceptance and encouragement of shared management of wildlife resources between responsible government departments and user-groups. The co-management approach is given national recognition in the publication, *A Wildlife Policy for Canada* (Wildlife Ministers' Council of Canada, 1990) which is designed to complement existing governmental legislation and policies so that there may be a comprehensive set of policies guiding the management of Canada's flora and fauna throughout the nation. The policy recognizes the necessity of effective participation of aboriginal groups in the management of wildlife in certain regions and urges governments to involve aboriginal peoples in wildlife management either through comprehensive land claim agreements or by other means. The government of Quebec, for its part, has adopted a motion to encourage the negotiation of agreements with aboriginal nations which would include the right to participate in wildlife management.

Several co-management wildlife regimes exist in northern Canada today and others are under negotiation. Certain of these are designed to manage wildlife in general while others are specifically for caribou. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) was signed in 1975 (Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1975) and the Northeastern Quebec Agreement (NEQA) was signed in 1978 (Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978). These very comprehensive agreements apply to approximately 1,000,000 km² of northern Quebec. Beneficiaries of the agreements are the Inuit of northern Quebec, the James Bay Cree of Quebec and the Naskapi Indians of Quebec. As mandated by the JBNQA, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee was formed in 1977. This committee is composed of an equal number of aboriginal and

government representatives. It is primarily a consultative body to the governments of Quebec and Canada and is intended to be the preferential and exclusive forum where the beneficiaries of the JBNQA and the NEQA and the two governments may jointly formulate regulations pertaining to hunting, fishing and trapping of wildlife.

The Coordinating Committee has the authority to establish harvest quotas for moose and caribou for both aboriginal and non-aboriginal hunters, subject to the principle of conservation. In turn, it is the responsibility of the government to draft regulations to ensure that these quotas are met. In the implementation of co-management, government board members see the committee's role as advisory to the responsible governments in the management of wildlife resources, whereas the aboriginal parties perceive the committee as an equal partner with the governments in this task. This fundamental difference in the concept of co-management has, in the past, contributed to mutual frustration and impatience on the part of the Quebec government, and the three aboriginal parties to the JBNQA.

Initial attempts by the Inuit party to directly assume part of the responsibility for the management of caribou together with a portion of the pertinent government budget, were rebuffed by the Quebec government which has maintained its role and responsibility as the sole legal entity for caribou management in Quebec. The aboriginal parties have frequently criticized the government's management of caribou. Most significantly, the aboriginal parties have criticized on biological and economic grounds, the government policy of encouraging increased exploitation of the George River caribou herd. As well, the government has been criticized for failing to develop a cohesive caribou management plan. Although draft management plans for caribou have been submitted by the Quebec

government, to the Coordinating Committee and although the committee has reviewed those plans, an official caribou management plan for northern Quebec has not yet been adopted by the government of Quebec.

In May 1985 the Inuit members of the Coordinating Committee tabled a proposal for the establishment of a caribou management board for northern Quebec, which would be formulated along the lines of the Beverly and Kaminuriak Caribou Management Board. The Quebec government responded by suggesting that caribou could be managed cooperatively by the Coordinating Committee and three existing government committees. Negotiations continued until the government recommended, as a compromise, the creation of a single caribou management board with representation from the aboriginal parties, the Quebec Government and the "Secrétariat des activités gouvernementales en milieu amérindien et inuit". Finally, after studying and comparing the principles and objectives of the Beverly and Kaminuriak Caribou Management Board with those of the JBNQA and with those of the proposed Quebec Management Board, all parties agreed that, in the light of these comparisons, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee would be best suited to collaborate with the government in managing caribou. Consequently the notion of a caribou management board for Quebec was abandoned. Since this decision, the Coordinating Committee has continued to press the government for a caribou management plan while participating fully in reviewing and commenting upon government initiatives in caribou management.

The commercialization of caribou meat was proposed by the government in 1985 with the support of the Inuit Party. The Cree party was initially reticent to support the project and the Naskapi were opposed. However, intense discussions external to the Coordinating Committee between the Native parties on the subject of commercialization eventually led to negotiations with the Quebec Government and the amending of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1975) in 1993 to permit commercialization. In 1985 the Quebec party proposed the creation of a winter sport hunt for caribou in the Cree area of primary interest. This area had been closed to sport hunting of caribou since 1973. The Cree expressed concern over the security of Cree families on their traplines

at this time of year and for the protection of their hunting and trapping equipment stored in the forest. The aboriginal parties were unanimous in opposing the hunt. However, after three and a half years of consultation with the Coordinating Committee and bilateral discussions between the Cree and the government, the sport hunt in zone 22 was opened in 1989. The hunt has been very popular with sport-hunters. Bilateral consultations have continued between the Cree and the government and certain regulations concerning the hunt have been modified in the light of Cree comments and recommendations. Local Cree have recently expressed the desire to participate in the hunt as guides and outfitters - an approach which the government welcomes.

The responsibility of the Coordinating Committee in the management of wildlife, including caribou, in northern Quebec is self-evident. Since its establishment in 1975 the committee has attempted to fulfil this responsibility. Initially the committee was hampered in its efforts largely due to a different interpretation of this responsibility among the parties. However, a three stage process for reviewing and discussing management initiatives has evolved over the years which has been shown to be effective. Initially the initiative is discussed at the table of the Coordinating Committee. If necessary, the item is referred to a working group. Finally, the government initiates discussions on the item at the community level, if required. Protection is accorded the Coordinating Committee from being shut out of the decision making process by safeguards in the JBNQA which oblige the government to consult with the committee prior to adopting a new regulation or other decision. Through trial and error over the years, the committee has come to fulfil its intended role - that of "coordinating" wildlife management in northern Quebec in conjunction with the responsible governments.

References

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