



Co-management in the Western Arctic and Yukon North Slope

the Inuvialuit Final Agreement

What is the Inuvialuit Final Agreement?

In 1984, the first comprehensive land claim entirely in the Canadian Arctic, in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon was completed. Known as the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), the claim affects the Western Arctic Region of the Northwest Territories and the North Slope of the Yukon. The settlement was passed into federal law as the Western Arctic (Inuvialuit) Settlement Act.

Three goals were recognized in concluding the Agreement:

- to preserve Inuvialuit cultural identity and values within a changing northern society;
- to enable Inuvialuit to be equal and meaningful participants in the northern and national economy and society; and
- to protect and preserve Arctic wildlife, the environment and biological productivity.

To meet these goals, a new environmental cooperative management (co-management) system was developed.

How has management changed?

The most significant change is the direct, and guaranteed, involvement of Inuvialuit in the management of both renewable and non-renewable resources in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR). Over the entire Region, protection of traditional lifestyles and the environment is of primary importance. Development must minimize environmental degradation and project sponsors are financially responsible and liable for damage caused to wildlife, habitat and traditional activities. The Inuvialuit and the governments of Canada, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon share management responsibilities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. To enhance cooperative management (co-management) between these parties, five joint Inuvialuit-Government bodies were established as a result of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. Government and Inuvialuit interests are equally represented in each group. An impartial, non-government person acceptable to both government and the Inuvialuit, chairs each of the co-management bodies

How does co-management affect me?

The recommendations of the co-management groups affect government actions and thus the direction of non-renewable resource management in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Everyone with an interest in the Western Arctic and Yukon North Slope therefore should be aware of the co-management boards and the role they play in decision making.

Researchers and resource developers should consider the co-management groups as one of their initial contacts when preparing project proposals.

This includes all government funded researchers and resource developers - both renewable and non-renewable users. Amongst other activities, river rafting, wildlife viewing, geological or archaeological investigations and oil and gas development can all affect traditional lifestyles and harvesting. If an activity is considered a development, as defined by the IFA, then the developer is responsible for submitting a project description to the Environmental Impact Screening Committee for screening.

The Western Arctic and the Yukon North Slope are unique areas in Canada. They are also the traditional lands of the Inuvialuit. The IFA co-management groups will continue to work with government and Inuvialuit organizations to protect this internationally significant arctic region.

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories)

Six members representing Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Inuvialuit, form the WMAC (NWT) together with its Chair. The Chair is appointed by the Government of the NWT with consent of the Inuvialuit and Canada. Responsible for the area of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region that falls within the Northwest Territories, (the Western Arctic Region) the Council provides advice to federal and territorial government ministers on all issues relating to wildlife in that Region.

Central to the WMAC (NWT)'s activities has been the production of the Inuvialuit Renewable Resources Conservation and Management Plan. This plan outlines goals and principles for conservation in the Western Arctic Region.

Complementing the overall Regional Plan are six community-specific conservation plans . Through these efforts, the Council is supporting Inuvialuit interests for environmental protection and resource conservation while also maintaining traditional lifestyles.

Through the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories (ENR), the Council is involved in research on various species of wildlife such as polar bears, caribou and migratory waterfowl. Inuvialuit knowledge is also gathered and helps set research priorities. The WMAC (NWT) considers the development, design, conduct, and interpretation of research on the basis of both Inuvialuit and scientific knowledge. The information gathered is used by the Council to determine and recommend appropriate quotas for Inuvialuit harvesting in the Western Arctic Region. Working together, the Council, the Inuvialuit and government agencies ensure wildlife conservation and environmental protection.

Fisheries Joint Management Committee

The Fisheries Joint Management Committee (FJMC) has four members: two Inuvialuit members are appointed by the Inuvialuit Game Council and two Canada members are appointed by Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). The Chair of the FJMC is member appointed. The FJMC works jointly with DFO to co-manage all fish, fish habitat, and marine mammals within the ISR. The FJMC has the power to directly advise the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on fisheries issues.

The Committee is responsible for collecting harvest information and making recommendations on subsistence quotas for fish and harvestable quotas for marine mammals. The FJMC has also implemented a system to monitor sports fishing on both Crown and Inuvialuit owned lands. To increase Inuvialuit participation in fisheries management, the Committee also has developed a student mentoring program.

To ensure resource users have input in co-management process, FJMC conducts community tours to visit all the communities in the Settlement Region. Community consultations are essential for identifying and prioritizing local user-based resource concerns and developing subsequent research projects.

The FJMC has a research budget. Each year the FJMC contributes to research, assessment, and monitoring projects that address concerns raised at the community level. Examples of projects include monitoring beluga whale harvests, studies of arctic char and evaluations of the health of ringed seals. These research projects provide convincing examples of how well Traditional Knowledge and Western Science can complement each other and help to solve difficult resource management issues in the ISR.

Environmental Impact Screening Committee

The Environmental Impact Screening Committee (EISC) has a Chair and six members. Three of the members are appointed by the Inuvialuit Game Council. The governments of Canada, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories also each designate one member and Canada appoints the designated members. The Chair is appointed by the Government of Canada with the consent of the Inuvialuit Game Council.

The primary responsibility of the Screening Committee is to determine if proposed developments could have a significant negative environmental impact on the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, or a significant negative impact on present or future Inuvialuit wildlife harvesting. Each developer has to submit a project description to the Screening Committee for screening. If the Screening Committee determines that a development could have a significant negative environmental impact it can recommend terms and conditions to mitigate the potential impact. Where the EISC determines that the development could have a significant negative impact it may be subject to a further assessment and review by the Environmental Impact Review Board. No government licenses or approvals may be issued before the Screening Committee has completed its review.

Since the Committee was established in 1986, over 700 hundred development proposals have been screened. These projects have ranged from oil and gas seismic and drilling programs to commercial river trips. A standardized system for screening, developed by the Committee, has led to prompt and consistent

decision-making.

Through the efforts of the Screening Committee, a positive relationship between the Inuvialuit, industry, government and the EISC, has emerged.

Environmental Impact Review Board

If the Environmental Impact Screening Committee deems a project to have potential significant environmental impacts, it will refer that project to the Environmental Impact Review Board (EIRB) for further assessment and review.

The EIRB initiates the public phase of environmental reviews by inviting the general public to participate in the review process. The public can participate in a number of ways, including by registering as an intervener and participating at a public hearing. These public hearings usually occur in the community most affected by the proposed development.

After gathering its information, the EIRB will prepare a final report with its recommendations to be submitted to the federal authority. The federal authority will choose to accept, alter, or reject these recommendations. No permit or license shall be issued without final approval.

The EIRB consists of six members. Three members are appointed by the Inuvialuit Game Council; one member is nominated by the Government of the Northwest Territories; one member is nominated by the Yukon Territorial Government; one member is appointed by the Government of Canada. The Chair of the EIRB is appointed by the Government of Canada with consent from the Inuvialuit Game Council.

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)

With members representing the Inuvialuit and the governments of Canada and the Yukon, this five person Council is the Yukon counterpart to the WMAC (NWT). It is responsible for advising federal and territorial ministers on all matters related to the conservation of wildlife, habitat and Inuvialuit use on the Yukon North Slope.

As established by the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, the Yukon North Slope falls under a special conservation regime which includes two wilderness parks: Ivvavik National Park and Herschel Island Territorial Park. The WMAC (NS) is actively involved in the management of these two parks.

The WMAC (NS) has prepared a Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan, and a Long-term Research Plan for the Yukon North Slope. These plans help government and the Inuvialuit and implement the special conservation regime for the area.

Similar to the FJMC and the WMAC (NWT), the WMAC (NS) makes recommendations to the Government on wildlife and habitat research. Since its formation the Council has supported research on a number of species including caribou, muskox, grizzly bears, waterfowl, Dall sheep and wolves. The Council has also supported ongoing ecological monitoring and critical habitat mapping projects.

In all its activities, the Council has worked to facilitate cooperation between the Inuvialuit and the governments of Canada and the Yukon. Inuvialuit have assisted with wildlife research and in the development and implementation of wildlife and park management plans. Every three years, in cooperation with the Yukon Government, the Council organizes the North Slope Conference to address matters of public interest in the area.

Want More Information?

For information on the co-management groups contact the Joint Secretariat – Inuvialuit Settlement Region:

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For additional information on the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) contact:

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For information on resource use in the ISR, check out the websites at www.fjmc.ca, www.eirb.ca, www.screeningcommittee.ca, www.taiga.net/wma