

## COOPERATIVE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN CANADA'S WESTERN ARCTIC

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### 1. INTRODUCTORY *SLIDE*

Management of common property in Canada has until recently been the exclusive preserve of government. Joe Canuck has been left out of nearly all meaningful decisions related to resource management, and has put up with that situation because he has had the luxury of living in a world where natural resources; water, trees, fish and wildlife were inexhaustible, or so it seemed. Thus he did not feel alienated by major allocation decisions.

Recently most of us have become much more sensitive to the finite size of our forests, our fisheries and our wildlife populations, and as a result we have begun to scrutinize not just the allocation decisions made by governments on our behalf. We have also begun to question the decision process itself, and whether it is appropriate that decisions which can have such far reaching consequences as, for example Forest Management Agreements in Saskatchewan which block off hundreds of thousands of acres of northern forests for the exclusive use of a single multinational forest products firm, (whether such decisions) should be made without major public involvement.

In my view we are witnessing the end of the "back room" allocation era and moving to a phase where public participation in both resource allocation and management questions will become commonplace. The real trick facing both managers and users will be finding mechanisms that can accommodate crown ownership, government management and public participation.

One area where there has been some innovation with user involvement in resource management has been in the settlement of aboriginal land claims. There, because the people involved have historically had such a close tie to their natural resource base, all recent negotiations have focused on finding methods to involve them in the management process. This was especially true in the settlement of the Inuvialuit claim in Canada's Western Arctic.

### 2. MAP SLIDE

But first, some background. The Inuvialuit Final Agreement was signed in 1984, following more than 10 years of negotiation. The region covered by the claim comprises a geographic area of about 34,000 square miles and consists of a mix of crown lands (including ocean) and Inuvialuit private lands. Although the enrolment process is still not quite complete, there are about 4000 Inuvialuit beneficiaries. .

### 3. FAMILIES SLIDE

As is the case in most areas of northern Canada, renewable resources, especially fish and wildlife, have always played an important role in the subsistence economy of the Settlement Region. For many people, country foods form the most important components of their daily meals. And the hunting and gathering of those country foods is also an integral part of their way of life.

### 4. PRINCIPLES SLIDE

Thus it is not surprising that in the negotiation of their Final Agreement, the Inuvialuit based everything on some key principles, including one aimed at protecting their cultural identity, a second aimed at protecting the ecosystems of which they, and those resources so important to them, were part.

In order to put the effect of the settlement legislation into perspective, one must also understand a key foundation point. That is, that where there are conflicts between the IFA and other legislation, the IFA is supreme. Thus, for example, if a conflict were to occur between a provision of the IFA and the Fisheries Act, the IFA would prevail.

### 5. COMMITTEES SLIDE

To put the principles and themes into practice, the IFA called for the establishment of a number of committees to deal with the management of renewable resources.

The Inuvialuit Game Council and the six community Hunters and Trappers Committees are all-Inuvialuit bodies designed to represent Region-wide and local interests in fish and wildlife, respectively. The remaining groups are joint bodies with both Inuvialuit and appropriate government representation.

Looking more closely at the Fisheries Joint Management Committee, the next slide outlines the primary responsibilities of the committee that I chair.

## 5. FJMC RESPONSIBILITIES SLIDE

Responsibilities include .....

## 7. FJMC STRUCTURE SLIDE

To carry out those relatively comprehensive responsibilities, the IFA called for the establishment of a four person committee, two Order-in-Council appointees representing Canada and two Inuvialuit members, appointed by the Inuvialuit Game Council. These four members then select an independent chairperson.

So given that structure and responsibility, what does the Committee really do?????

## 8. BUDGET SLIDE

A good idea of Committee programs can be provided by a quick look at how implementation funds are spent. In the 1988/89 fiscal year approximately \$665,000 was allocated to implementing the fisheries related tasks of the IFA.

As you can see, funding has been allocated to ensure that the Committee has the capability of carrying out projects, usually about 10 or 12 major projects per year. The Committee is committed to the idea that wherever possible such programs will be delivered through contracts with local HTC's.

## 9. HOLMAN SLIDE

To date, this has often meant that HTC's have either had to sub-contract some of the technical aspects of the project, or rely upon help from Departmental biologists; but slowly the Htcs are building a competence that in the long run will allow them to take on more and more of the work.

We have also taken some steps to assist in this process. The FJMC sponsored a year-long technical training program through Arctic College in Inuvik in an effort to lay the groundwork for the local delivery of at least some of the management programs. However, we are still some distance from having a local delivery capability in each of the settlement communities.

To this point we have focused on the IFA and the structures created as a result of that legislation. Equally important were the changes adopted by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans so that it could carry out its new role. I will ask my colleague to briefly describe those changes.

#### DFO CHANGES

What steps did DFO take to foster cooperative management? At the time of signing of the IFA the department's presence in the Western Arctic was minimal, a 2-person office.

Administratively, the department re-tooled to meet the terms of the IFA first by enhancing the area office in Inuvik and clearly stating that the priority for that office was to work with the FJMC. In resource terms, 6 new positions and \$110 K of operating funds, largely re-allocations of A-base funds, were assigned to the area. Thus the department was able to demonstrate that it was no longer "business as usual".

Second, the department accepted, in principal, the legality of the IFA as well as the spirit of the document by fostering a communications channel for the FJMC directly to the Minister's office. Although the co-management body had the mandate to establish that link on its own, the department clearly recognized the opportunity that such a link presented in advancing its own as well as the co-management agenda for the area.

Operationally, both the area and regional offices accepted a new dynamic where the priority setting exercises for DFO programs within the settlement

region were largely controlled by the cooperative management group. DFO also placed a much higher priority on consultation with its newly defined partner in an effort to ensure that the user group acknowledged the purpose of projects even though they sometimes did not agree with that purpose.

Finally, with respect to its research mandate, changes have been less dramatic. However projects in the Western Arctic have had their focus adjusted to accommodate the information needs of the user groups as expressed through the FJMC. Never the less, resources are limited and few of the major issues are being adequately tackled at this time.

### Is IT WORKING

So, given all of the above, is the management system that was designed and implemented through a land claim process working? And if it is, what are the elements that contribute towards that success.

With respect to the first question, "Is it working?", in our view, and in the view of those in the Settlement Region, it is. Let me give three bits of evidence.

1. In the area of environmental impact assessment, the co-management process worked effectively within the Inuvialuit's legislated environmental hearings. The result was a no-development decision on a major oil drilling application in the Beaufort Sea. Much of the rationale for the decision was based upon concerns for fish and marine mammals, concerns that were identified and presented cooperatively.
2. With respect to the question of stewardship and user-responsibility, members of the Aklavik HTC, when confronted with information that suggested that one of their principal domestic fisheries was in trouble, (information, by the way, that they had helped collect) they recommended to the Minister that he legally close the fishery for a ?-

year period. This, to our knowledge, represents a Canadian first and amply demonstrates that users are prepared to participate in making the hard decisions required to protect their resource base.

3. In the area of traditional activities, co-management played a major role in instituting the first modern day bowhead whale harvest for subsistence use in Canada. This occurred in in spite of international obstacles and the fact that the public perception is that bowheads are an endangered species. In short the department opted to risk probable national and international censure in order to meet its obligations under the IFA.

I think these examples demonstrate the strength of the IFA and the success of the process in achieving joint decisions.

## WHY DOES IT WORK

Regarding the second question, why is it working, it is more difficult to identify the contributing elements. However , in our view it boils down to three factors that exist within the ISR and that are likely fundamental to any cooperative management effort; **1) correct conditions, 2) commitment and 3) the courage to change.**

First the **conditions** were appropriate.

- A) The user group was identifiable (by legislation) and felt a sense of ownership of the process.
- B) The area of impact in terms of geography was defined, again by legislation.
- c) Both the management agency and the user group had a visible and long term attachment to the resource.

Hindsight also suggests that there was **commitment:**

- A) Commitment from both government and the user group overcome the obstacles in the iplementation process and to adopt a "lets make it work" attitude.

B) Commitment from both groups to give the process time to develop and thus, at least in the short term, to live with its decisions.

Finally, there was the ***courage to change***.

A) In this instance, the management agency demonstrated a willingness to open up its agenda to the user group. It approached management questions in a recognizably different way than had been the practice in the past. In short, it sent out strong signals that it was prepared to operate in a different mode.

B) The user group, as well, demonstrated that it was willing to shoulder a new level of responsibility in that it was prepared to make hard management decisions even in instances when those decisions affected harvest levels and as a result, food on the table.

## SUMMARY

In closing I would like to leave you with the following observations:

1. In our view cooperative management works. However it is, by nature, a fragile process, fragile in that it places ongoing demands on the cooperators.

For the user group the process requires that as they gain the power to influence the decisions, their responsibility towards the resource must adjust to that role. There must be a sense of stewardship.

From the government side, the process requires nurturing, first in terms of people and dollars, and second, in a continued commitment to change, to be responsive, as the needs and focus of the user group change.

2. Cooperative management is not necessarily going to work in all instances. However the choices facing the resource manager are now rather limited. Human rights are in, autocratic decisions are out. Management agencies have little choice but to adopt some form of cooperative management.
3. Our experience suggests that each application of the concept of cooperative management will be unique and will depend upon the circumstances of the moment. Thus, the specific approach that has worked well in the Western Arctic would have to be modified to suit the circumstances if, for example, it were to be applied to resource management issue in northern Saskatchewan. In a sense, cooperative management represents a philosophy, not a technique or process.
4. Within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region there will be no reversion to an autocratic management of fish and marine mammals. Even in the absence of the backing of the IFA