



Context

Inuit have inhabited and used most of the region north of the 55th parallel in Québec for hundreds if not thousands of years (long before Québec even existed). Prior to the signing of the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*, life in the communities consisted essentially of traditional subsistence harvesting pursuits. Wildlife resources continue to be vital to the Inuit health and their way of life.

A Few of the Challenges

Population growth and subsistence harvesting may eventually create unsustainable pressure on wildlife resources and their habitats.

Climate change is threatening the capacity to access inland and marine harvesting areas safely, as well as contributing to the encroachment of non-indigenous species.

High transportation costs for equipment and supplies puts harvesters without another form of paid employment at a disadvantage.

The habitats of harvested wildlife and of some endangered species are the same areas coveted for mineral exploration and other industrial development projects. Air, sea and land traffic generated by these projects also exert pressure on wildlife resources.

Sport hunters, sport anglers and increased numbers of workers from outside the region place additional pressure on the same wildlife resources used by traditional subsistence harvesting.

Implementation of wildlife provisions under the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* as well as the enforcement of wildlife laws and regulations are difficult in particular due to the lack of permanent funding, the absence of sufficient enforcement capacity, and the high turnover of wildlife conservation personnel.

The disruption of caribou migrations by unregulated outfitting mobile camps, the increasing presence of private small aircraft, helicopters and illegal trapping affect the ability of Inuit to practise traditional subsistence harvesting.

Wildlife harvesting and food processing regulations make it almost impossible to serve locally harvested food to tourists as well as in restaurants and health centres.

Solutions and Priorities

Inuit harvesting rights in Nunavik are protected by treaty, subject to the Principle of Conservation.

Take steps to protect and enhance these rights in the face of industrial development. Specifically, the control of landholding corporations on Category I lands and their involvement in resource exploitation on Category II lands must remain paramount.

Create a master land use plan to control industrial development. Require industrial developers to share the cost of researching and managing sustainable wildlife populations and habitat.

In line with Québec's protected areas strategy, identify unique biospheres for conservation while limiting areas available for industrial development to a maximum of 50% of available land.

Secure the supply of locally harvested food through financial and other support for subsistence harvesters. Subsistence harvesting has direct impacts on the health and culture of Inuit, as well as local economies.

Provide permanent funding to regional and local Anguvigak hunting, fishing and trapping associations to exercise wildlife management at the community level, as well as permanent funding for wildlife management research and veterinary resources to deal with potential zoonotic diseases.

Provide more funding for enforcement of wildlife laws and regulations, as well as related training.

Renew land and marine wildlife management plans, based on traditional Inuit knowledge and prioritizing subsistence harvesting. Improve funding for research activities for this purpose.

Foster the revision of regulations to permit the serving of locally harvested foods commercially.

Discussion

The relationship between Inuit and wildlife resources remains very strong. Protection of this relationship, of harvesting rights and, importantly, of current levels of traditional subsistence harvesting must be paramount in the context of development of the region's potentials. Habitats critical for land and marine wildlife as well as areas identified as essential for traditional subsistence harvesting must be systematically protected, for example by improving enforcement and reducing sport hunting. As well, with outside interests putting pressure on their harvesting rights, Inuit must be prepared to take pro-active management measures.

