



Friday, February 28, 2025

**Subject:** Written statement for Phase 2 of the NMRWB Polar Bear Public Hearing

This is a statement submitted jointly by the Anguvigaq and Makivvik for the second phase of the Polar Bear Public Hearing, reiterating in writing some of the verbal interventions made during the in-person hearings held in Kuujjuarapik on February 4-6, 2025.

In our views, there are 3 main questions that must guide, in the following order, the NMRWB and EMRWB when structuring the information and knowledge received during this hearing and making informed decisions for the management of the overlap area:

1) Is there a conservation concern?

This is the foundational question of this process as decisions of the Boards can restrict or limit Nunavik Inuit harvesting only, in this case, if that is necessary to address conservation concerns<sup>1</sup>.

The scientific presentations made during this hearing indicate that the population is likely stable, which is supported by the status table of the Polar Bear Technical Committee. The Inuit and Cree knowledge holders expressed no concerns about the health or population status in the region.

While all parties seem to agree that the climate is changing, the impacts of these changes on polar bears remain uncertain. While Inuit knowledge indicates that polar bears are very smart and adaptable, more frequent monitoring might be needed to foresee any negative impacts on the population. Once again, we need to refrain from using the precautionary principle as an excuse to infringe on Nunavik Inuit rights, and rather work together to better understand and monitor changes.

2) What should be the management objective?

We are advocating for a management objective that is aligned with Inuit culture and practices. As such, we ask the Boards to consider a management objective that is not solely

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<sup>1</sup> The NILCA also allows restricting or limiting Nunavik Inuit harvesting for public health or public safety purposes, however no information provided throughout this public hearing point to any of those two sources of concerns as a motive for harvesting restrictions.

rooted in western science but that also and primarily recognizes the important relationship between polar bears and Inuit while empowering Inuit to act locally within their knowledge system. Throughout this phase 2, there was no demonstration nor consensus on a set population figure that would consist in the appropriate level of bears to strive to maintain. More importantly, when the management objective is dictated by science alone, such as the maintenance of a certain number of bears, it does not encourage Inuit stewardship but rather a top-down approach. This approach has repeatedly proven to be both disrespectful and ineffective.

Our suggestion is therefore the following management objective:

- ❖ Maintaining a balance between sustaining the population to a level that supports Inuit harvesting and cultural practices, short to long term, WHILE ensuring security of people and their properties.

We believe this objective aligns with the goal of Qc-EMR-NMR polar bear management plan.

### 3) What are the appropriate management measures to meet this objective?

Given the misunderstanding of the current TAT system and the jurisdictional complexity and implementation gaps, including the absence of federal and Nunavut regulation for making the TAT enforceable in the NMR, it is very unlikely that this measure is responsible for having maintained a healthy and stable polar bear population. Inuit ways and knowledge, cultural practices, and profound respect for this great predator are responsible for maintaining a natural balance of the ecosystems and a vital, healthy polar bear population.

We therefore advocate for a responsible and lawful management system for which each co-management partners are accountable and proactive in the management.

- Surveying of the population every 5 years (to mitigate long-term risk associated with climate change)
- Inuit-led management, from local to regional to inter-settlement scale (e.g., traditional practices, 1984 Anguvigaaq regs, nation-to-nation coordination, etc.)
- Continue the implementation of the management plan
  - harvest monitoring (Makivvik-Anguvigaaq mobile app)
  - polar bear safety workshops
  - local and regional engagements to promote the management plan
  - etc.