

**COASTAL HABITAT RESEARCH PROGRAM**

**STEERING COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE 13TH MEETING**

**HELD IN EASTMAIN ON MARCH 28, 2018**

---

**PRESENT:** William Blackned – Cree Nation of Wemindji  
Norman Cheezo – Cree Nation of Eastmain  
Réal Courcelles – Hydro-Québec  
Marc Dunn – Niskamoon Corporation  
Carine Durocher – Hydro-Québec  
Jean-Philippe Gilbert – Hydro-Québec  
Louie Kanatewat – Cree Nation of Chisasibi  
Roderick Pachano – Cree Nation of Chisasibi  
Ernie Rabbitskin – Niskamoon Corporation  
Jean Rodrigue – Canadian Wildlife Service  
Nadia Saganash – Cree Nation Government  
Robbie Tapiatic – Cree Nation of Chisasibi  
Alain Tremblay – Hydro-Québec  
Merlin Whiskeychan – Waskaganish First Nation

**ABSENT:** Emily Sinave – Cree Nation Government  
James Bobbish – Cree Nation of Chisasibi

**GUESTS:** Josée Rousseau – Hydro-Québec

**PROPOSED AGENDA**

- 1) Approval of the agenda
- 2) Approval of the minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting
- 3) Update on research programs:
  - a. Research program on Geese – Proposal from M. Giroux and budget (J.P. Gilbert)
  - b. Research program on Cree Knowledge and Land Use: Proposal from the Chisasibi Research Center (M. Dunn and C. Durocher)
  - c. Research program on Oceanography – coastal (A. Tremblay)
  - d. Research program on Oceanography – rivers (A. Tremblay)
  - e. Research program on Eelgrass (M. Dunn)
- 4) Field work logistic

- a) Update from Ernie Rabbitskin
  - b) Mobile laboratory – Cost and equipment (A. Tremblay)
- 
- 5) Coordination between researchers:
    - a) Revised mandate for Zou Zou Kuzyk (M. Dunn)
    - b) Integrated methodology and summary report
  - 6) Communication plan
  - 7) Article published in the National Post (March 18, 2018)
  - 8) Newsletter (M. Dunn)
  - 9) Validation tour - February 2018 (M. Dunn)
  - 10) Conference in Victoria, BC, June 10 to 15, 2018
  - 11) Steering Committee meetings' schedule for 2018
  - 12) To do list
  - 13) Varia

#### **CHAIR AND SECRETARY**

Ms. Durocher chaired the meeting.

Ms. Josée Rousseau acted as Secretary. The meeting began at 8:40 a.m. on March 28, 2018.

#### **1) APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

The Chair reviewed the agenda. It was agreed that the following item be added to the agenda as 4 c):

- Helicopters

#### **2) APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE 12th MEETING**

The Chair reviewed the minutes of the 12th meeting page by page. Some corrections were requested and the minutes were approved as corrected.

### 3) UPDATE ON RESEARCH PROGRAM

#### a. Research program on geese

Mr. Dunn asked Mr. Gilbert to remind those present of what was said in the community during the validation tour in February 2018.

Mr. Gilbert presented a document entitled *Coastal Community Tour – Eeyou Istchee Eelgrass Research program*. A copy is appended to the minutes.

He said that the presentation was prepared based on Jean-François Giroux's suggestion. He added that he talked about the methods used to reach the program objectives. He explained what the different options were for the flyover.

Mr. Gilbert said that Mr. Rabbitskin would be the only Cree representative on the helicopter, which would reassure the hunters more. The fact that Mr. Rabbitskin is present for the entire flyover would minimize any inaccuracy in the goose count.

Mr. Pachano asked about the reliability of this method of counting geese.

Mr. Rodrigue explained the method. He said there will be three observers—one in the front and two in the back of the helicopter. He added that Mr. Rabbitskin will be seated in the back and that he will count the geese.

Mr. Gilbert said the result will be an estimate. He added that they know they won't count all the geese but that the GoPro camera will also provide some indications. He said what's important is obtaining a good estimate.

Mr. Kanatewat said that during the flyover, not all the geese will move, making it difficult to see them.

Mr. Gilbert said that the flyover will take place where the eelgrass beds are located.

Mr. Pachano asked to what extent the tides are a factor when it comes to the flyover.

Mr. Gilbert answered that in the past, the best option was to wait for low tide before doing the flyover, but that the tallymen might not want to wait that long. He said that the best timing would be to start the flyover at low tide.

Mr. Rodrigue said that the first thing that is visible during a flyover is movement. He added that he didn't think the observers would have any trouble seeing the geese.

Mr. Blackned asked if the helicopter used is equipped with recording tools during the flyover.

Mr. Gilbert said that it was, specifying that the helicopter is equipped with a camera.

Mr. Gilbert said that the method that will be used to count the geese is an excellent method and that filming the flyover will give users the opportunity to see everything.

Mr. Dunn said they insisted on having experienced people do the flyover and that it is important to do it quickly in order to minimize the inconvenience for users. He added that having Mr. Rabbitskin do the goose count on each flyover would minimize the risk of error. Mr. Dunn reminded those present that it would be ideal to do the flyovers on a Sunday.

Ms. Durocher said that the flyover schedules based on the tides will be defined with Mr. Jean-François Giroux. She added that it will be important that the community representatives be informed of any changes to the flyover schedules.

Mr. Dunn said it was agreed that the flyovers would take place on May 6 and 13. He added that bush radios will be purchased so Mr. Rabbitskin can make radio announcements.

Mr. Pachano asked if there were still geese in Waskaganish on May 13.

Mr. Gilbert said that the objective is to do the flyover in Waskaganish before goose break, i.e., May 6.

Mr. Courcelles asked if the dates agreed to with the tallymen could be changed.

Mr. Dunn replied that they were not set in stone.

The participants discussed the possibility of changing the flyover dates agreed to with the tallymen as well as the flyover itinerary.

Mr. Kanatewat said that it depends on the temperature, and that if it is cold the geese will stay longer.

Ms. Saganash asked if a third flyover could be added on the previous Sunday.

Mr. Gilbert said that based on the different scenarios, the same geese might be counted twice, but that at least information would be obtained on their habitat and route. He added that it depends on what kind of information we want to collect.

Mr. Dunn said that users want to support the study because they want the best possible results. He added that in his opinion, if explanations are provided with the help of the local representatives, it will be possible to start the flyovers on April 29. He wondered if the May 13

flyover could be cancelled if one is added on April 29. He said a decision will be needed soon in order to determine the budget.

The participants discussed the pros and cons of doing three flyovers instead of two, namely on April 29, May 6 and May 13.

Mr. Gilbert said that the May 6 flyover is important because that is when there will be the most geese on the coast based on the goose inventories carried out under the Eastmain-1-A environmental follow-up program.

Mr. Dunn said it would be difficult to obtain the budget for a third flyover.

Mr. Gilbert said that if only two flyovers are carried out, the ideal dates would be April 29 and May 6 rather than May 6 and May 13.

Mr. Dunn said that the tallymen said that if it is impossible to do the flyovers on a Sunday, they could be carried out on a Monday.

It was agreed that the local representatives will consult the tallymen in the next two weeks regarding the possible dates.

Mr. Dunn reminded participants that for traplines CH3, CH5, CH6 and CH7, we are not authorized to carry out a flyover.

Mr. Dunn said that if we plan a third flyover, it will cost about \$25,000.

Ms. Saganash said that the Chisasibi tallymen may agree to a flyover on May 13 given that according to Mr. Kanatewat, many hunters will have left their hunting site by mid-May.

Mr. Courcelles summarized the discussion by outlining the two scenarios:

- Plan A: 2 flyovers among the three possible dates, i.e., April 29, May 6 or May 13
- Plan B: 3 flyovers on April 29, May 6 and May 13.

The meeting paused at 10:10 a.m. and resumed at 10:30 a.m.

Mr. Dunn presented the type of booklet that the users could use. He said it would be made in collaboration with the Cree Trappers' Association. He added that the trappers would receive \$25 per booklet that is filled out and returned.

Ms. Durocher asked if the booklets would be validated in any way before being submitted to Mr. Jean-François Giroux.

Ms. Saganash said that a meeting is planned for April 10 with the Cree Trappers' Association and the representatives of the Eeyou Marine Region to outline the SC's mandate and explain how the booklet works. She added that a press release and a poster will be prepared. She asked if the fact that a monetary incentive will be offered should be indicated on the poster.

The members agreed that the monetary incentive should be indicated on the poster.

Mr. Dunn said that the next field survey will be in Boatswain Bay and that meetings were held with the Waskaganish users. He added that they were shown the target sites and that all the users agreed to do the field survey this fall.

Mr. Rodrigue said that the next field survey will be carried out in the fall or at the end of August. He added that they will go there in advance for the preparation stage.

Mr. Gilbert said that as soon as he knows more about the new technology that will be used, he will give the information to the committee secretary so that all the members can be informed. He added that they are considering putting the collars of the two geese shot in Pennsylvania on the resident geese in Puvirnituk. Mr. Gilbert showed members the route that the geese had taken since February 28, 2018. He said he asked CTT (Cellular Tracking Technologies) to collect data every 15 minutes.

#### **b. Research program on Cree knowledge and land use: proposal from CERRI**

Mr. Dunn said he received the second proposal from the CERRI and that this proposal is much improved and addresses most of our concerns. He said he is still analyzing their budget proposal. He added that the amount of time is within what can be expected for such a project. Mr. Dunn said that between now and June, he expects to have finished the analysis and to report back to the SC.

Mr. Tremblay said that the definition of third party would have to be discussed in more detail.

Mr. Dunn suggested doing so in June.

Ms. Durocher said that it is often difficult and expensive for scientists to conduct activities related to geomatics and cartography. She said she spoke to Mr. Hugo Asselin from UQAT, who has a good cartography department.

Mr. Dunn said that Mr. Asselin may be biased because of his connection to Mr. Colin Scott.

Ms. Saganash said that the Cree Nation Government has resources.

Mr. Dunn said that the CNG is a good option but that the number of resources could be a problem given that they have a lot of work to do.

Ms. Saganash asked what the needs would be.

The members discussed the possibility of obtaining support from the CNG for the cartography activities.

### **c. Research Program on Oceanography: Coastal**

Mr. Dunn said that out of the 73 installed stations, we were able to collect information for 62 of them. He added that most of the work was done by helicopter and also by snowmobile. He said that more work was carried out at Bay of Many Islands, but also all along the coast. He added that overall, everyone was satisfied.

Mr. Tremblay referred to a summary he received on the field survey that was carried out.

Mr. Dunn said he received a copy and that he will send it to the secretary so it can be distributed to all the SC members.

Mr. Dunn said there was a bit of an issue when the UQAR team wanted to go in the field and the land users did not arrive on time. The researchers wanted to go without them. Mr. Dunn said that this is not an option and that it is important that the researchers understand that it is an important aspect of the research, that the Crees are paying part of the research and that it is a question of values.

Mr. Dunn said that there is a cultural learning that needs to happen for the researchers, even if this means going outside their comfort zone. He added that this applies to all the researchers.

Mr. Tremblay noted that the researchers are nevertheless expected to focus on results.

Mr. Dunn agreed, but not at any price.

Mr. Tremblay replied that in that case, it would have to be explained to them that there is a trade-off given that Niskamoon is paying more.

Mr. Dunn said that the researchers will have to find a balance between that and the fixed costs of their operations.

Mr. Rabbitskin specified that the users were late arriving but that they did eventually arrive. He added that if the researchers had left without waiting for the users, it could have been perceived as a lack of respect and the users could have refused to have the researchers return.

Mr. Pachano said that the researchers need to understand that it is first and foremost a question of safety, and that that is what matters most.

Ms. Saganash said she wanted to address the issue of incorporating traditional knowledge into the fieldwork. She said that the Cree representatives are somewhat concerned by the issue, given that some of the researchers don't seem to be very interested in communicating and creating bonds. She asked if an e-mail should be sent to the researchers.

Ms. Durocher said that it is also important to help the researchers and to have a certain mechanism in place to do so. She asked if they should be referred to Mr. Rabbitskin.

Mr. Rabbitskin said he always explains to the researchers that they have to follow the tallyman's lead, and that if the tallyman decides not to go somewhere, then they cannot question that decision.

Mr. Tremblay said he talked to the researchers and that they have no problem with the tallyman making the decisions. The issue they had was that the tallyman was late.

Mr. Tapiatic reminded members that when the tallymen refuse to go somewhere by boat, it's for a good reason. He provided the example of an event that occurred in 2002.

Mr. Dunn said that everything is a question of communication and that a relationship cannot be created overnight. He added that the barriers have to come down. He said that the researchers need to be reminded that good research requires good results, but that everyone must be on board.

Mr. Rodrigue suggested that the third group of researchers be informed of the issue so that they don't repeat the mistakes made by the first two groups.

Mr. Tremblay agreed with Ms. Durocher and Ms. Saganash that an e-mail could first be sent to the researchers and that assistance could be provided.

Mr. Whiskeychan suggested conducting a field visit with the researchers and the local representatives during the field surveys.

Ms. Saganash said she thought it was a good idea in that it would help the researchers and the users get to know each other better.



Mr. Pachano explained that it is important that the users know that the researchers trust them, because otherwise the users won't trust the researchers either.

It was agreed that Mr. Dunn and Ms. Saganash will prepare a draft e-mail to be sent to the researchers.

Mr. Tapiatic suggested that it be specified in the e-mail to the researchers that they need to trust the users' traditional knowledge.

Mr. Dunn confirmed that he would include that point in the e-mail.

Mr. Dunn said that the contract with ISMER was approved.

**d. Research Program on Oceanography: Rivers**

Mr. Tremblay explained that the idea is to equip the eight rivers and their current with water-level gauges, given that gauges have already been installed on the other rivers. He said that the initial budget was \$80,000 but that it is now \$140,000. He added that the work will begin in early June for a total of at least three annual periods. He said that the work will be done as close as possible to the mouth of the river but will not be affected by the tides. He said that the Cree will help identify the exact location of the work.

Ms. Durocher asked if a modified map will be produced once the instruments are installed.

Mr. Courcelles said that he will need a revised budget, including the new planned costs. He confirmed that Niskamoon will purchase the required equipment and cover the costs.

The meeting paused for lunch at 12:05 p.m. and resumed at 1:15 p.m.

**e. Research program on eelgrass**

Mr. Dunn presented a document entitled *Coastal Habitat Comprehensive Research Program, Eelgrass Component, Dr. Fred Short, University of New Hampshire, March 27, 2018*. A copy was appended to the minutes.

In reference to page 6 of the document, under *Community Engagement – sharing the results*, Mr. Tremblay asked whether Mr. Joël Heath's platform or the community's platform will be used.

Mr. Dunn said that Mr. Short will use the Arctic Eider Society's platform and that he will work with the CERRI. Mr. Dunn added that he will verify how the platform will be used.

Mr. Dunn said that the budget is very unclear with regard to which resolution Mr. Short intends to use. He added that it was questionable whether analyzing the effects of light and salinity was either useful or feasible.

The members discussed the biomass collection at one of the Bay of Many Islands sites.

Mr. Tremblay said that the work planned by Mr. Short will not reflect that of the other researchers. He added that the biomass will have to be measured by Mr. Short, and that it is very easy to measure.

The members discussed the relevance of the correlation between above-ground biomass and the eelgrass cover.

Mr. Dunn said that the connection between the two is questionable. He asked, "Is it going to survive peer review?"

Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Tremblay said it would not.

Mr. Pachano asked what Mr. Short's intention was.

Mr. Dunn answered that Mr. Short believes that what the users are doing is sufficient and that it is therefore not necessary to measure the biomass.

Mr. Courcelles said that this research is costing millions of dollars and that the SC would like the biomass to be measured. He said that establishing a correlation is not enough.

Mr. Gilbert asked if another team of researchers could do the biomass analysis if Mr. Short does not want to do it.

Mr. Dunn suggested that Mr. Short's team take samples and send them to Rimouski (ISMER) for analysis.

Mr. Dunn said that the other issue concerns how many sites require a biomass analysis. He suggested at least two sites in Chisasibi, namely one in the north and one in the south, as well as one site in Wemindji and one in Eastmain.

Mr. Rabbitskin suggested that 5 or 6 sites be analyzed in Bay of Many Islands.

Mr. Courcelles asked who would choose the sites.

Mr. Gilbert said that the biomass would have to be analyzed in the same locations where the samples are collected so that the other parameters can be measured.

Mr. Dunn said that the biomass must be collected at the same locations where the videos will be taken.

Ms. Durocher suggested that the biomass be collected in the same locations so that the parameters studied by the other researchers can be correlated and also to prove the relationship that Mr. Short believes applies to the Baie James (James Bay).

Mr. Dunn said that since the beginning, the idea has been that Cree divers would collect the samples.

Mr. Pachano asked whether we need to prove the correlation.

Mr. Dunn answered that if it works, it could be useful for trappers in future follow-ups.

Mr. Courcelles summarized the discussion as follows:

- 1- Who will collect the biomass?
- 2- The biomass must be dried in a mobile laboratory.
- 3- Who will carry out the analysis?

Mr. Dunn said more divers will need to be recruited.

Mr. Courcelles asked who would choose the biomass collection sites.

Mr. Dunn replied that we will inform Mr. Short that we will identify the biomass collection sites and that we will ask him if he wants to help us choose a minimum of 15 sites along the coast.

Regarding the section of the document entitled *Eelgrass health mapping and threat analysis*, Mr. Dunn asked Mr. Gilbert to send him his questions so that he could present them to Mr. Short.

Mr. Dunn reminded members of the importance of developing the terms of reference and that no contract will be signed if Mr. Short does not accept the terms.

Ms. Durocher agreed with Mr. Dunn and added that a full report with all the data must be provided.

Mr. Courcelles proposed that Mr. Gilbert prepare the terms of reference in collaboration with Mr. Dunn.

Mr. Dunn said he would prepare an initial version, which he will send to Mr. Gilbert. He suggested that, in the event Mr. Short does not collaborate with us, the SC should contact the University of New Hampshire and ask for their assistance in obtaining Mr. Short's cooperation, otherwise we will have to end the relationship.

Mr. Dunn said that Mr. Short has the contractual obligation to submit a report by June 2018. He said he would ensure that Mr. Short understands that the report must be complete.

Mr. Courcelles said that the figures presented in Mr. Short's budget make no sense.

Regarding the section entitled *Additional requirements* in the *Cree lab assistant* section, Mr. Dunn said he told Mr. Short that the SC can only accept this request if the assistant is shared between the researchers. He added that the expense could be justified based on workload.

The members discussed the section of the document entitled *Zodiac boats*. The members recommended that paddle canoes and flatboats be rented instead.

The meeting paused at 2:45 p.m. and resumed at 3:00 pm.

Ms. Durocher suggested that items 9 and 10 be removed from the agenda, given that item 9 had already been covered and there was nothing to present for item 10 other than what was addressed at the last meeting.

The committee began to talk about the item 5 of the agenda.

##### **5) COORDINATION BETWEEN RESEARCHERS: Revised mandate for Zou Zou Kuzyk**

Mr. Dunn presented a document entitled *Coastal Habitat Comprehensive Research Project, Editor – Synthesis Document, Roles and Responsibilities*. A copy was appended to the minutes.

Mr. Courcelles suggested adding in the document that Ms. Kuzyk will be present during presentations or events such as the validation tour and that she will also review the committee minutes once they are approved and share all relevant issues with the other teams of researchers when necessary.

It was agreed that Mr. Dunn will send this document to the committee secretary so that it can be distributed to all members and that the members will have two weeks to submit their comments to Mr. Dunn.

It was agreed that item 5 b) be removed from the agenda.

The committee came back on the item 4 of the agenda.

#### **4) FIELDWORK LOGISTICS**

##### **a. Update from Ernie Rabbitskin**

Mr. Rabbitskin said that virtually the entire issue had already been covered. He said that the team of researchers from New Hampshire and the UQAR team will be in Chisasibi at the same time and that he had found a house for them in Chisasibi available from June 28 to July 15. He said that the University of New Hampshire team will be made up of 3 people and the ISMER team will be made up of 4 or 5 people. He said he is still looking for accommodation for the researchers in Waswanipi.

##### **b. Mobile laboratory – Cost and equipment**

Mr. Tremblay showed members pictures of mobile laboratories that are currently available. He reminded everyone that the SC had decided to purchase a mobile laboratory. He added that depending on the model, it could take between 12 and 14 days to be delivered if the SC decides to order a different model from the ones shown. The total cost would be about \$26,000.

Mr. Tapiatic said that the mobile laboratory must be equipped with radial tires.

The members discussed the costs associated with the purchase of a mobile laboratory in light of the approved budget.

Mr. Courcelles reminded members that any purchase must be approved by the Niskamoon Corporation.

The members agreed that Mr. Tremblay and Mr. Courcelles would purchase the mobile laboratory.

Mr. Tremblay said a decision would have to be made regarding where the laboratory could be installed in each community concerned.

##### **c. Helicopters**

Mr. Dunn said he spoke to Transport Canada and that it was confirmed that no permit is required to leave the helicopter at the Eastmain airport.

He said it would be possible to leave a fuel tank or a barrel of fuel at the airport but that a pilot would have to verify on site because there is a transmission line nearby. He added that Chisasibi is the only site where the airport manager refused due to scheduled work.

Mr. Whiskeychan asked how many barrels of fuel will be required.

Mr. Tremblay said that we can estimate with the pilot how many barrels will be necessary but that based on his forecasts, approximately 5 to 10 per community will be required.

Mr. Dunn suggested that Mr. Whiskeychan contact the Waskaganish airport manager. He added that he will contact the Eastmain airport manager himself to discuss the possibility of building a hangar beside the airport.

## **6) COMMUNICATION PLAN**

Ms. Saganash said that a communication plan had been circulated for comments. She suggested sending it to Ms. Cynthia Taylor given that it could be useful in preparing the next edition of the newsletter.

Ms. Durocher said that it was agreed today that Mr. Rabbitskin would prepare a half-day preparatory meeting with the researchers and that the local representatives would be invited. She said that the researchers could explain the objectives of their research and what they are planning on doing on site.

Ms. Saganash asked if any progress had been made regarding the open house idea.

Mr. Dunn said that the researchers could inform the SC regarding when and how they would like to meet with the public and that the SC could organize everything.

Mr. Pachano suggested that researchers give a presentation during the local annual general meetings and the Cree Nation Government's regional annual general meeting.

Ms. Saganash presented the draft communication plan to members.

Ms. Durocher suggested targeting certain actions outlined in the communication plan and including them in a 2018 action plan.

Ms. Saganash will provide the secretary with both the communication plan and the action plan so that they can be sent to all members.

The committee began to talk about the item 8 of the agenda.

## **8) NEWSLETTER**

Mr. Dunn said that Ms. Cynthia Taylor had begun meeting with the team of researchers in order to understand their profile for the second edition of the newsletter. He added that the draft will be sent to all SC members for their comments.

Ms. Durocher suggested that the newsletter be sent to the Cree Trappers' Association.

Mr. Pachano suggested that it be sent to the local radio stations and newspapers.

Mr. Dunn said that the newsletter is available on the Niskamoon Web site.

The committee came back to item 7 of the agenda.

## **7) ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE NATIONAL POST (March 18, 2018)**

Mr. Dunn said that the article written by The Canadian Press was published in several newspapers, not only in the National Post. He added that he does not believe that the SC should take action related to the article.

Mr. Pachano said that if the article is not corrected, people will think that Niskamoon is speaking on behalf of Hydro-Québec.

Mr. Courcelles said that if the article is corrected, the journalists will simply write more articles.

Mr. Dunn agreed with Mr. Courcelles.

## **11) STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS' SCHEDULE FOR 2018**

The next meeting is scheduled to be held in Wemindji between June 26 and 28, as follows:

June 26 (afternoon): Pre-meeting for Cree representatives

June 27 and 28: SC meeting

It was agreed that Mr. Dunn would write to the researchers to invite them to the following SC meeting in Chisasibi from August 20 to 23, 2018.


## 12) TO DO LIST

It was agreed that the To Do List would be sent as soon as possible following the SC meeting and that it was therefore not necessary for the members to go over it together.

## 13) VARIA

Mr. Courcelles announced that Ms. Rousseau will no longer act as committee secretary as she has taken on new responsibilities. He thanked her for her services. He added that the new secretary will be appointed shortly.

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.



Carine Durocher