

COASTAL HABITAT RESEARCH PROGRAM
STEERING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 52
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE ON OCTOBER 27, 2022

PRESENT:	Félix Boulanger	EMRWB representative
	Réal Courcelles	Hydro-Québec
	Marc Dunn	Niskamoon Corporation
	Carine Durocher	Hydro-Québec
	Jean-Philippe Gilbert	Hydro-Québec
	Louie Kanatewat	Cree Nation of Chisasibi
	John Lameboy	Cree Nation of Chisasibi
	Josée Lefebvre	Canadian Wildlife Service
	Geraldine Mark	Cree Nation of Wemindji
	Gregory Mayappo	Cree Nation of Eastmain
	Ernest Moses	Cree Nation of Waskaganish
	Ernie Rabbitskin	Niskamoon Corporation
	Emily Sinave	Cree Nation Government (partly)
	Alain Tremblay	Hydro-Québec
ABSENT:	James Bobbish	Cree Nation of Chisasibi
	Roderick Pachano	Cree Nation of Chisasibi
	Robbie Tapiatic	Cree Nation of Chisasibi
GUESTS:	Zou Zou Kuzyk	University of Manitoba
	Lindsey Carlson	University of Saskatchewan
	Armand Larocque	University of New Brunswick
	Mary O'Connor	University of British Columbia

PROPOSED AGENDA

11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. pre-meeting

1:30 p.m. to 16:30 p.m.

- 1) Approval of the agenda
- 2) Revision and approval of the Minutes of the 47, 48 and 49th meetings
- 3) Symposium

- a. Feedback
 - b. Workshops results
- 4) Update Research Teams
- a. Kaleigh manuscript
 - b. Kevin Clyne's thesis
 - c. Artic Net – Toronto
 - d. Brant project update
- 5) Update on the James Bay Coastal Limnimeters Program
- 6) Update on the Website
- 7) Update on the mobile lab
- 9) Next meetings

CHAIR AND SECRETARY

Marc Dunn chaired the meeting. Mhaly Bois-Charlebois acted as Secretary.

The meeting began at 1:15 p.m. on Thursday, October 27, 2022.

1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The chair reviewed the agenda, and it was approved with the following changes:

Removal of items 8 and 9 because there is no update.

[Secretary's note: the minutes reflect the order in which items were discussed.]

Mr. Dunn said that Brigitte Leblon has some reservations about some of the minutes and reminded the members that they need to be disciplined about the minutes, especially when they are not approved.

Réal Courcelles said that he believes the minutes should not be influenced by anyone who is not a Committee member.

Mr. Dunn said he explained to Ms. Leblon that the minutes reflect what people say, regardless of whether their comments are right or not.

Carine Durocher said that maybe the minutes should be less detailed.

Mr. Dunn said that it can be difficult to distinguish between what is important to include and what is not.

Ms. Durocher asked if the minutes are on the website.

Mr. Dunn said they are and added that he is willing to stand by what he said.

Mr. Courcelles said he is of the same opinion. He said that people need to know where the conclusions come from, so he also stands by what he said.

2) REVISION AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 47, 48 AND 49TH MEETINGS

The chair reviewed the minutes page by page and the minutes were approved with some modifications.

Ms. Leblon joined the meeting.

Mr. Dunn explained that the Committee had made some revisions.

Ms. Leblon said that some of the comments were very discouraging for the University of New Brunswick team and that it was almost defamation.

Mr. Dunn said that the Committee went through the problematic sections and made some changes, but that minutes are for Committee members and reflect what people said. He explained that it doesn't mean that people's comments are true. He added that minutes are not public until they are approved.

Ms. Leblon said they should write this.

Mr. Courcelles said that minutes are meant to show what people said and that people stand by their comments.

Mr. Dunn said that he appreciates that Ms. Leblon has concerns but doesn't agree that there is defamation.

Ms. Leblon said that what is written in the minutes is not true. She gave the example of the statement that her team doesn't collaborate with the other researchers. She said that her team shared information with the other researchers. She added that it is also not true that people are saying they do not agree with her team's results. She said that , the proof that this isn't true is that Jean-Francois Giroux used those results. Ms. Leblon said that she cannot accept these statements and that she is devastated.

Mr. Dunn said that Ms. Leblon mentioned a few issues in the minutes and the Committee went through them. He added that Committee members don't know the level of collaboration between the researchers, and that he made it clear, in the minutes, that this comment was based on what he heard. He explained that what is written is just what the Committee heard and that if it isn't true, other researchers will say it isn't true and their comments will also be included in the minutes. Mr.

Dunn said that, if he is wrong, he invites people to correct him. He added that the second item of their discussion regards the protocol they must follow. He said that Kevin Clyne did not follow the protocol, but it is clear in the minutes that this was the Committee's fault, because master's theses were not included in the protocol they defined. He said that he is not attacking anybody, and he stands by what he said. Mr. Dunn said that he was told that collaboration between Ms. Leblon's team and the other researchers was not ideal; he added that he's sorry if it was hard for them to read that, but it's his job to bring that information to the Committee if people who are part of the project are not happy.

Ms. Leblon said that they always say yes to researchers' requests, but if people don't want to work with them then there's nothing they can do. She said that it's not her responsibility to force people to collaborate. She added that Mr. Giroux and Julian Idrobo included her results.

Mr. Dunn said that Ms. Bois-Charlebois is taking notes, and that everything being said will be in the minutes.

Ms. Durocher thanked Ms. Leblon for sharing these concerns with the Committee and said that it showed her strength in defending her team. She pointed out that there are two different issues here: first, the minutes that Ms. Leblon saw were preliminary and had not been reviewed. She explained that the Committee normally reviews the minutes and makes corrections. She added that the second thing is that the minutes are intended for the Committee's purposes, and are not like a scientific review. She said that minutes are not designed to tell the truth, but just to reflect what was said during the meetings. She stressed that it's important to take minutes for what they are and not overestimate their scope.

Ms. Leblon said that her team's reputation is on the line.

Ms. Durocher said that the minutes reflect the situation as it was at that moment. She said that to have a global perspective of the project, one would have to look at all the minutes, not just one document. She added that today's minutes will include her comments.

Alain Tremblay thanked Ms. Leblon for sharing. He pointed out that it is also difficult for the Committee to coordinate all the different researchers and the information they share. He said that, sometimes, they have to manage openly uncomfortable situations. He added that it's important for members and speakers to have the freedom to say what they want and then correct their comments if needed. He explained that this is why there is a second reading of the minutes, so that they are approved before they are published, but that it is also important for everyone to have a safe space to share their opinions.

Ms. Leblon said that she agrees with this, and that's why she asked the Committee to correct the false information, which impacts her team's reputation. She said that the people who said those things should correct their comments. She added that when things are said behind her back, she doesn't have the chance to react and explain her team's decisions. She gave the following example: she was once asked why she doesn't share her team's method, and the reason was that CERRI and Dante Torio were opposed to sharing. She said that these elements are important to consider: it was difficult for her to share everything because it was reviewed by CERRI.

Mr. Tremblay said that he understands, but to view this as defamation is an exaggeration. He said that he didn't believe it was anyone's intention to attack anyone else, and that the discussion was about things they can improve. He added that it's a process parties need to go through to adjust their speech and discussion approaches, and then move on. Mr. Tremblay said if the things that were said hurt people, they need to talk about it, but that they must do so respectfully.

Mr. Dunn said that, with regard to what Ms. Leblon stated about the sharing of data, he personally takes responsibility for her not sharing. He explained that he told her not to share the data because it was too technical for the members. He added that the other members wanted to see it, so it put her in a bad position. Mr. Dunn said he is very sensitive to what Ms. Leblon is saying, but that the information in the minutes is not defamatory. He said that the Committee reviewed the minutes and made corrections to put everything in context, and that they might do it again, but that the comments reflect things they had to resolve as a Committee at that time. He added that the minutes have been clarified and the Committee members were sensitive and tried their best to acknowledge certain things, but that they could not make all of the corrections Ms. Leblon asked for.

Ms. Kuzyk said she has not reviewed the minutes, because this is not part of her mandate, and she was only there for part of the discussion. She said that she appreciates that, as a SC, they must discuss things, and she understands that minutes are for their own uses. Ms. Kuzyk said that she doesn't think she ever reported on the collaboration, but on integration. She pointed out that it is a large research consortium, where everyone has role, and it just felt particularly relevant. She added that they all have things to deliver, and they focus on these things as efficiently as they can, and she didn't pay attention to individuals' feelings. She said she apologizes for that and told Ms. Leblon she should have brought this to her.

Ms. Leblon said that she just saw this a few minutes before. She said that some teams have been put aside and they must be careful in what they say because it will be in minutes and will be public. She said that the minutes have to be corrected.

Ms. Kuzyk said to Ms. Leblon to address the problems to her.

Mr. Dunn said that the minutes will be revised as discussed.

3) UPDATE – RESEARCH TEAMS
a. Kaleigh manuscript

This item was deferred.

b. Kevin Clyne's thesis

Mr. Dunn said that Kevin Clyne will defend his thesis and he asked Ms. Leblon if Kevin could give the same presentation to the SC because not everyone will be able to attend.

Ms. Leblon said she can give it now. She began a presentation entitled "Use of Landsat Imagery Time Series and Random Forests Classifier to Reconstruct Eelgrass Bed Distribution Maps in Eeyou Istchee." A copy of the presentation is appended to the minutes.

Ms. Durocher said that there is a lot of work under these results. She said she would like to understand more about the difference between the data if they use the areas with turbidity versus not a lot of turbidity.

Ms. Leblon said that the total eelgrass surface in 1988 could be different from the total surface in 2019 because the water was more turbid. She said that they do not compare the exact same area from one year to another.

Ms. Durocher said that, based on her understanding, this means that the areas that have turbid water are not the same from one year to another, and that the amount in the red column is not necessarily in the same area from one year to another.

Ms. Leblon said that was correct and explained that it's because there was a large fire in 1999 and another in 2013 in Eastmain. She added that, because of these fires, the impacts are different on the bay. She said her team demonstrated that this turbid water came from the fires. She explained that once the leaves are gone, and by the time they come back, the rain will continue to flush the dirty stuff in the watershed.

Ms. Durocher asked if the effect continues even that many years after the fires.

Ms. Leblon answered that it does, and that the effect can still be seen six years after the fire.

Ms. Durocher said that, for example, in James Bay, most of the trees don't have leaves, and asked if the effect is the same, even if the roots stay in place.

Ms. Leblon answered that there was a fire in Eastmain twice and this kind of ash flushes very quickly.

Armand Larocque showed some pictures.

Ms. Durocher asked if this is something they also see elsewhere, or if it's more present in northern Québec because of the slow revegetation. She said she imagines it's not like this in regions where the trees grow faster.

Ms. Leblon said that the reason they focus on the fires that much is because they're related to climate change.

Mr. Dunn said that he doesn't disagree with a lot of the information Ms. Leblon is sharing, but that he finds it interesting that the effects last a few years. He said that he's having a hard time wrapping his head around the connection between these results and the project, and that he guesses it is turbidity. He added that he appreciates the fact that fires last longer and are stronger, however, he considers that fires are a part of life in the north. He said that forests have always burned, so he's having a hard time seeing this as a new phenomenon.

Ms. Leblon said that turbidity is not only related to fires, but also to eelgrass disappearing. She said that with the changes in the climate, fires remain a natural process, but happen more often. She added that the vegetation doesn't have time to grow back and the soil is more sensitive because there is no vegetation. Ms. Leblon explained that the works of Mr. Bergeron from the Université du

Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue show that the frequency and intensity of fires have increased and that fires are returning in the same areas, so it is more problematic than before.

Ms. Kuzyk said that Ms. Leblon might have forgotten to share this information with the group. She said she wants to make sure that this is not going to cause an increase in turbidity in the entire bay. She added that her team has incorporated the fires into the larger picture and that, based on their findings, if erosion and fires increase in the future, that is a concern only in some areas.

Ms. Leblon said she is open to debating this and that she didn't share the information because nobody asked, and it's difficult to include this in the symposium.

Ms. Kuzyk said that these results are too preliminary at this time. She said that there are several lines of evidence suggesting that fires don't have a big impact on eelgrass. She added that they will have to think about how to treat information on fire and turbidity in the future, to know how important it is.

Ms. Leblon said that this kind of study is not just about prediction, but involves looking for historical data. She said that for the relation between turbidity and eelgrass, her team intends to isolate maps and see the effect of fires on turbidity and then eelgrass.

Ms. Kuzyk said that she believes the discussion is getting a little too detailed for this meeting and that they should continue the conversation between researchers.

Ms. Durocher asked them to keep the SC updated.

Ms. Leblon said that, with regard to her team's work, the project is over, and they did what they were asked to do. She explained that these fires were not part of the project, but were a discovery. She added that they never planned to include the fire effect and they were not planning on doing more investigation.

Ms. Durocher said that she understands and explained that what she meant was to have an update on Ms. Leblon and Ms. Kuzyk's discussion.

c. Artic Net – Toronto

This item was discussed later in the meeting.

d. Brant project update

This item was deferred.

4) SYMPOSIUM

a. Feedback

Louie Kanatewat said that he believes the people of Chisasibi were very happy with what they heard at the symposium. He said that they would like more information on what is going on with the geese, because there are fewer and fewer of them. He added that the tallymen, like himself, did not collect many geese and that goose numbers continue to decline every year, with last year being the worst year yet. Mr. Kanatewat said that he is concerned that, soon, he will not collect any geese. As for the symposium, however, he said the tallymen were very satisfied with what they heard.

Mr. Dunn said that there was a lot of discussion about waterfowl, and a lot of comments about the uncertainties around eelgrass. He said that the land users want to think about the next steps for the future.

Mr. Kanatewat agreed and said that land users had other ways of tracking geese before, and that eelgrass will never be the way it was because it has been too many years now since it disappeared. He added that land users have started talking about a goose hunting project, or about transplanting berries along the coast to encourage geese to keep returning to the area.

Ms. Leblon thanked Mr. Kanatewat for welcoming her team when they went on the territory. She said that, regarding goose habitat, what they see is that the tree line is moving north because of climate change, so there is less and less tundra. She added that this impacts the geese. Ms. Leblon said that they can check with Mr. Giroux and map these changes on the land.

Ms. Bois-Charlebois said that the symposium was great, and that, even though there were fewer people than at the previous one, attendance was still high. She added that the researchers did a good job presenting everything in plain language.

Ernest Moses said that he wished the researchers had more input on the causes of eelgrass decline. He said that there are impacts to releasing water in certain areas where water was not released before and that this can't be ignored. He added that the impacts on the habitat are ongoing. Mr. Moses said that before EM-1 and Sarcelle Rupert the territory was totally different to what it is now. He said that this was a lesson learned: that every time you touch the environment, it's going to have an impact on its uses. He also said that the pandemic affected the research, and the researchers and everyone involved did a tremendous job. He added that the Crees did a good job when the researchers were unable to come to the territory. He said that they still don't really understand what happened with the eelgrass, but that from now on, they have to brainstorm and work together to plan the future.

Ernie Rabbitskin said that people associate him with eelgrass and research. He said that the interpreter did a really good job, and that people were listening to the symposium on the radio. He said that they told him they really appreciated it and were very happy with it.

b. Workshops results

Mr. Dunn said that those who were present at the workshop would like to continue the research. He said that he talked with Josée Lefèbvre about collaring geese on CH7, because there are nesting geese on that trapline. He added that they would discuss it further and that he hopes they can work something out. He said that monitoring eelgrass is important and that there are more shifts on the shoreline. He explained that shorelines consist of recovering habitats, berries, eelgrass. He said that

information on geese and eelgrass needs to be merged to determine the best intervention along the coast. He added that they have no funding now, but that he wanted to propose something.

Mr. Courcelles said that he was pushing for Niskamoon's participation in the Brant research. He said that, of course, it would be great to have more data. He said that he appreciates the offer of the CH7 tallyman, which could yield more information on geese movement, and he added that Mr. Giroux mentioned that two geese are still equipped with transmitters. Mr. Courcelles said that he will push for the Niskamoon Board to provide additional time for Mr. Giroux to complete the research he started with these transmitters. He said that he believes it's important and that they could do a pilot project to determine how to attract more geese to the coast.

Mr. Dunn proposed creating a working group to discuss future research. He said that he recommends including Mélanie Leblanc in the group, because she is very motivated and has great relationships with the land users. He also recommended including Mr. Rabbitskin, Mr. Kanatewat and somebody from Hydro-Québec. He said that maybe Félix Boulanger would be interested and that they will have a discussion with EMR.

Mr. Boulanger said that he would be interested. He agreed that Ms. Leblanc has a good relationship with the land users. He said that it was shown at the workshop that there is interest in future research and that it should not focus only on eelgrass, but also on waterfowl.

Mr. Dunn said that he will delegate someone to draft the terms of reference and propose a framework for a future phase. He added that he will follow up with the Committee about this. He said that the steering committee will continue for this project, but land users are excited to know about what is coming.

The members of the Committee agreed on what was said.

5) ARCTIC NET - TORONTO

Mr. Dunn said that many of the researchers asked if the SC will go to the event. He said that they haven't registered. He added that they are looking for funding, at least on the Cree side, and that he believes they'll obtain it. He asked the Cree members if they would be interested in going.

Mr. Tremblay said that he would go.

Mr. Dunn asked if they would do a meeting at the same time. He said he can't go because he has other obligations at that time.

Mr. Courcelles said that if Mr. Dunn, Robbie Tapiatic and some of the others can't go, he would suggest waiting until after the ArcticNet event to have a meeting. He said it will be difficult to plan a meeting before Christmas.

Mr. Dunn said maybe it should be after the new year.

6) SUMMARY DOC

Mr. Dunn said that the researchers would like to finalize the summary document.

Ms. Kuzyk said that the first draft of the summary was written. She added that it was prepared by the researchers and they want to acknowledge how much Cree knowledge has been incorporated. She said that it includes a few paragraphs to say that they do not represent anyone other than themselves and that they incorporated Cree knowledge. She shared the draft on the screen.

Mr. Dunn said that it's a very humble perspective and it makes their role clear. He said that this approach will be important going forward. He added that some people will try to make them say things that the results don't fully support.

Ms. Kuzyk said that it's just to recognize the limits of the knowledge they were able to gather in the allotted time. She said that she will send the draft to the members for comments.

Ms. Durocher asked to see the final version before it's published. She asked in what journal or media the summary will be published.

Mr. Dunn replied that it will be on CBC North.

Mr. Dunn asked Ms. Kuzyk to circulate the document.

Mr. Courcelles asked Ms. Kuzyk to send it to Ms. Bois-Charlebois for her to distribute to the members.

Ms. Kuzyk said it would be great to receive the comments by next week, if possible.

Mr. Dunn said that it would be done by end-of-day, Tuesday.

7) UPDATE ON THE JAMES BAY COASTAL LIMNIMETERS PROGRAM

Mr. Courcelles said that he and Mr. Dunn met with Léo Parent-Sirois (Corporate secretary of Niskamoon Corporation), Paul del Giorgio (University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM)), Pernilla Talec (Cree Nation government CNG) and Ernie Rabbitskin (Niskamoon Corporation). He added that he will review the memo Mr. Sirois sent them and share it with the group for comments. He said that there will be a contract between CNG, Niskamoon, Hydro-Québec and UQAM. Mr. Courcelles said that he will have a revised draft of the contract by next week, which he will finalize and send to the parties for comments and internal sharing with their colleagues. He said that he would like to sign the contract by the end of the year. He asked Mr. Rabbitskin if he had an update on the maintenance of the helicopter pad landing.

Mr. Rabbitskin said that they'd been asked not to do a pad yet.

Mr. Courcelles asked if Gilbert Dufresne said when it will happen.

Mr. Rabbitskin answered that Mr. Dufresne didn't say.

Mr. Courcelles said that he will contact him.

Mr. Dunn said that they need to finalize this before the end of the year because the contract with UQAM ends at the end of the year.

Mr. Courcelles said that it won't be a problem and that he will have it done by the following week.

8) UPDATE ON THE WEBSITE

This item was deferred.

9) UPDATE ON THE MOBILE LAB

This item was deferred.

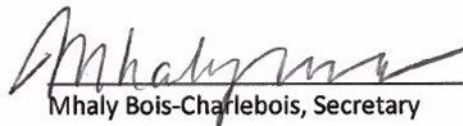
10) NEXT MEETINGS

A meeting was scheduled for January 18, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.



Marc Dunn, Chair of the meeting



Mhaly Bois-Charlebois, Secretary