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## MINUTES OF THE MEETING STEERING COMMITTEE (SC)

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Meeting No° 61  
**Tuesday, September 26, 2023**  
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM  
Videoconference on TEAMS

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<b>Present:</b>	Felix Boulanger Marc Dunn Luc Duquette Carine Durocher Jean-Philippe Gilbert John Lameboy Mélanie Leblanc Josée Lefebvre Geraldine Mark Johanna Ménélas Graeme Morin Ernest Moses Alain Tremblay	EMRWB representative Nation Government Niskamoon Corporation Hydro-Québec Hydro-Québec Hydro-Québec Cree Nation of Chisasibi Niskamoon Corporation Canadian Wildlife Service Cree Nation of Wemindji Hydro-Québec Cree Nation Government Cree Nation of Waskaganish Hydro-Québec
<b>Guest:</b>	Caroline Fink-Mercier Paul del Giorgio Jean-François Giroux Julián Idrobo Zou Zou Kuzyk Michaela de Melo	ISMER-UQAM University of Quebec in Montreal UQAM University of British Columbia University of Manitoba Postdoctoral Scholar UQAM
<b>Absence:</b>	James Bobbish Daniel Brosseau Louie Kanatewat Gregory Mayappo Roderick Pachano Ernie Rabbitskin Robbie Tapiatic Lindsay Carlson	Cree Nation of Chisasibi Hydro-Québec Cree Nation of Chisasibi Cree Nation of Eastmain Cree Nation of Chisasibi Niskamoon Corporation Cree Nation of Chisasibi University of Saskatchewan

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## MEETING CHAIR AND SECRETARY

Luc Duquette chaired the meeting, and Johanna Ménélas acted as the meeting secretary.

## PROPOSED AGENDA

1. Approval of the Agenda
2. Review of the manuscript
  - Presentation and discussion on the manuscript titled "Cree-driven community-partnered research framework to gain insight on environmental change in coastal waters of subarctic Canada" co-led by Caroline Fink-Mercier, Melanie Leblanc, and with Zou Zou Kuzyk as the senior author.
3. Hydrometric Stations – Helipads
4. Presentation on Atlantic Brant Research (Lindsay Carlson)
  - Presentation and discussion of reports on "Ascribing the importance of Atlantic brant staging areas for holistic conservation planning".
5. Review of the manuscript (Jean-François Giroux, C. Julián Idrobo)
  - Presentation and discussion on the manuscript titled "Integrating studies on Canada geese and land use: a dialogue between Cree knowledge and western science" authored by Jean-François Giroux, C. Julián Idrobo, and Manon Sorais.
6. Miscellaneous
7. Summary and Next Steps
8. Next Meeting

## ROUND TABLE

A round-table introduction allowed everyone to become acquainted to Graham Morin (**Mr. Morin**).

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### 1. Approval of the Agenda

The Chair reviewed the agenda, and no additional points were proposed. Thus, the agenda was approved as presented.

It was noted that Ernie Rabbitskin (**Mr. Rabbitskin**) was not present at the meeting, and therefore, Marc Dunn (**Mr. Dunn**) would be addressing point 3 on the agenda.

Lindsay Carlson's (**Mrs. Carlson**) absence was also acknowledged, leading to the decision to defer the Presentation on Atlantic Brant Research to the next meeting.

## **Niskamoon Board Meeting Highlights - Phase II Support**

Mr. Dunn provided a summary of Niskamoon's last meeting regarding phase II. The board of Niskamoon reached an agreement to support phase II, which involved raising \$600,000. This support extended to the drafting of the support letter and a potential support resolution from local communities. In addition, Mr. Dunn planned to connect with Geraldine Mark (**Mrs. Mark**) and Ernest Moses (**Mr. Moses**) regarding the schedule for the next council meeting within the relevant communities. This update emphasized the ongoing preparations and progress, with special recognition given to Melanie Leblanc (**Mrs. Leblanc**) for her dedicated contributions. Paul del Giorgio (**Mr. Del Giorgio**) expressed his gratitude for the update and extended thanks on behalf of everyone present.

### **2. Review of the manuscript – Cree-driven community-partnered research framework to gain insight on environmental change in coastal waters of subarctic Canada**

Zou Zou Kuzyk (**Mrs. Kuzyk**) proceeded to present the presentation on the manuscript titled "Cree-driven community-partnered research framework to gain insight on environmental change in coastal waters of subarctic Canada." A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes for reference. She expressed how they felt really fortunate to have research protocol from the Committee. She then explained how disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary methods were used. Mrs. Kuzyk moved on to the workflow that supported co-development, community engagement, and co-validation of knowledge, highlighting associated benefits and the mechanisms that contributed to those aspects. Afterward, she explained the factors contributing to the saliency, legitimacy, and credibility of the knowledge. In conclusion, credit was given to everyone who played a role in the research.

### **Discussion**

Mr. Dunn highlighted the substantial improvement in the quality of the article over time. Although it wasn't initially aligned with their expectations, the final product was of high quality. The early stages of the project were considerably political, but this phase marked a significant shift towards realization. The process was driven by a strong commitment to achieving substantial results in the James Bay.

Mr. Dunn had to departed during this discussion.

Carine Durocher (**Mrs. Durocher**) expressed her appreciation for the paper, noting its strong clarity in the summary on page 6. She did have some comments to provide, which she planned to send via email. She raised a question about the timeline, as the monitoring seemed to have stopped in 2009, even though Hydro-Québec (**HQ**) continued some monitoring until 2022. Mrs. Kuzyk acknowledged the comments.

The Chair inquired about the deadline. Mrs. Kuzyk indicated that the researchers needed to submit their comments by the end of the week, but she was hesitant to impose a strict deadline on others, especially on the Cree, as she wished they had time to review at their own pace. The Chair insisted on a clear deadline. She then suggested that comments should be provided within two weeks and recommended sending an email indicating when to expect these comments, confirming that comments should be received by October 10<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Durocher raised a point about co-authorship, suggesting that if everyone were co-authors, the article should reflect or nuance their perspectives. Mrs. Kuzyk expressed the need to revise that statement. Mr. Morin, being a recent member of the Committee, acknowledged that he couldn't be a co-author but expressed his positive impression of the article.

**Decision:** Members should submit their comments on the manuscript, if any, by October 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **3. Hydrometric Stations – Helipads**

Mr. Dunn read the text he received from Mr. Rabbitskin and subsequently highlighted the following elements: The Secretary should inquire Gregory Mayappo (**Mr. Mayappo**) to validate the sites mentioned in the email. The Chair will oversee the responsibilities related to Gilbert Dufresne (**Mr. Dufresne**).

*Oct 11-18 helipads installations @ hydrometric stations. I sent the sites and details of the required helipads and clearing of the area to Johanna.  
Some sites are accessible by vehicles and by foot (Maquatua)  
Old Factory, Henry Stewart said it cannot be accessed by boat right now cause the river is very low cause of the dry season. Workers have to flown in. He said he was could go there before but not this year.  
Waskaganish: Ernest said the sites are only accessible by helicopter  
Eastmain: confirm with Gregory about the sites.  
Workers can be picked up at the communities.  
Payments: we will pay them directly from Niskamoon. We didn't send the FA to the band for these.  
Not sure how HQ want to do it yet. I tried contacting Gilbert Dufresne but he hasn't replied.  
I don't know whether they'll wait for the workers or drop em off and pick up later. I'll confirm this later.  
If they can get workers to access these sites on their own, even better!  
Two workers per site for safety reasons  
Agda  
Merci!*

### **4. Presentation on Atlantic Brant Research**

Due to the absence of Mrs. Carlson, this point was deferred to the next meeting.

## **5. Review of the manuscript – Integrating studies on Canada geese and land use: a dialogue between Cree knowledge and western science**

Following the requested presentation of the manuscript titled "*Integrating studies on Canada geese and land use: a dialogue between Cree knowledge and western science*," Julián Idrobo (**Mr. Idrobo**) and Jean-François Giroux (**Mr. Giroux**) delivered a presentation with the same title on the Eeyou Istchee Coastal Habitat Research Project. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes for reference.

Mr. Idrobo and Mr. Giroux presented a detailed account of how goose populations have changed over time, shedding light on various key aspects. They began by highlighting that 50 years ago, geese would follow a predictable pattern, feeding on eelgrass at low tide and berries inland at high tide. This resulted in a successful hunt with numerous established goose camps. However, over the last two decades, these patterns have become erratic. Geese are no longer flying back and forth between the coast and inland areas, mainly due to reduced eelgrass and berries, resulting in a much less successful fall hunt.

The presentation emphasized the value of a dialogue between Cree knowledge and western science in understanding these changes. Cree knowledge, rooted in the experience of Cree land users in the region, offers insights into goose behavior, migration, and local abundance. It plays a crucial role in comprehending how Cree hunting practices, livelihoods, and ways of life depend on goose population dynamics.

In parallel, western science is vital for identifying different goose populations in Eeyou Istchee, as they are managed separately at the flyway level by various wildlife agencies. A combination of traditional aerial surveys and advanced GPS tracking is used to determine goose distribution and habitat use. The presentation underscored the importance of considering environmental changes at both local and continental scales, focusing on the entire east coast, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing these shifts.

Continental changes, including an increase in the long-necked goose population and the molting migration of subadults, were explored, with potential impacts on the short-necked goose population discussed. The presentation also noted a shift in goose feeding habits from natural to agricultural habitats, particularly cornfields, which offer highly digestible and profitable food sources. Furthermore, increased disturbances from activities like helicopter use and the presence of bald eagles were identified as factors that could affect goose behavior and feeding patterns.

In conclusion, this dialogue between Cree knowledge and western science serves as a valuable resource for comprehending the transformations in goose populations and identifying the driving forces behind these changes. It is evident that both sources of

knowledge are essential in providing a holistic view of this complex issue, combining the insights of local experience and scientific analysis.

### **Comments and questions:**

The Chair, in acknowledging the presentation, expressed gratitude for its assistance in understanding the relevant paper.

John Lameboy (**Mr. Lameboy**) raised concerns and questions about the manuscript, noting the unmentioned change in salinity. He shared insights on the altered flyway, emphasizing the impact on geese behavior, particularly in the fall when, despite the presence of cornfields, the geese appeared skinny due to the lack of eelgrass. Mr. Giroux responded, explaining the manuscript's focus on information exchange between Cree knowledge and survey data, deferring detailed salinity discussions to other works. He also highlighted historical bird flight patterns and the decline in hunters affecting geese behavior.

Mr. Idrobo contributed from the Cree knowledge perspective, referencing his recent report on salinity changes. He discussed how geese behavior shifted, affecting hunting traditions. Mr. Lameboy raised concerns about the manuscript's representation of diverse communities, emphasizing the need for individualized reports. The Chair requested a re-presentation for better clarity.

Regarding community specifics, Mr. Idrobo clarified the generalization in reports, explaining that observations were tied to the presence of eelgrass. Mr. Giroux expanded on landscapes and behavior further south, and Mr. Lameboy emphasized variations in coastal communities and their evolving practices.

Discussion shifted to spring migration and community-specific practices. Mr. Giroux highlighted changes in snow geese distribution, affecting habitats. Mr. Lameboy noted that while Chisasibi continued harvesting, other communities, like Waskaganish, faced declines. Decision-wise, members were urged to submit comments by October 10th.

The Chair encouraged views from Wemindji and Waskaganish members. Mr. Moses offered insights on the broader impact of eelgrass studies, suggesting the need for ongoing engagement with land users. He stressed the challenges of monitoring and the importance of understanding changes beyond eelgrass. Expressing pride in the team's efforts, he emphasized the ongoing journey, acknowledging the positive impact of diverse perspectives. Mr. Moses thanked all people involved in the study, recognizing the ongoing challenges and the importance of continued engagement in the study.

**Decision:** Members should submit their comments, if any, by October 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **6. Miscellaneous**

This item was previously addressed when Mr. Dunn provided a recap of Niskamoon's last meeting regarding phase II.

## **7. Summary and Next Steps**

The secretary offered an overview of the next actions to be taken:

- The deadline for submitting comments on both manuscripts has been established for October 10<sup>th</sup>.

It was stressed that the guidelines pertaining to manuscript submissions is a work in progress and not static document. The Secretary mentioned that Mrs. Leblanc and she have clarified the process, resulting in some minor adjustments. Mr. Dunn further noted that these modifications to the guidelines will necessitate approval from the Committee.

## **8. Next Meeting**

Following the exchange on the availability of each, it was agreed that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 18, 2023, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, via Teams.

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## **ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING**

Considering that the allotted time has elapsed, the meeting is adjourned at 3:03 PM.



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Johanna Ménélas, Secretary