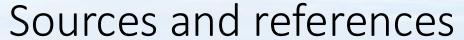
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SHB Polar Bear Hearing
Whapmagoostui / Kuujuarapik
February 5, 2025

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- Cree Knowledge of Polar Bears in the Eeyou Marine Region (EMRWB, 2020)
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- Observation database Direct observation or evidence collected by CTA-EMR officers
 - CDD-G&GOUS DECK Cd-GDDSDG-DP-CPSDOUNGS DACDL4 CTA-EMR-de Addenses
- James Bay Polar Bear Ecology (McGill U) (2020-present)
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- Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Polar Bears in the Northern Eeyou Marine Region (Laforest et al., 2018)

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Polar Bear Report – COTA (Pachano, 2021)

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Cree Knowledge of Polar Bears in the Eeyou Marine Region (EMRWB, 2020) Goals:

- Collect Cree knowledge on the importance of polar bear, observations and interactions;
- Learn about changes in distribution and abundance;
- Contribute to the inclusion of TEK in the QC-**EMR-NMR Management Plan**
- Guide management measures in the EMR in the future



CREE KNOWLEDGE OF POLAR BEARS IN THE **EEYOU MARINE REGION**

A Report Based on Information Shared by Cree Knowledge Holders from the Coastal Communities of Whapmagoostui, Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain, and Waskaganish

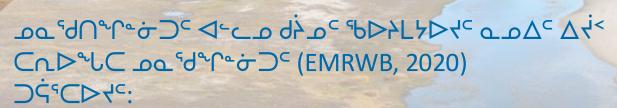






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Cree Knowledge of Polar Bears in the Eeyou Marine Region (EMRWB, 2020)

- •Collaboration between EMRWB, CNG and CTA

 ΛαζδΛΓς Δσς ΕΜRWB-d, CNG-d, Δς δς ΓζΛς CTA-dσς
- •Based on 27 interviews conducted by local CTA-EMR officers in Whapmagoostui, Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain and Waskaganish in 2017



CREE KNOWLEDGE OF POLAR BEARS IN THE EEYOU MARINE REGION

A Report Based on Information Shared by Cree Knowledge Holders from the Coastal Communities of Whapmagoostui, Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain, and Waskaganish









Cultural Importance and Perception of Polar Bears

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Many expressed great respect for polar bear.

- "I respect the way they hunt. We need to protect them, they are in decline."
 Resident of Chisasibi
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Cultural Importance and Perception of Polar Bears

- "We are part of the same ecosystem as polar bears, so we need to learn to live with them. Polar bears are territorial, so are humans, so we need to live within certain boundaries. We need to create that balance with polar bears. We have to co-exist together because it they don't exist then we cannot exist. We are tied in together."
 - Resident of Chisasibi

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Cultural Importance and Perception of Polar Bears

Cree do not necessarily give the same importance to the polar bears that the Inuit do, as they do not usually harvest it. Some mentioned human-bear conflicts as well.

- "They're not important because they destroyed my cabin so I am mad." Resident of Wemindji



Cultural Importance and Perception of Polar Bears

- "The Cree would tend to support the Inuit in these concerns because of their respect for the Inuit community. – Chisasibi
- "Polar bears are not really important to me. But they're important for Wemindji tourism, the tourists like to see the polar bears." Resident of Wemindji
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Distribution and Abundance \[\lambda \lambda

- "The reason they are starting to come around the shore is that the bay is not freezing so they can't go further out to go hunt" – Resident of Wemindji
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Distribution and Abundance

- "They're starting to come more to the land looking for food, they're
 hungry, plus the ice is melting every year due to climate change. They're
 swimming far to look for food, I've never seen it like this for 20 years, it has
 changed a lot." Resident of Wemindji



Distribution and Abundance

Significant increase in polar bear observations in many areas

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- "There were not many bears back in 1948, we rarely saw them back then. In 2009 they really started appearing in this area. They usually arrive in March/April in Charlton Island. In 2017, we saw more bears than in previous years." Resident of Waskaganish



Distribution and Abundance

- "I saw polar bears when we went to Twin Islands. One time we saw about 5 or 6, we only saw them on the North Island, and we landed on one of the islands but we didn't go far from the plane, we only stayed near the plane." Resident of Eastmain
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Polar Bear observations near Waskaganish and Eastmain: ΔΔ^C CdケトもCC/Lゼ JdらPσらし Δらていこ:

- Most observations on Charlton Island and neighbouring islands + Cape Hope
- Several cabins on those islands (goose hunting) & significant number of observations
 & interactions
- Many observations during fieldwork or training (bird surveys, polar bear study, COTA captain training, etc)



Polar Bear observations near Wemindji:

- Large number of observations on Twin Islands, Solomon Temple Island
- Twins Islands provide critical denning habitat in the winter and staging during the ice-free months
- Solomon Temple PPSCo
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Polar Bear observations near Wemindji:

- Some observations during fieldwork (bird surveys, polar bear study, etc)
- No cabin or traditional activity on these islands
- Some observations + human-bear interactions on the coast
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Polar Bear observations near Chisasibi and Whapmagoostui:

- Small number of observations in Chisasibi, mostly on the coast or small islands near the coast



Polar Bear observations near Chisasibi and Whapmagoostui:

- Larger number of observations in Whapmagoostui, mostly along the coast, on Long Island or on the ice
- Several observations close to the community of Whapmagoostui
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Harvest

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Cree hunters do not harvest polar bear for subsistence

- "Hardly any Cree hunters go out to hunt for polar bear. They do not go out to hunt for them or search for them. Polar bear are killed opportunistically if they cross the path of a Cree hunter and he decides to kill the bear, if the bear threatens life and property." – Resident of Whapmagoostui
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Harvest

- "People no longer pursue bears actively like they did in the past. Back then even the Cree were eating polar bears. Inuit were more aggressive in their pursuit of polar bears." – Resident of Chisasibi
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Safety of land users b<Ada'DJC OPDOCUCT 4'5'6" Dabdic

The increase in human-bear conflicts in the last few years is a concern expressed in several interviews.

- "There is a trend, we have a growing number of polar bear incidents. For instance, a
 polar bear pushed the camp door open during the night, the hunter had to scare it off
 with his rifle." Resident of Waskaganish



Safety of land users b<Ada'DJC OPDOCUCT 4'b'c pabdic

- "Polar bears are out in May now, at same time as goose hunting season, which
 can be dangerous. So it's important not to sleep in your blind when you are
 goose hunting out on the islands. Polar bears are very strong, they can tear
 anything apart." Resident of Waskaganish
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Safety of land users

- "About five years ago, a polar bear also came into the blind where my grandchildren were hunting. There was an older person there with them, if not, the bear would certainly have killed one of the children. I cannot leave young people behind anymore to hunt because of the bears. That particular bear was stalking them, it went downwind from hunters and crept towards them in the ice ridges. The goose camp was relocated to another island as a result." Resident of Waskaganish
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Safety of land users

- "We need to make sure nobody will die from polar bears. They are so strong, they can do a lot of damage. We have to have a rifle all the time. We need to know what will happen if we shoot a bear in self-defence. Need to be sure that nobody is going to get a big fine or jail time if they shoot a polar bear in DLP." Resident of Wemindji



Defense of life and property

In many encounters, the hunters had to defend themselves ארלאכלח בשינו הףליכד לי, נישה בייל אשר של אינם אין ביילי

• "We went spring hunting at our goose camp, and I had a bear looking into the cabin window while I was sitting at the table a couple feet away. I went out with a gun, I shot the ground in front of the bear but it kept coming, it was not afraid. I didn't know what to do because I didn't want to kill it. So I shot it in the back and it ran off into the ice." — Resident of Waskaganish "DASUST AGALILOS of COMPANISHOR, and I should be a solution of the cabin window while I was sitting at the table a couple feet away. I went out with a gun, I shot the ground in front of the bear but it kept coming, it was not afraid. I didn't know what to do because I didn't want to kill it. So I shot it in the back and it ran off into the ice." — Resident of Waskaganish

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- "A polar bear came around the camp while I was away. It scared my family who were at the camp. I went looking for the polar bear when I returned to camp I found it and shot it. The bear was an adult male. An airplane took the bear to Whapmagoostui and the meat and fur were given to the Inuit." Resident of Whapmagoostui
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Damage to property

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Several instances of damage to property were reported বিষয়ে বিষয় বিষয়ে বিষয়ে বিষয়ে বিষয়ে বিষয়ে বি

- "Every year between 2011 and 2016, I had destruction of my cabin, the windows, the skidoo, gas tanks and seats." - Resident of Waskaganish
- "The polar bears destroyed my fishing cabin at Goose Island and they made a messinside the cabin." Resident of Wemindji
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- "In that area, they destroy cabins, I saw two cabins they sort of destroyed. One was in 2013, early September, in Long Island where my cousins hunt. The other one I saw was back in 2006, it broke the doors and windows across from the first camp I mentioned.
 Resident of Whapmagoostui



Diet and Body Condition

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Polar bears feed primarily on seals, but also feed on other sources of food and arthur also feed on other sources of food

- "I saw leftovers of seals at Pebble Island and saw seal bones on the north side of Walrus Island in 2013." Resident of Wemindji
- "They eat the ducks there until the ice comes. They roam around near open water south from here." – Resident of Whapmagoostui
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Diet and Body Condition

- "I saw two polar bears feeding on dead caribou in Walrus Island on the pond where we hunt in the spring." Resident of Wemindji
- "They target beaver lodges, they have been killing beavers, we saw blood and tracks."
 - Resident of Waskaganish
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Diet and Body Condition

Hunters observed mostly good body condition

• "Skinny": 10%

• "Average": 50%

"Fat" or "Very fat": 40%

"ちータン":

• "à'L⊃": 50%

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Observation/Encounters Database

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- Based on reports filled up by CTA-EMR local officers, maintained by EMRWB staff
- Records observation (direct or indirect), encounters, DLP, sex, presence of cubs, body condition, use and efficacy of deterrent, context, etc
- 110 entries have been made since 2017
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