



YUKON FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
BOX 5954 WHITEHORSE, YUKON Y1A 5L7
PHONE 867-667-3754 • FAX 867-393-6947 • E-MAIL: YFWMB@HYPERTECH.YK.CA

March 28, 2000

Sent to all YFN
Chiefs

Hon. Eric Fairclough
Minister of Renewable Resources
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Dear Mr. Fairclough:

Re: Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program for the Yukon

I am pleased to present you with the final 'Coordinated Harvest Management Program for the Yukon' which the Board is recommending to the Yukon and all First Nation Governments as a means of ensuring accurate and complete monitoring of wildlife harvests in this territory.

This has been a painstaking three year joint effort of all governments mandated to manage wildlife in the Yukon and I am pleased to report that a number of governments are already utilizing the formats set forth in this document.

The program is based on harvest monitoring for all Yukon hunters by appropriate governments and a universal reporting system coordinated by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board with technical support from the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources.

This is a big project and a major turning point in the management of fish and wildlife in the Yukon. It also fulfills many of the objectives of Chapter 16 in the Umbrella Final Agreement.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this program please contact the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. Additional copies of the enclosed document are available on request from the Board.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Joe

Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program for the Yukon

January 2000

Recommended by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board



Yukon Fish & Wildlife Management Board

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This program is the product of two years of cooperative development by the Yukon and First Nation Governments coordinated by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board with full public consultation.



Yukon Fish & Wildlife Management Board

Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program for the Yukon

INTRODUCTION

Why do we need harvest information?

The primary goal of wildlife management is to have wildlife populations which are abundant and thriving in their natural environment. Easy to say - hard to do. This is because most factors affecting this goal are beyond human control.

The interplay of such factors as climate, disease, predation, accidents with a wildlife population is termed '*population dynamics*' and every day wildlife populations are dynamically involved in the business of living and dying. Each day some members of the population die and once a year newborn animals arrive to build the population up again. These relationships are extremely complex and every wildlife population exists in a delicate balance where just one factor can have a major impact. A harsh winter, for example, can affect caribou cows so much that their calves are born weak and don't get fed properly so that many die but this really doesn't show up in the population until a few years later when that group of calves would have become breeders.

For managers it is extremely frustrating to realize that so little can actually be done to help a wildlife population in trouble, especially where mortality is concerned. However, there is one major factor that should be totally within human means to control and that is harvest. Because most wildlife populations are just barely holding their own with all the natural factors that chip away at their numbers, harvesting by humans can easily tip the balance one way or the other and either help out a struggling population or push it over the edge.

Even healthy big game populations can only tolerate about a 3% harvest every year which is called the '*sustainable harvest*'. If we take more, the population cannot withstand or 'sustain' the harvest and it will go down. This is why it is so vitally important to know exactly what is being taken and why so much emphasis is put on getting complete and accurate harvest information.

How is harvest information used?

The first step in managing wildlife harvests is to find out what is being taken. This is harvest monitoring. The next step is to compare that with what the population can tolerate and decide whether more animals or fewer animals can be safely taken on an annual basis. Such adjustments are administered through a variety of management options that rely on the harvest information. For instance a quota may be removed if a population has recovered to the point where an open season will not result in an overharvest. Elsewhere, the harvest may be too much for small and accessible wildlife populations. In such cases, permits or some other type of harvest control may be required to keep the annual take in line with what the population can withstand.

Why change what we have now?

For the past 25 years the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources has been trying to get good harvest information. They have experimented with a lot of different methods. Some have been very successful and some have been very disappointing. Meanwhile, some First

Nations have also been collecting harvest information, sometimes in partnership with the Yukon Government, but more often on their own.

From the past experience of both First Nations and YTG everyone has come to realize that harvest monitoring is a very difficult undertaking. It looks simple but it is not. For example, the harvest of the Porcupine Caribou Herd is recorded 12 different ways and one caribou can be recorded by three separate methods. And even simpler systems have all kinds of problems related to accuracy, confidentiality, security etc. As it turns out all Yukon governments were facing versions of the same problems and these have recently been magnified by the requirements of cooperative community based wildlife management plans which require harvest information from both Yukon and First Nation government partners.

How was the model developed?

In June 1997, at the request of several First Nations, the Yukon Department of Renewable hosted a workshop in June 1997 to explore means by which First Nations could document wildlife harvesting by their beneficiaries. The conclusion of the workshop was that the Yukon really needed one system of harvest monitoring for all governments which could generate accurate harvest information for management purposes.

Accordingly the following actions were undertaken:

- The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board formed a small 'Working Group' to lead the process, part of which was to establish a larger 'Harvest Monitoring Committee' which would attend the planning workshop and review drafts of the model. The smaller Working Group would handle the rest of the consultation and administrative work involved with the project.
- Two background documents were prepared (see references) which presented approaches from other jurisdictions in Canada and what had been done over the past 25 years in the Yukon.
- On October 6-7, 1998, the Harvest Monitoring Working Group hosted a workshop for the Harvest Monitoring Committee which included representatives from First Nations which had concluded their settlement and several which had not, plus representatives from the Renewable Resources Councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Yukon Government.
- On October 20, 1998 the first draft of a coordinated harvest monitoring model was sent to the Committee members for review.
- Based on the Committee's comments, a second draft was submitted to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board for approval as a public consultation document.
- Following approval the third draft was used for a public consultation program throughout the spring and fall of 1999.
- The final public review of the model took place as part of the Board's annual public meeting on December 8, 1999.
- On January 26, 2000 the Board approved a final version of the model for recommendation to the Yukon Territorial Government and First Nation Governments.

COORDINATED HARVEST MONITORING PROGRAM for the Yukon

Harvest Monitoring consists of basically two concepts: a) The Information and b) How you get it. This model will deal with these in a separate but unified fashion to ensure that there is flexibility for individual governments to operate while maintaining a consistent base of information.

Part A

INFORMATION

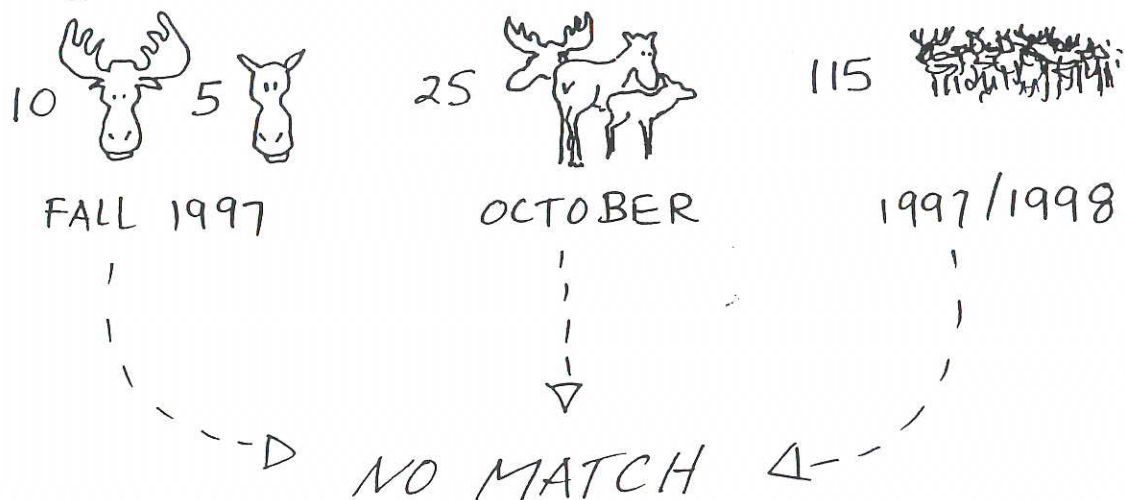
STANDARD COMPONENTS

Introduction:

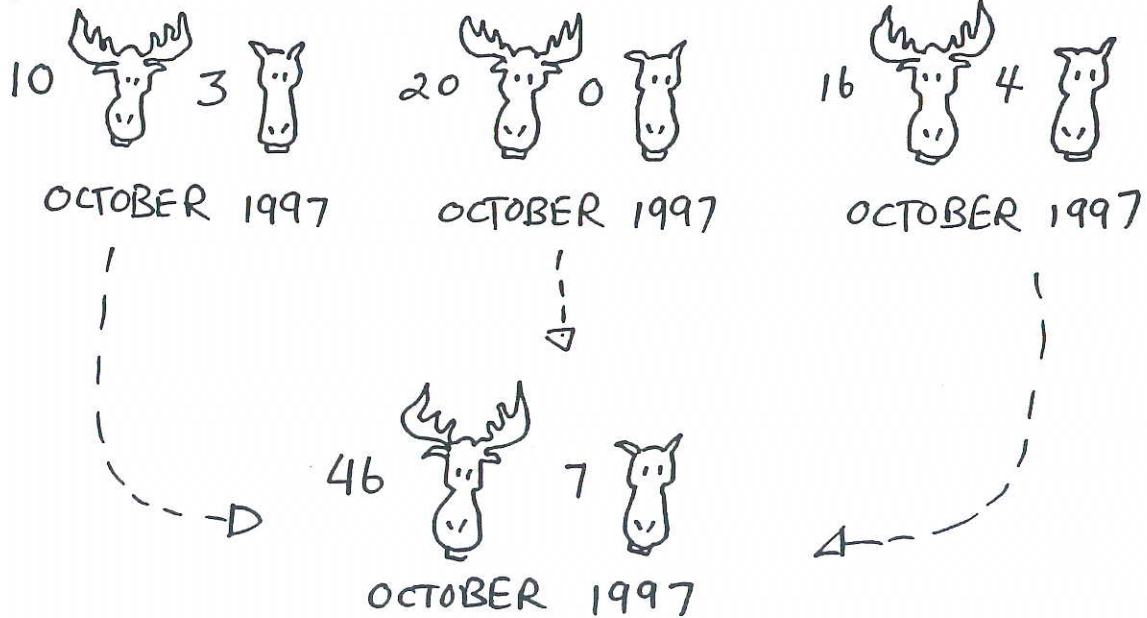
The biggest problem with compiling harvest information from different sources is getting the same kind of data from everybody. In other words, if one source says, "We harvested 10 bulls and 5 cows in the fall of 1997" and another source says, "We got 25 moose in October" and a third source says, "In 1997/98 we totaled 115 moose", the data does not *match*.

But if all three sources said, "We harvested so many bull moose and so many cow moose in this month and year" the data *matches* perfectly and so it can be added up to get the full picture.

Wrong



Right



In order to make sure that the harvest information from each source matches the other sources, the *Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program* requires that everyone record the following information:

SPECIES:

The species of each animal harvested must be recorded. Species to be recorded are:

- Moose
- Caribou
- Sheep
- Goat
- Grizzly
- Black Bear
- Wolf
- Wolverine

Note: All these animals are ones which can be hunted. Wolf and wolverine can also be trapped but the trapping records will remain separate. This program only records what animals have been harvested by hunting.

PRINCIPLE ONE

“KEEP IT SIMPLE”

Note: We discussed adding other species like fish, waterfowl and game birds but felt it was better that this information continue to be collected by existing methods for now until the new system is running well.

SEX:

The sex of each harvested animal must be recorded

Note: We considered an age category but decided there would be too much variation in how people classified animals for the information to match well. Perhaps, an impression of young/old and size could be noted in case a strong trend becomes evident.

DATE:

The date of harvest for each animal must be recorded as follows:

- Year (*absolutely necessary*)
- Month (*absolutely necessary*)
- Day (*not absolutely necessary but should be attempted*)

Note: The bottom line here is year and month. Nothing less will do. With the year and month any manager can compile the total harvest for the period required e.g. January to December 1997 or October 1997 to September 1998, etc.

LOCATION:

The location for each animal harvested will be by Game Management Subzone

Note: If everyone uses the subzones created by the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources all the information will match. Any government may require additional information from its hunters such as specific landmarks but the Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program only requires the subzone and nothing else will do. Some adjustment of subzone boundaries may be required to better conform with management plans based on First Nation Traditional Territory boundaries. It was further noted that 1:250,000 map scale should be used as smaller scales are inaccurate.

Summary: The Standard Information Components required by the Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program are:

- Species
- Sex
- Date - Year/Month/Day
- Location - Subzone

ANALYSIS

Introduction:

Analysis refers to what you do with the information after you collected it. Harvest analysis can be considered in three categories:

1. Confidential

This is the original information received from the hunter including name, address etc. Often, to protect the hunter's privacy, governments assign each person a number and keep a separate list of names and numbers so that there is no longer any direct link between the hunter and the information.

PRINCIPLE TWO

“ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY”

Note: In a fully coordinated system, each individual hunter should have a unique number. This would help avoid duplication of reporting which happens when a hunter responds to more than one harvest monitoring program or moves around a lot. But what number should be used? You would not want to start a whole new numbering system because (trust us) it never works. We tried to come up with an existing number (driver's license, social insurance, health card) but could not think of anything that absolutely everyone in the Yukon would have.

2. Standard Components

This is the minimum information necessary for the Coordinated Program

3. Details

This is information beyond the *Standard Components* required by the *Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program*. Such information may cover hunter effort, economic value etc. which a particular government may consider important for its own purposes.

STORAGE, REPORTING, ACCESS AND USE

Introduction:

These four topics are interrelated and therefore must be discussed together.

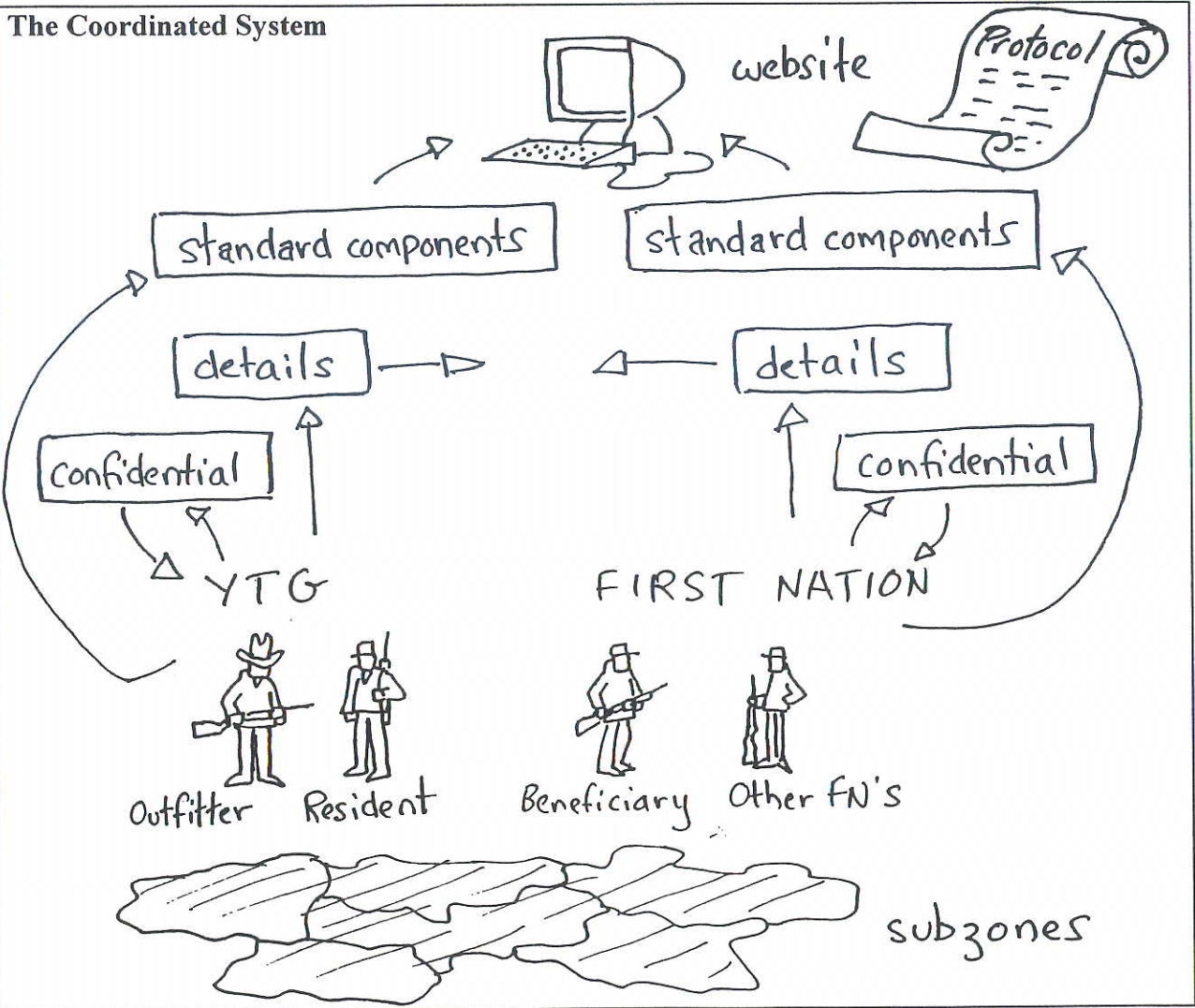
- ◇ A complete record of harvest information will be maintained by each government
- ◇ *Confidential information* will only be used internally by each government
- ◇ *Detailed information* that does not compromise confidentiality may be shared in situations deemed appropriate by the government (such as management planning exercises)
- ◇ *Standard Components* for the Coordinated Program will be shared with other governments
- ◇ A central location will be established for compiling and accessing the standard information. This will be a website maintained by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and secured by one or more passwords.
- ◇ Public release and publication of harvest information will observe the protocols established for such uses.

PRINCIPLE THREE

“BUILD AND MAINTAIN TRUST”

Note: The Muslim saying is, “Trust in God. But tie your camel”. The emphasis on trust among governments in this program cannot be overstated. In this case the camel could be a protocol between governments on reporting, access and use with respect to each other’s information. A standard format or minimum set of standards in the protocol would complement the system. The intent would be to ensure that information is not accessed, reported or utilized in a manner that would threaten a wildlife population or jeopardize either intergovernmental relationships or a government’s relationship with its own citizens.

The Coordinated System



Part B

GETTING THE INFO

Collecting wildlife harvest information looks easy but it is not. Many methods have been tried and most have drawbacks of one kind or another. Each government which agrees to participate in the *Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program* is free to utilize whichever method seems most appropriate with the common understanding that the goal is to provide accurate information to the coordinated program.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

“HUNTER ETHICS”

- * *The Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program is not intended to establish an adversarial relationship with hunters such that they feel reluctant to comply with what appear to be onerous and unreasonable demands.*
- * *The coordinated program acknowledges that accurate harvest information is ultimately reliant on the cooperation and commitment of hunters and it therefore seeks to encourage hunter's to accept the responsibility for accurate reporting as part of the privilege of hunting and as their contribution to the wise stewardship of the land and its resources.*
- * *The coordinated program is based on the fundamental respect for wildlife that is the foundation of the ethic that for a hunter to take something from the land and offer nothing in return is to dishonor both the wildlife and the hunter.*

A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM

Introduction:

Based on the conclusions of the initial workshop in 1997, plus discussions at the planning workshop in 1998, it was recognized that the ultimate goal of the *Coordinated Harvest Monitoring Program* was one system for all hunters in order for the information to match as closely as possible. Each method of collecting harvest information contains some biases and the greater the variety of methods used, the weaker the match of information becomes. An additional advantage of adopting one system is that all hunters are tasked with the same standard of responsibility for reporting which will unify them with respect to the hunter ethic and encourage greater compliance. In this regard, it should also be recognized that until a single standard is adopted by all governments, there will always be some resistance by hunters who perceive that they are being subjected to stricter regulations than others.

1. MANDATORY DECLARATION

- **Applies to all resident hunters**
- **Declaration must be made for each animal taken from the following list:**
Moose, caribou, sheep*, goat*, grizzly*, black bear, wolf**, wolverine**
- **Declaration must be made to a Conservation Officer or Wildlife Technician**
- **Declaration must be made within 10 days of the close of the season for the animal harvested**

Rationale: This method represents a departure from the former YTG methods regarding moose and caribou and is recommended for its simplicity and to overcome problems with lack of response to mail-in questionnaires. Since only about 600 (15%) out of 4000 hunters are successful each year, this method focuses on the successful hunter, reducing both the administrative effort for government and further contact with the majority of hunters who may have viewed the previous process as a needless intrusion. The term 'mandatory' signifies that a penalty will result from non-compliance.

** The present requirement for declaration with a sample submission will be maintained*

*** The present regulation requiring seals for wolves and wolverines will be maintained*

2. MANDATORY SAMPLE SUBMISSION

- **Submission of the following samples are required from every resident**
 - ◇ **Sheep horn**
 - ◇ **Goat horn**
 - ◇ **Grizzly skull, tooth, baculum**

3. OUTFITTER TROPHY EXPORT PERMIT

- **The current Outfitter Trophy Export permitting system will be maintained**

Note: This method applies to all non-resident hunters plus any resident who engages the services of a registered outfitter. The present system includes a mandatory declaration signed by the hunter, guide and outfitter plus a requirement for sample submissions. This system currently operates with a high level of accuracy.

The above three components of the universal system are provided by the Board as the simplest combination to achieve full and accurate harvest data collection. This approach was derived mainly from the past 25 years of experimentation by the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources with other methods that have proven relatively unsuccessful. The Board therefore recommends that it be considered by the Department as a solution to the past deficiencies. First Nations may also wish to consider the merits of this method as well.

However, notwithstanding the ultimate aim of a uniform process, the Board recognizes that other options must be available for First Nation governments in recognition of current perspectives and concerns about harvest monitoring that would make the above system unworkable at this time. Thus the model strives to provide some flexibility while noting that evolution towards a form of mandatory declaration would best serve the principles of

coordinated harvest monitoring. The following options are also presented for consideration by First Nation governments with the understanding that, whatever method of collection is adopted, it must still contribute the *'Standard Components'* to the program.

MANDATORY QUESTIONNAIRE

This method consists of mailing a questionnaire to registered hunters who must return the completed form by a certain date. The 'mandatory' stipulation indicates that failure to comply will result in a penalty. This method has been successfully utilized by a First Nation in the Yukon but may be time consuming to ensure a high rate of compliance and requires a knowledgeable and dedicated administrator to confirm accuracy.

VOLUNTARY INTERVIEW

This method consists of personal interviews with hunters and is either documented for each separate hunter or sometimes by household. The method may be time consuming and comparatively expensive but is often the initial approach where hunters have never been contacted before and may have concerns about divulging information. In order to increase accuracy, the method should follow some basic rules regarding the type of question, the status and training of the interviewer, courtesy, confidentiality, and incentive. It should also be noted that the method places little responsibility directly on the hunter according to Principle Four.

VOLUNTARY QUESTIONNAIRE

This method consists of mailing out a form to identified hunters or households. There is no obligation to return the form and the level of accuracy in the information received is not high. Versions of this approach were experimented with by the Yukon Government for resident hunters culminating in a mandatory questionnaire which for some strange reason reduced rather than increased responses. Depending on the questions, the method may select for successful respondents only but still must make initial contact with all eligible hunters. There is less responsibility placed on the hunter, per Principle Four, than any of the above methods.

SPECIAL PERMIT

This method involves issuing a permit to a hunter authorizing that person to hunt under certain restrictions (place, time, species). The hunter must report the harvest according to the conditions of the permit. Such permits have been employed by Yukon First Nations to allow other First Nation or Non First Nation hunters access for the purpose of hunting either to the entire Traditional Territory (for hunters from other First Nations) or to Category A&B lands (for resident hunters). Failure to report the harvest within a specified time often results in loss of future permit privileges. These permits closely resemble the 'mandatory questionnaire' approach with respect to compliance and enforcement but may not have the same level of accuracy since the hunter may not be personally known to the administrator.

GAME GUARDIAN

This method usually accompanies one of the other above methods and is often employed when certain species or populations are at risk. On patrols the guardian makes observations and interviews hunters. This method has proven very effective in obtaining a better understanding of hunting activities and encouraging hunters to report their harvests.

SUMMARY

The first objective in Chapter 16 of the Umbrella Final Agreement is, “ To ensure Conservation in the management of all Fish and Wildlife resources and their habitats”. All governments in the Yukon endorse this objective and the principles of wise management and stewardship that it implies.

The monitoring and control of wildlife harvesting by humans is one of the most powerful means that governments possess for fulfilling the above objective and principles. However, exercising this authority in an efficient and effective manner has proven to be a very elusive and frustrating endeavor.

A collective desire among governments to improve harvest management for the mutual benefit of wildlife and people prompted the cooperative development of a *Coordinated Harvest Management Program*. Without such a unifying mechanism for monitoring wildlife harvests, the ability of governments to effectively manage wildlife in a cooperative manner will be severely impaired.

Although participation in the program is voluntary, each government should seriously weigh the costs and implications of refusal at a time when cooperative wildlife management is essential to the conserve of such resources for future generations.

1999 WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATION

During discussions regarding reporting period for wildlife harvesting it was noted that each government must have the capability of invoking emergency closure of hunting to protect specific wildlife populations.

The recommendation arising from this conclusion is that each government in the Yukon establish legal means by which hunting may be prohibited on an emergency basis.

REFERENCES

- Barichello, Norman 1998** *An Evaluation of Big Game Harvest Reporting*
Yukon Department of Renewable Resources, unpublished report, 15pp.
- Dennison, Patricia 1998** *A Historical Review of Harvest Reporting Methods Imposed on Licensed Hunters in the Yukon* Yukon Department of Renewable Resources, unpublished report, 6 pp.