

# **Community Report**

## **Evaluating Co-management in the Sahtu: A Framework for Analysis**



**A community report based on the Graduate  
Research conducted by Darwin Bateyko**

## **Message from the Researcher**

Conducting research in Northern Canada is an exciting and challenging opportunity. The issues that were looked at in this study will potentially have large effects on the people that live in the Sahtu Region and the land and resources they rely on. It is hoped that through the research findings and recommendations the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) will undertake some of the recommendations that have been suggested. The information presented in this community report is a short plain language summary of the information that is presented in the much longer academic document entitled "Evaluating Co-management in the Sahtu: A Framework for Analysis". This document is available for review at the SRRB Office Library in Tulita or at the National Library of Canada.

This research project would not have been possible without the contribution and assistance of a number of individuals. I would like to acknowledge the contributions made by the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board members and staff, especially Dr. Norman Simmons, who were crucial to the success of this project. Finally I would like to acknowledge the many participants of this study for their time and input into the research process, as well as the residents of the Sahtu, for their support while I was in the communities; *Mahsi Cho*.

## **Academic Citation**

Bateyko, D. (2003) **Evaluating Co-management in the Sahtu: A Framework for Analysis**. Master Degree Project. University of Calgary.

## **What was this research about?**

The study looked at how well the Sahtu Renewable Resource Board (SRRB), a co-management board, is working. The SRRB is a co-management board and is the main

**The assessment answered the following questions about the SRRB:**

- Was it working?**
- Was it the best way of doing things?**
- What could be done better?**

instrument of Forestry and Wildlife Management in the Sahtu Settlement Area. The Board was formed as a result of the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. The SRRB office is presently located in the community of Tulita, NWT, where all four staff members reside. The six board members reside both inside and outside the Sahtu area, and are

appointed by the Sahtu Secretariat Inc. (SSI), the federal government and the territorial government. Three of the Board members are appointed by the SSI, while the others are appointed by the federal and territorial governments. These members meet at least twice a year to make decisions on the management of resources, Board and regional research, as well as staffing issues.

## **Why was this research completed?**

The research was completed as part of a Masters Degree in the Faculty of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary. The Faculty of Environmental Design believes in undertaking research and studies that have real life applications and make a positive change or a contribution to society.

**The Research was completed as part of a Masters Degree at the University of Calgary.**

As this study is focused on Co-management boards, it is important first to understand what co-management is. Co-management can be defined as a consensus-based approach to resource use and development, and is based on the sharing of decision making power between governments and a community of local resource users. Within the North it also requires the successful combination of scientific and traditional knowledge.

**The Research was also completed to:**

**Ensure that the powers and responsibilities that have been assigned to these co-management organizations are kept in check.**

**Ensure that the concerns of the community of resources users are balanced with the sustainable management of resources.**

The co-management of natural resources involves, in many cases, the management of public resources, such as wildlife, and therefore it is important that these management boards function at a high level. As more co-management boards are formed in Northern Canada, a method to evaluate these organizations must be developed to ensure that the powers

and responsibilities that they have been assigned are kept in check. As well, it is important to ensure that the concerns of the community are balanced with the sustainable management of natural resources.

By looking at co-management in practice through the SRRB, and gathering concerns from the community, the staff, and board members, a better understanding of the existing process was determined. This information was then used to ensure that the recommendations were applicable to the SRRB and realistic in the Sahtu Region.

## **How was the research carried out?**

To gather the information needed to complete an assessment of the SRRB, three main techniques were used; a) review of board documents, b) interviews and c) general observations.

A review of the Board documents, including meeting minutes, operational procedures, and Land claim documents, was completed to understand the process in which the board was formed and the changes that had occurred over its life span.

Before interviews were carried out, permission to conduct the study was required from the respective community leaders. The leaders of various organizations in the communities of Colville Lake, Deline, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells and Tulita were all consulted and a research license from the Aurora College was granted.

Travel was then undertaken to all five of the Sahtu communities and interviews were carried out with a variety of individuals. The interview participants included SRRB members and staff, community members, and other professionals working within the five Sahtu communities. In total 43 people were interviewed. While in the communities, general observations also allowed me to gain insight into the operations of the Board and its relations with community members and organizations.

Once the information was collected, it was pulled together in an initial report, presented back to the SRRB, and sent out to many of the community organizations for comment and feedback.

**Board documents and the Land Claim were reviewed.**

**Permission from the community leaders was granted.**

**Interviews with community members, board members and members of various community organizations were undertaken.**

**The information was presented back to various individuals and organizations to ensure that it was correct.**

## What did the research find out?

### **Beneficial Initiatives**

- The Harvest Study**
- The Wildlife Studies Fund**
- The Sahtu GIS Project**

### **Barriers to the SRRB's Operations**

- Staff Turnover**
- Lack of ownership and understanding**
- Lack of available Traditional Knowledge**
- Lack of participation by Renewable Resource Council**

### **External Factors Affecting the SRRB**

- Lack of capacity in the Sahtu Region**
- Dissatisfaction with the Land Claim and pursuit of self-government**
- Interest in developing a pipeline down the Mackenzie Valley**

### **Beneficial Initiatives**

The SRRB has enjoyed success in the following areas. The items listed here are a direct result of the Land Claim agreement and the creation of the SRRB.

***The Harvest Study:*** The purpose of the harvest study is to gather data on the resources harvested in the Sahtu Settlement Area. The study has been ongoing for over five years, and in many communities, almost everyone that harvested participated in the study. It was one of the main Board responsibilities that individuals at the community level could identify as part of the SRRB. This project has also trained and employed several community members.

***Wildlife Studies Fund:*** This fund is a pool of money that has been set aside for resource management research, and is managed by the SRRB. Available to any research project approved by the board, this fund has allowed a large amount of research to be undertaken in the Sahtu Area. The research has increased the understanding of the renewable resources in the region.

***The Sahtu GIS Project:*** The Sahtu GIS Project was established to provide high-quality GIS and maps within the settlement area. The project was a unique partnership between the SRRB, two other Sahtu co-management boards, and the Government of the Northwest Territories. Since its inception, it has produced a significant amount of maps and has increased cross organizational communication. Although the GIS services of this partnership still exist, the partnership has been dissolved.

## **Barriers to the SRRB's Operations**

Based on the assessment that was undertaken, a number of barriers to the SRRB operations were identified. A summary of the main barriers that the SRRB had encountered or is currently dealing with is presented below.

**Staff Turnover:** The SRRB has had frequent and ongoing staff turnover that has negatively affected its ability to function. In the Board's 8 years of existence, there have been 6 executive directors and many other staff replacements.

**Lack of ownership and understanding at the community level:** Community members, for the most part, view the Board as a government agency where they have little input into the decisions that are being made.

**Lack of available Traditional Knowledge:** The use of traditional knowledge by the SRRB has been summary and ad hoc, with little research concentrating on the collection of this type of knowledge. Traditional knowledge research has usually been undertaken as an add-on to scientific research.

**Lack of participation by Renewable Resource Councils:** Although Renewable Resource Councils have significant resource management responsibilities, these organizations have a limited amount of money and limited capacity.

## **External Factors Affecting the SRRB**

It is also important to note that the SRRB has other pressures that can affect the way it functions. A summary of the pressures identified through the research is presented below.

**The lack of capacity in the Sahtu Region:** The lack of capacity within the region was identified as one of the most significant hurdles to the success of co-management. The region does not have enough individuals who are interested, and have the time and capacity to sit on all the co-management and municipal boards.

**Dissatisfaction with Sahtu Land Claim and the pursuit of community self government:** Although the land claim was agreed to in 1994, many individuals felt that the Agreement was not as comprehensive as they would have liked. In many cases, individuals were more interested in pursuing self government arrangements in each of the communities, rather than finding solutions to work with co-management Boards at a regional level.

**Renewed interest in developing a pipeline down the Mackenzie Valley:** Recent interest in the development of a natural gas pipeline is also affecting the function of the SRRB. This large scale development project brings with it increased exploration and development activity in the Region, translating into further concerns related to renewable resources.

## What are the Recommendations?

The recommendations will not attempt to address each and every barrier or finding, but rather will concentrate on important areas.

### Recommendations

- 1) Engage in a Strategic Planning exercise
- 2) Engage in internal evaluations of projects
- 3) Hire a Community Liaison Person
- 4) Introduce the concept of resource co-management in school curriculum
- 5) Engage in sustained contact with the Renewable Resource Councils
- 6) Hold one or two day orientation and skill building sessions with the Board members
- 7) Build a partnership with a northern educational institution to train Board members
- 8) Engage in research and management priority workshops
- 9) Attract independent researchers to the region
- 10) Formalize the method for evaluating research projects applying for funding

### Internal Board Operations

One of the most important things the SRRB needs to do is improve its internal board operations and communication. Therefore I propose the following:

**Strategic Planning Exercise:** It is recommended that the SRRB undertakes a comprehensive Strategic Planning exercise to clearly outline their mandate and vision. A strong and specific plan of action, supported by adequate resources and funding, is important to the success of this strategic plan.

**Specific Internal Evaluations of Projects:** It is further recommended that the SRRB undertakes comprehensive, task/project specific evaluations and assessments. These internal assessments need to be included in any initial planning processes and require commitment by the participants to ensure that once the task or project is complete, they can learn from their success or failures.

### Community Consultation and Trust Building

As the SRRB needs to build understanding and ownership among community members, it is recommended that they focus on becoming visible within the communities. To accomplish this, I propose the following.

**Hire a Community Liaison Person:** This person will be responsible for consulting and building understanding of the SRRB at the community level.

**Introduce the concept of resource co-management in regional School curriculum:** Informing the next generation about the benefits and responsibilities associated with co-management and the Land Claim agreement will be beneficial to the SRRB in subsequent years.

***Engage in sustained contact with the 5 community Renewable Resource Councils:*** This will include lending logistical, office and moral support to these organizations, and ensuring that they are able to undertake their own responsibilities.

### **Board Member Capacity Building**

To ensure that Board members have the capacity to engage in Board activities and adequately represent and inform their constituents, I propose the following.

***Short Term :***In the Short Term, it is recommended that the Board hold one or two day orientation and skill building sessions prior to every second Board Meeting. This would help Board members become more familiar with their responsibilities and provide them with additional training.

***Long Term:*** In the Long Term, it is recommended that the SRRB build a partnership with a Northern Educational institution to setup Board Member Responsibility Awareness and Capacity Building courses. Although this might seem like a substantial undertaking, other co-management boards in the region also expressed an interest in developing this type of long term solution.

### **Research and Management Priorities**

For the SRRB to ensure they are engaging in research and management initiatives that balance the concerns of local resource harvesters and the concerns of scientists or government officials working in the region, I propose the following.

***Develop and engage in research and management priority workshops :*** These workshops need to take place periodically and at a community level.

***Develop a manner in which it can attract independent researchers to the Region:*** Securing partnerships with a number of education institutions would provide the Board with access to innovative and cost effective research.

***Develop a formalized method for evaluating research projects put forth under the Research Fund:*** It is recommended that research projects submitted for funding be evaluated in a formalized fashion to ensure they meet the Board's present research and management priorities.

## **What are the Next Steps?**

The research results will be presented in all the communities to ensure that the results are given back to the communities. Some of the recommendations outlined above have already been put into practice by the SRRB, including hiring a community liaison person and holding a research priority workshop. It is hoped that the presentation of this report in all the Sahtu communities will help the communities become more familiar with the SRRB and help the organization implement many of these recommendations.