Beyond Bureaucracy:

Collaborative relationships in the transition to co-management

A case study in the Sahtu Region, Northwest Territories, Canada.

A community report based on the Master's research conducted by Ruaraidh Carthew

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of resource managers on the impacts of the transition to cooperative resource management in the Sahtu Region. No known studies have been done that compare conditions before and after the transition to co-management. Such a comparison would provide a better basis to evaluate whether or not co-management has improved the resource management regime. This study has attempted to fill this gap in knowledge. The findings of the study were analyzed to assess how well the Sahtu resource management regime can respond to change, according to the following three indicators defined through previous studies:

1. **All participants equally share power.**
2. **Land users are full participants in decision-making.**
3. **Indigenous knowledge is combined with science as a basis for decision-making.**

The research was done through a series of interviews with six resource managers with extensive experience in the Sahtu Region. Perspectives on harvester participation in decision-making were analyzed for elements of continuity and change. The range of experiences referred to in the interviews dated back to 1962 and extended to the present.

[How many?] key themes related to manager and harvester relationships emerged from the interviews.. Analysis of the themes led to the conclusion that the resource management regime is adaptive, or responsive to change. On the transition to co-management, the study concluded that:

1. **The transition to co-management resulted in more bureaucracy. This appears to limit the participation of harvesters and the ability of managers to respond to change.**

2. **Strong relationships between managers and harvesters appear to have offset the negative affects of bureaucracy. A focus on community engagements, relationship building and problem solving has contributed to making the Sahtu co-management regime adaptive.**

3. **Relationships, an important form of social capital, are a significant aspect of successful co-management arrangements.**

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Message from the researcher

This community report reflects upon changes that have occurred in resource management since the 1960s in the Sahtu Settlement Area. It is meant to provide readers with an idea of how resource managers perceive co-management to have affected resource management in the Sahtu. It is hoped that this study will help resource managers and community stakeholders to evaluate successes and priorities in co-management. The community report is a summary of the larger thesis *Beyond Bureaucracy: Collaborative relationships in the transition to co-management*. The thesis was submitted for completion of a Master's degree at the University of Stockholm, Sweden.

This study would not have been possible without the time and support of numerous individuals and agencies. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the interview participants, particularly for their time, patience, and willingness to share their experiences with me. Support from the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board, the Sahtu division of NWT Environment and Natural Resources, and the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board helped make this work a reality. Finally, special thanks go to my thesis supervisor Dr. Deborah Simmons for her guidance and critical perspective. To all of these individuals, *mahsi cho;* this work would not have been the same without you.

Contact Information

To obtain a copy of the full thesis, or to find out more about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher at Ruari.Carthew@gmail.com.

A copy of the thesis will be made available at the Sahtu Renewable Resource Board, the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, the Sahtu division of NWT Environment and Natural Resources, and the Aurora Research Institute.

What was this research about?

The research was about management perspectives on relationships with harvesters before and after the transition to co-management.

This study looked at what resource managers understand to be the effects of institutional changes on their relationships with harvesters over the past 50 years. Special attention was given to the new co-management regime established through the 1993 Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. The study starts off with the belief that strong manager-harvester relationships are necessary for successful co-management. These relationships are understood as a form of *social capital*, a value that benefits everyone. The challenge is to understand the role of the new *bureaucracies*, the systems of policies, processes and procedures that make up co-management, and how they affect these relationships.

The study covers a period of much social, economic and environmental change in the Sahtu region. The evolution of relationships between managers and harvesters provides an estimate of how *adaptive* the system is, its ability to respond to change. Stronger relationships (more social capital) means that stakeholders are more likely to find a solution to challenges being faced. The study explores how the transition to co-management has affected the resource management regime's ability to respond to change.

Why was this research done?

The research was done to compare user participation before and after co-management. The comparison allows for a basic understanding of how the Sahtu land claim has affected resource management.

The research also aimed at understanding how the transition to co-management has affected management's ability to respond to change.

The Sahtu land claim established three Sahtu co-management boards: *the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board*, *the Sahtu Land and Water Board*, and *the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board*. These boards were set up to facilitate public participation in resource management. The board members are nominated by the Sahtu Secretariat, the Federal government, and the government of the NWT. The transition to co-management marks a major change in how resources are managed.

Three key indicators of successful co-management are that:

1. **All participants equally share power.**
2. **Land users are full participants in decision-making.**
3. **Indigenous knowledge is combined with science as a basis for decision-making.**

Studies have been done to evaluate the success of this new management process. Rusnack (1997) examined the different types of co-management arrangements in Canada. Nadasday (1999 and

2005) looked at how knowledge and power were distributed in co-management in the Yukon Territories. Spak (2001) looked at how well indigenous knowledge was shared in the Gwich'in. Bateyko (2004) evaluated the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) as an example of co-management. A general finding from these studies is that co-management institutions are having difficulty achieving the three criteria for success. In his evaluation of the SRRB, Bateyko found a lack of community participation and poor integration of indigenous knowledge. All of the studies mention the existence of a power imbalance between indigenous groups and government. The studies claim that the ability of land users to shape and direct resource management decisions can be compromised when they become a part of a larger bureaucratic system.

While these studies identify flaws in the co-management process, they do not provide an assessment of whether or not management conditions have improved through co-management. This study was undertaken to understand how the transition to co-management has affected the Sahtu resource management regime. The study draws on the experience of past and present resource managers from the Sahtu to contrast power sharing, participation and the integration of indigenous traditional ecological knowledge in resource management before and after formal co-management was established. Interviews with managers led to the conclusion that the resource management regime has indeed suffered from the effects of the bureaucracy associated with co-management. Despite this obstacle, conditions for resource management were found to be generally better after the transition to co-management. This was owing to the increased strength of manager and harvester relationships, which were seen to have a long history of development. The conclusion of the study was that bureaucracy has a negative affect on resource management but that social capital – relationships between stakeholders – is a more important determinant of management success.

The thesis was completed to fulfill the requirements of a master's degree at the University of Stockholm, Sweden.

The research was done as part of a Master's degree at the Centre for Transdisciplinary Environmental Research (CTM) in the Faculty of Biology at Stockholm University (Sweden). CTM is an environmental research organization that focuses on adaptive planning as a tool to confront social and ecological challenges. The researcher has done previous work in the Sahtu Region in assessing development impacts on harvesting, and on the development of a management plan that considers the cumulative effects of multiple development and environmental disturbances. This study is part of the researcher's ongoing efforts to learn more about resource management processes in the Sahtu Region.

How was the research done?

The research was done through interviews with senior Sahtu resource managers. Perspectives on harvester participation in decision-making were looked at for elements of continuity and change.

The interviews revolved around three research questions:

1. **What are the different turning points of resource management in contemporary history?**
2. **What are the strengths of the relationships that have existed?**
3. **How has the use and role of traditional knowledge changed in decision-making?**

Interviews were supported by a literature review on the history of resource management in the Northwest Territories and on collaborative arrangements.

The study looked at how resource managers have understood their changing relationships with harvesters. Relationships were the focus because they combine aspects of trust, communication, influence and accountability between managers and harvesters. These aspects all contribute to a practical and effective management system. By gaining an understanding of how strong manager/harvester relationships have been, the quality and effectiveness of management could also be understood.

The research was done through interviews with senior resource managers who have worked in the Sahtu Region. Interviews were conducted by telephone and by email. Managers were asked for their perspectives on how relationships with harvesters had developed during their time as a manager in the Sahtu. These perspectives combined to create a narrative of how resource management in the Sahtu has developed over time.

The managers who participated in the Study appear in the table below. Their experience working in the Sahtu varies in length and timing. Collectively, the participants hold experience dating back to as early as 1962, and continuing to the present. The managers were asked for their perspectives on the quality of relationships shared with resource users, and how the participation of resource users changed over time.

Responses from the interviews came in the form of rich stories covering the past 50 years of manager/harvester relationships. The stories were used to develop an understanding of change and continuity in indigenous participation in decision-making. This understanding was used to assess whether or not the critiques of co-management could be applied to the Sahtu co-management process and if imbalance issues exist.

The interviews were supported by a comprehensive literature review on the history of resource management in the Northwest Territories, and on theories about collaborative resource management arrangements based on experiences elsewhere.

Table 1. Interview participants and a summary of their work experience in the Sahtu Region.

Interview Participant	Experience
Walter Bayha	Chairperson, Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (2003-present); Forestry Manager, Government of the Northwest Territories (1970s-1990s).*
Norman Simmons, Dr.	Executive Director, SRRB (1999-2000); Board Member, SRRB (???-2006); Superintendent, Northwest Territories Fish and Wildlife Service (1975 –1982); Regional Biologist, Canadian Wildlife Service (1966-1975).
Alasdair Veitch	Supervisor, Wildlife Management- Department of Environment and Natural Resources (2005-present); Supervisor, Wildlife Management, Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development (1996-2005); Sahtu Area Biologist, Department of Renewable Resources (1994-1996).
Robert Ruttan	Caribou biologist 1950s+; Former CWS biologist in the Sahtu Region, 1962-65.
Executive Director/Senior Planner, Sahtu Land Use Planning Board (SLUPB) (2005-present).**	
John Donihee, PhD	Lawyer specializing in aboriginal rights settlements; former Sahtu Region biologist (1980s)*.

* Dates are rough estimates
** For identification purpose only; the participant requested to remain unnamed for this study

What did the researcher learn?

Research question 1: Turning points in resource management history

The themes represent a general consensus about how resource management has evolved in the Sahtu since the 1970s, from the perspective of the resource managers. The transition to co-management has been significant.

***Collaborative management has existed for over 30 years*:**
Collaborative relationships have existed in the Sahtu for over 30 years. In 1975 the Game Advisory Council (GAC) was formed to assist native and non-native hunters and trappers. The GAC was the first co-operative management body in the Northwest Territories. The Hunters and Trappers Associations (HTAs) were used as a bridging link between harvesters and the GAC through which harvesters could express their concerns. The relationship between the GAC and the HTAs became a central aspect of resource management in the Sahtu Region. It provided an early shift in the roles, responsibilities and power of native and non-native resource users in resource decision-making. Resource managers sought out and listened to advice from local harvesters. This early form of collaborative management marked a change in management

Themes that emerged from management perspectives:

Turning points in resource management history

- Collaborative management has existed for over 30 years
- The abilities of harvester institutions have gone through a reversal
- Resource management is a service provided for resource users
- A more bureaucratic system limits co-management
- Manager optimism for the future

Strengths of relationships

- Strong relationships require respect
- Factors affecting community engagements
- Transparency of motives affects trust and success
- Relationships with management have switched from individual to institutional

Changing role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- TEK is being used more frequently by managers but remains secondary to science
- The authenticity of TEK is being challenged by a reduction in traditional practices

strategies towards empowering locals in resource management decision-making and a commitment to improving co-operative management conditions.

***The harvester institutions have gone through a reversal*:** The signing of the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (the Sahtu land claim) in 1993 replaced the role of the GAC with the new co-management boards. Government managers took on an advisory role in relation to these boards. Shortly after the Sahtu land claim took effect, funding for the GAC was stopped altogether, and the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board took over its role at a regional level. The HTAs became the Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs) and were given responsibility for harvesting related issues. The intent was to increase the powers of harvesters and beneficiaries. A poor implementation plan and a lack of funding instead reduced the ability of the RRCs to manage. The transition to co-management thus resulted in more legal powers for indigenous land claim beneficiaries in resource management but a reduced ability to use those powers.

***Resource management is a service provided for resource users*:** Providing assistance to resource users and harvesters seems to have developed as a priority for resource managers. This priority began with the formation of the Game Advisory Council (GAC) and its commitment to assisting the HTAs and addressing concerns of the harvesters. The priority continued following the transition to co-management when the main board responsible for wildlife, the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board, took on the role of the GAC. Under this new set-up, community engagement with Sahtu residents helped shape management goals and priorities. These discussions centred on community concerns/needs

versus board needs. While assisting resource users appeared a priority of managers, their ability to do so immediately following the claim agreement seems to have been compromised by funding constraints and a poor implementation plan.

***A more bureaucratic system limits co-management*:** The transition to co-management seems to have complicated the relationship between managers and harvesters. The complications come from reduced familiarity of harvesters with the new management regime and an increasingly bureaucratic management system. Confusions over the roles and responsibilities of the different co-management boards added to the change in manager/harvester relationships. For example, it is not known how much authority the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board actually has under the Sahtu land claim because the Federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs bears final decision-making authority. In the case of the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board (SLUPB), the Federal government appears to be stalling approval of the land use plan. This allows for development activities to continue in the region with relatively few restrictions.

***Manager optimism for the future*:** Resource managers interviewed expressed optimism about the future of resource management. This optimism was likely based on the many challenges that managers and Sahtu residents have already overcome. In the evolution of Sahtu resource management there appears to be a long memory of teamwork and hard work that leads to positive results. These long term working relationships still exist and local beneficiaries now have more powers than they have previously held. The difficulty that managers and beneficiaries now have is to fully implement the Sahtu land claim and to understand the extent of change and powers that it entails.

Research question 2: Strength of relationships

The strength of relationships appeared to be based on three factors: management respect for indigenous worldviews, the quality and extent of community engagements done with resource users, and the transparency of government and management motives in interactions with resource users. Positive relationships were seen to result in an increase in harvester participation in management issues, and policy outcomes that benefited all stakeholders.

Strong relationships require respect: Understanding the distinctions and complementarities between traditional and scientific perspectives were seen as crucial for effective decision-making. Respect could be won from the demonstrated willingness to learn from and share different perspectives. A familiarity with Dene and Metis culture was considered an important asset in relationships between managers and indigenous resource users. Included in this was the respect and appreciation for traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and traditional ways.

Factors affecting community engagement: Strong community engagement processes were seen to result in improved conditions for

both harvester and manager. Common features contributing to a successful community engagement process were: a lack of time pressure; a high commitment level on the part of the managers; and a high interest level on the part of the harvesters. Information overload and language barriers were seen as barriers to successful community engagement. Community engagement processes have changed in the Sahtu Region over time. During the 1970s, community engagement processes were rare, but when they were done they were done well. After the transition to co-management, community engagement processes became common, but their quality decreased. Legal and policy requirements increasingly made engagement with Sahtu beneficiaries a norm in government and development activities. Limits of time and money were seen as the biggest barriers in engagement processes following the transition to co-management. A current focus by resource managers on long-term consultation processes, regular public reporting and information sessions, and on encouraging local participation were seen to be having a positive effect on strengthening relationships and increasing local participation. The success of these community engagements was thought to have produced a process that is not rushed, allowing individuals the opportunity to review information comprehensively.

***Transparency of motives affects trust and success*:** Transparency of motives emerged as an important consideration in building relationships. Resource managers interviewed were aware of a legacy of mistrust in the communities that affects contemporary engagement processes. This mistrust was seen to result in prolonged negotiations, increased community engagement expenses, and a lack of action. Positive relationships between stakeholders were seen to offset these poor results. Where relations were positive, stakeholders were more likely to work towards similar goals.

***Relationships with management have switched from individual to institutional*:** Individuals were seen to have played a very important role in the development of resource management. These individuals were noted for defending indigenous interests and harvesting rights, for assisting harvesters wherever possible, and for respecting traditional ecological knowledge and giving it a position in decision-making. The importance of individuals was reduced under the co-management regime. Indigenous rights and interests were incorporated within the land claim agreement and the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. There was no longer a need for individual champions of harvester interests. Legislation and policy had become the important factor in the protection of indigenous resource management rights. The replacement of personal “champions” with legislation seems to have contributed to a depersonalized manager/harvester relationship. This likely led to a public perception of resource management as less personal and more institutional.

Research question 3: Changing role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge

The role of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in management decision-making seems to have changed much, but with little result. The impression given was that TEK is being used more often, but only when it supports scientific conclusions. TEK is also being challenged by a question of authenticity. On one hand, its increased use is making it more acceptable among managers and researchers. On the other hand, managers suggested that traditional lifestyles and values are declining, making TEK less relevant.

***TEK is being used more frequently by managers but remains secondary to science*:** Results from the interviews suggest that managers are collecting and considering TEK much more frequently after the transition to co-management as compared to beforehand. Despite its increased presence in decision-making, TEK has not attained a status equal to that of science. The impression given was that TEK is only applied into decisions when it supports scientific conclusions. In this regard, the use of TEK by managers has not changed over time. The subordinate status of TEK reduces the likelihood that management decisions will reflect harvester perspectives.

***The authenticity of TEK is being challenged by a reduction in traditional practices*:** The increased consideration of TEK in management decisions is transforming TEK into a more acceptable form of knowledge in the eyes of the wider public and research community. At the same time, interview participants observed that traditional practices and lifestyles are becoming less common among Sahtu Dene and Metis beneficiaries. The loss of this knowledge, especially among youth, could have a negative affect on the acceptance of TEK in future management decision-making. In order to address this challenge, a need to develop an interpretive method and rationale for TEK was identified. Such a method would give resource managers tools for applying TEK in a modern context, and thus render it more compatible with science. The proposed Deline Knowledge Centre was an acknowledged initiative with similar goals.

Indicators of Success

Analysis of key themes in the interviews provided an overview of how the transition to co-management has affected manager-harvester relationships in the Sahtu Region. The overall impression is that the ideals of co-management have not been achieved in the case of the Sahtu.

The transition to co-management seems to have had the following affect on…

Power sharing: Harvesters have less active power

Participation: Harvesters are participating more in decision-making processes

Knowledge sharing: has not improved

Power Sharing: Power sharing between managers and harvesters was reduced in the transition to co-management. The co-management regime appears to have made resource management in the Sahtu much more bureaucratic. This has affected power sharing in several ways:

- Management decisions seem more directly affected and limited by bureaucracy.
- The implementation of co-management has reduced the role of important bridging organizations between the resource users and managers (i.e. the Renewable Resources Councils play a diminished role in comparison to the former Hunters and Trappers Associations).
- A more bureaucratic system favours the interests of industry, the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories over those of Sahtu resource managers and Sahtu beneficiaries.

Participation: Harvester participation has improved in the transition to co-management. Stronger relationships between managers and harvesters are the reasons for the noted increase in participation. Specifically:

- An earlier cooperative management between resource managers and users created strong and lasting relationships that survived the transition to co-management.
- Committed and long-term community engagement processes have strengthened relationships and created more public trust and support for management initiatives.
- The switch in relationship type from personal to institutional after the transition to co-management reduced the personal connections that managers and local harvesters had established. This negative aspect was offset by the management focus on interactive community engagements. This expanded management relations to the wider community and allowed resource managers to spend more time communicating management goals and resource information to the public and gathering public feedback.

Knowledge sharing: The integration of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and science has not improved with co-management. Co-management has made TEK more acceptable, but has not improved the extent of knowledge sharing in management decision-making.

- TEK is being accorded more credibility in co-management processes, but there is ongoing difficulty in translating and applying TEK in resource management processes.
- The transition to co-management has increased the use of TEK, but its use seems limited to how well it supports science.
- Science is given a stronger voice and thus more weight than TEK in decision-making. Science fits into the bureaucratic framework of co-management. TEK does not.

The increased authenticity and use of TEK in co-management has not altered the extent of integration between TEK and science. The potential for combining the two knowledge forms has increased though. If TEK can be used and interpreted appropriately, its value is equal to science and can be

readily incorporated with science. Competent people experienced in working with scientific and traditional knowledge can achieve this.

Conclusions: An Adaptable System

The Sahtu resource management regime appears to be an adaptable management system.

The transition to co-management resulted in more bureaucracy. This appears to limit the participation of harvesters and the ability of managers to respond to change.

Strong relationships between managers and harvesters appear to have offset the negative affects of bureaucracy. A focus on community engagements, relationships building and problem solving has contributed to making the Sahtu regime adaptive.

Social capital is significant for successful co-management arrangements.

The Sahtu resource management regime's apparent focus on community engagements, relationship building, and problem solving is indicative of a regime capable of responding to change. The adaptability is based on:

- A management focus on developing trust, cooperation, respect and valuing different perspectives. This has increased the relationships (social capital) of the resource management regime.
- Focusing on practical approaches to resolving resource challenges is a proactive response. This promotes flexibility to respond to change.
- Collaboration between resource managers and resource users encourages knowledge sharing. This provides more options on how to adapt to change.

The adaptive aspects of the regime appear to be the result of strong relationships and not a result of the transition to a new resource management regime. The collaborative and problem solving approach taken by managers offsets the bureaucratic limitations by creating different alternatives for managers to choose from. This allows for more innovation and flexibility.

Conclusions drawn from the interviews are that the transition to resource co-management in the Sahtu region led to increased bureaucratization of resource management. This bureaucracy seems to have limited the freedom of managers to respond to change, and had a negative effect on indigenous participation. This conclusion is supported by the imbalances in power and knowledge sharing that were observed in the transition to co-management. It is also supported by the depersonalized relationship that emerged between managers and harvesters following the transition to co-management. These affects seem to limit the ability and effectiveness of indigenous resource users to have their concerns expressed in resource management decision-making.

The study also concludes that strong relationships between resource managers and resource users can offset the negative affects of bureaucracy. In the case of the Sahtu resource management regime, a strong history of collaboration and cooperation between managers and harvesters seems to have led to a positive transition to co-management, despite the negative affects of bureaucracy. Strong relationships between stakeholders and a problem-solving approach apparent in resource management are indicative of a management regime capable of adapting to change. Thus the study confirms the ongoing significance of social capital as a determinant of successful co-management.

What are the recommendations?

The following recommendations are made for improving the participation level of indigenous resource users within co-management processes:

Power Sharing

- Support the financial stability of resource management agencies, including Renewable Resource Councils;
- Focus on building strong relationships between stakeholders and ensuring transparency.

Participation:

- Focus on problem solving rather than decision-making to strengthen community capacity and participation;
- Foster greater community support and institutional “leadership” by encouraging social and community capacity building;
- Revitalize early experiences of collaborative management to encourage learning and development in the resource management regime.

Knowledge Incorporation

- Encourage initiatives like the Deline Knowledge Centre to document and develop rationale explanations and applications of TEK in resource management;
- Encourage learning initiatives among youth that build traditional and scientific understandings of resource management.

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