



Arctic Development
Library

***Commercial Cariboo Hunt - Labrador Inuit
Development Corporation
Date of Report: 1988
Catalogue Number: 5-2-21***

INTRODUCTION

This report will provide a general background on the previous hunts carried out by the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation (LIDC) as well as specific reports on the hunt, the base camp operation, the caribou facility and the marketing of the meat during the 1988 Commercial Caribou Hunt.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past years, LIDC has operated a Commercial Caribou Hunt. The hunt was first carried out in the spring of 1985 by the Labrador Inuit Association. The hunt was determined to be viable and was passed over to the Development Corporation the following year. The hunt and accompanying marketing efforts in 1986 established a prime market for a quality product within the Province as well as considerable interest from outside of the Province. The demand appeared great enough for the Corporation to proceed with the construction of a major processing and storage facility to be built in Nain and completed in time to service the 1988 hunt.

In the meantime, there was considerable pressure from the Labrador Inuit hunters for LIDC to operate a hunt in the spring of 1987. That pressure, along with a desire to keep the market interest, resulted in LIDC operating a spring hunt even though it meant using the fish plant in Nain, again, and chartering aircraft to fly the meat out to market.

In anticipation of the full scale operation that would be under inspection, at all stages, by federal meat and plant inspectors, once the meat processing facility was in operation, LIDC used the opportunity to make some changes in the field operation.

The major change to the operation (from those hunts in 1985, 1986) was: the establishment of a base camp or a satellite camp, This would avoid the need for the commercial hunters to return to Nain from the hunt site, approximately 120 miles, each day.

The 1988 Caribou Hunt

Three reconnaissance flights during the month of March had not located a sufficient number of animals to begin a large scale hunt. Commercial hunters from Nain checked out the area which they had hunted the previous year and returned with approximately 40 animals on April 9.

The hunters continued returning to the same area, usually spending one to two nights on the caribou grounds. After the arrival of the Federal Meat Inspectors, on April 22, the hunters remained at the base camp at night and hunted caribou by day.

The Commercial Caribou Hunt was closed on April 29, 1988, with a total number of 1510 animals taken, 243 had been inspected in accordance with Federal Meat Inspection Standards.

THE BASE CAMP

Location

The site of this year's base camp was a vast improvement compared to the site used in 1987; it was a well protected area, located under and between reasonably high hills. It not only served as a well protected location, but also as an excellent landmark for less experienced and first year hunters. I strongly recommend that this site be used whenever the hunt takes place in this area.

Operation

The operation of the 1988 hunt was efficiently coordinated due mainly to the full cooperation of the different parties involved. There were five different parties associated directly with the base camp, these being Hunters, Base Camp Employees, Resource Technicians, Federal Inspectors and Wildlife Biologists or Technicians.

The technique of caribou evisceration was different this year compared to others. It involved the use of an evisceration tent and special design hanging racks. The only setback involved in this operation was the simple fact that there was not enough manpower in the field to maintain each hunter's daily quota of caribou. The caribou gutted on racks turned out to be clean and blood free (head shots), which made the carcass more acceptable in compliance with Meat Inspection Regulations.

Tagging System

The tagging system which normally works well on the caribou harvest, caused some problems this year. There were a number of tags having the same number, due to the fact that not enough tags were numbered prior to the start of the harvest. As a result, there was confusion as to what numbers were to be marked on the tags.

Caribou Transport (to Nain)

The idea of local people transporting caribou from the base camp to the caribou plant was slow catching on, but proved very effective in the latter stages of the 1988 harvest. It proves very economical when compared to the cost of shipping caribou by airplanes, and it also creates more employment to other people at a time when dollars are hard to come by. This system can diminish the use of airplanes substantially, if not totally, for air transport from base camp to Nain.

The Caribou Facility

The new plant at Nain has vastly improved the ability of the Corporation to provide top quality meat processing and should be a viable operation with another season of experience in meat processing.

During the 1988 hunt, the management of the facility changed three times causing many problems. Poor communication between

he base camp and the caribou plant resulted in a serious Over-
load being placed on the workers because the facility was not
designed to handle the number of caribou taken each day by the
hunters. This problem can be resolved by establishing a daily
quota for the hunters and providing better communication equip-
ment.

The production phase showed a substantial increase in the
proficiency of the plant workers, as well as, a number of renova-
tions which could improve production for another season.

Marketing

The marketing strategy which had been set up by the original
General Manager was poorly organized causing a delay in selling
the federally inspected meat. Markets within the province had
not been established and, in some cases, customer relations with
potential clients were severed. This problem is slowly being
rectified by the present management.

SUMMARY

The operation at the base camp using the Federal system of evis-
ceration has been well accepted by the workers and the hunters.
The processing at the plant can be made much more efficient with
sound management and changes to the structure. The marketing of
federally inspected meat has great potential, based on the number
of inquiries which have been received. The future of caribou

meat processing is very positive and we look forward to the 1969 season with continued cooperation from all parties involved.