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***Pilot Commercial Cariboo Harvest - Fall Hunt
1985***

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

In late September and early October 1985 the Labrador Inuit Association (L.I.A.) and the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation (L.I.D.C.) operated a very limited commercial fall hunt for a quota of 50 animals- Initial plans for a fall hunt included selling the meat in Newfoundland but due to prior heavy workloads L.I.A. and L.I.D.C. were unable to do the necessary advance preparation for establishing markets in Newfoundland in time for a fall 1985 hunt. Consequently, the objective of the fall hunt was restricted to testing the logistics of a commercial hunt along the north coast of Labrador using a local longliner as the base of operations.

In the meantime, L.I.D.C. is mounting an aggressive advertising and promotion campaign to establish potential markets in Newfoundland which can be supplied from a Spring (1986) hunt.

2. **Preparation for the Hunt**

L.I.A. and L.I.D.C. met jointly with various representatives from the provincial government in September to discuss the logistics of a fall pilot commercial hunt. Due to the short notice the province was only in a position to approve a limited quota of 50 animals with the meat to be sold only in Labrador.

L.I.A. convened a general meeting with all interested hunters in Nain to discuss the logistics, the location and the timing of the hunt and to determine which hunters would be interested. At that meeting L.I.A. stated very clearly that it would not charter a longliner for the hunt but would make arrangements with the owner of the boat to provide him with 225 gallons of fuel for the first trip and to pay him 15¢/lb. for meat delivered to the fish plant in Nain and bought by L.I.D.C. for commercial sale. The owner of the longliner would also be able to get a quota of animals as well.

L.I.D.C. would pay the hunters \$1.00/lb. for good meat.

It was proposed that the animals would be skinned and quartered and stored in ice on the boat. Each hunter would have tags which would distinguish his meat for purposes of accurate accounting back in Nain. L.I.A. would arrange for a manager to be on site at all hunts.

There was general agreement with this approach and with the need to have one more meeting to pin down the details. At the final meeting the hunters stated that they wanted to leave the next day which was 30 September. The hunters were anxious to get their quotas before the weather got too bad and before the caribou started rutting.

The decision to leave so quickly resulted in a lot of last minute organizing by the hunters to get their own supplies.

L.I.A. arranged for Tom Ok Iiu a ts iak to be the local manager on the hunt. His responsibility was to keep a record of the animals shot and the location of the hunts, to make sure no garbage was left behind, to collect organs and livers for the school science program, to make sure the hunters had their tags for their meat and to bring back to L.I.A. any problems encountered on the hunt.

Eventually, the hunters were ready to leave Nain and head north. There were 6 hunters on this trip (Aba Kojak, Tom Barbour, Ama Okkuatsiak, Abia Zarpa, Alec Dicker, Sem Noch-asak). Eli Merkuratsuk was the captain of the longliner and he had Jacko and Buddy Merkuratsuk on board as crew. The hunters came back from this trip with only 25 animals so there was a second trip. An account by Tom Okkuatsiak of both of these trips is attached.

Once the hunters actually left Nain and began their hunt there were changes made to the way the hunt was operated in practise compared to the way it was proposed back in Nain. The animals were skinned and left whole. The carcasses were then wrapped in the skin, tagged, and stored in ice on the boat. A few of the carcasses were split down the middle but not many of them. The carcasses were quartered back at the plant.

The meat was sold to the Canadian Armed Forces and to Hudson's Bay in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the rest of the meat was sent to the communities of Nain, Postville, Rigolet and Makkovik and sold through the L.I.A. fieldworkers.

Hides were sold to the Nain Craft Council, the Nain School and a few were sold to local individuals.

3. Problems

3.1 Timing

Late September /early October is too late for any substantial fall commercial hunt. August is a more suitable time. By the end of September the animals are starting to move away from the shores and up into the mountains. They become much harder to get at this time.

It is also getting closer to rutting time for the bulls and at this time the meat can develop a strong and very unpleasant taste. This will obviously be a very serious handicap to any marketing plans. L.I.D.C. has no intention of marketing meat from rutting bulls but there will be unavoidable perception problems from potential customers who know that meat is typically "bad" in the fall and who will not buy the meat for that reason.

Timing was also a problem from the organizational perspective due to the 'last minute' decision to go for a limited hunt. This raised all the typical problems of getting notice out, helping the hunters get organized, arranging to use the fish plant in Nain for storing the meat etc.

3.2 Charter Arrangements

Despite the efforts L.I.A. took to make sure that everyone understood that the longliner would not be on a charter arrangement with L.I.A. there were problems with it. The owner of the longliner did not really appreciate the fact that in order to make the arrangement profitable for him he would have to hunt himself so that he could have a commercial quota and he would have to try and get the 50 animals as quickly and efficiently as possible.

That did not happen on the first trip and consequently valuable hunting time was lost and only 25 caribou were brought back.

The decision to make a second trip was left up to the hunters and the owner of the longliner. They agreed among themselves to go back up but the younger hunters from the first trip were dropped (Area Okkuatsiak and Abia, Zarpa) so that the owner and crew of the longliner could hunt. There was still some dissatisfaction expressed with this arrangement but it was an improvement over the first trip.

3.3 Management

One of L.I.A.'s objectives is to involve more of its members, as appropriate, in the management of resource development projects. The management responsibilities include data collecting and report writing and liaison between the hunters and L.I.A. The local manager will work in consultation with the senior hunters who have been involved in past commercial operations with L.I.A./L.I.D.C.

This fall hunt was the first time that L.I.A. has used a local hunter as a manager. Because this was a new arrangement and because everything was done through last minute negotiations, there was some confusion with a few of the hunters about the role of the manager. This resulted in some interference from one of the hunters with the arrangements that were made between L.I.A. and the manager. However, using a local hunter as a manager proved to be a very successful one not only from the point of view of obtaining data, but also for collecting organ samples which were sent to the schools on the north coast. A report of the organ collecting program is attached.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

Despite the fact that the fall hunt was a last minute operation it was a useful and worthwhile pilot project because it did identify for L.I.A. and L.I.D.C. some of the major problems associated with a fall hunt.

In order to ensure a successful fall hunt, the hunt should take place ideally in late August/early September, when the caribou are more accessible to the shore. and well before the rutting season begins.

The preliminary economics of using a longliner as a base of operations indicate that it is only feasible if the captain and as many of his crew as possible hunt as well with a commercial quota. The longliner should try to get 50 caribou per trip and should maximize its time hunting-

The quality of the meat appeared to be good and there were no major problems encountered using the Nain fish plant to store the meat until it could be shipped via CN coastal boat to the customers. The transportation system with the coastal boats worked extremely well. It was much easier, more reliable and infinitely more cheaper than shipping the meat out by charter aircraft. The CN coastal boat system was very co-operative and was able to provide L.I.A. with advance notice about available space on outgoing boats.

The management arrangements using a local hunter as project manager also proved successful. There was' good feedback from the senior hunters about the manager and the role he played and the essential data was collected for L.I.A.

The manager was also able to help out some of the hunters in filling their quotas and packing the animals down to the boat .

Collecting samples for the local school science project was also a responsibility of the manager. The samples that he collected were in good shape. and were used by the school in its biology program. As a result a demand for more organs has increased. However, L.I.A. 's preliminary experience with data collecting using the hunters in the Spring hunt indicated that if there is to be any reliable organ or sample collecting done in the field there must be project personnel to oversee the operation and to do the bulk of the collecting in the field. The local field manager fills this function well.

Exactly how a fall hunt is operated and whether more small boats and hunters should be used still needs further experimentation. Ultimately the decision to continue with a fall hunt will depend on the hunters and whether or not it will be profitable for them. Even though there were complaints about the lack of charter arrangements for the longliner and the fact that the hunters had to hike in to get the caribou the hunters still decided to go for a second trip covering all costs, including fuel, themselves.

4.2 **Recommendations**

1. If the hunters are agreeable there should be more discussion between them and L.I.A./L.I.D.C. about alternatives to operating a fall hunt with just one longliner well in advance of the next opportunity for a fall hunt.

2. Without compromising the quality of the meat, or the responsible management of the hunt, the fall hunt should operate as much as possible as an independent economic venture without charter arrangements or financial support to the hunters from L.I.A./L.I.D.C.
3. There should be a serious effort made to establish markets for caribou hides and antlers taken from fall animals.
4. L.I.A. should continue the approach of using a local hunter as a project manager and should train this person(s) in the area of data collecting, recording and report writing. People chosen for this job should be respected hunters who know the areas where spring and fall hunts are likely to occur and who would be willing to go through the training.
5. Collecting samples for the school science project should be encouraged and continued.