

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON MUSK-OXENA. REPORT OF MEETINGS WITH THE RESIDENTS OF
RESOLUTE BAY AND GRISE FJORD

Chairman - John H. Parker, Deputy Commissioner

Members - Lyle R. Trimble, Member for Mackenzie Delta
Simonie Michael, Member for Eastern Arctic

Secretary - Peter S. Juli, Northwest Territories Government

Acting on directions received from Council at its 35th Session, the Committee on Musk-oxen visited Resolute Bay and Grise Fjord in April, 1968, to ascertain the views of the residents on Musk-oxen, with particular reference to the proposed program of allowing sports hunting of the animal. Two meetings were held in each community and the views of the people are summarized below. An interpreter from Resolute, Johnny Amagoalik, was used at all four meetings.

Resolute Bay - April 21 - 9:30 p.m.

(Attendance: 16 men, 7 women)

Mr. Parker explained to the people that biologists had reported an increase in Musk-oxen numbers since the ban in 1917 of all hunting of the species. He thanked the Eskimos for their strict observance of conservation measures and said that their scrupulous respect for the law had resulted in the possibility of limited harvesting of the species. He said that the Northwest Territories Council thought that a few animals could now be hunted and that Council is most anxious that the Eskimo people receive all possible benefit from any such hunting.

Mr. Parker said that one suggestion was that hunters from the south be allowed to visit and hunt one Musk-ox, and that another suggestion was that the Eskimos themselves should be permitted to shoot a very limited number of the animals when travelling far from the settlements and in need of additional food. He then said that the purpose of the Committee's visit was to determine the views of the people on the best plan for utilization of the species.

The people said that Mr. Kwaterowsky, Superintendent of Game, had visited the community the previous fall and had taken four men to Bathurst Island to train them as guides. Mr. Kwaterowsky taught the men fine points of guiding, and explained how they could make money from the operation. The people said they thought Mr. Kwaterowsky had been very helpful, and in general they felt the sports hunting proposal was a very good idea.

Speaking for the people, Sudlovnick expressed concern that Musk-oxen had been taken from Ellesmere Island to the south, ignoring the interest of Eskimo residents of the high arctic. He reminded the Committee that he and many other of the people at Resolute had been moved from Port Harrison to Resolute because game species were more abundant there, but that now the Government seemed to be taking the game species back to Arctic Quebec where the people had come from. Mr. Parker explained that the small herd had been moved from the Eureka Area, where no Eskimos live or hunt, to Fort Chimo to help the Eskimo people there, and explained Dr. Teal's experiment with herding and wool utilization. The people then said they understood the move, that they approved of it, and added that they also thought Mr. Kwaterowsky's plan was very good and a good way to help the people of the community to make money.

Mr. Parker explained the considerable public protest at the proposed sports hunting scheme, and the concern of the persons living in the south - the people thought this was very funny.

The meeting concluded at 11:10 p.m. after a discussion of other game matters.

Grise Fjord - April 22 - 7:30 p.m.

(Attendance: 11 men, 10 women plus 2 RCMP)

Mr. Parker introduced the subject of the meeting the same way he had at Resolute.

The people said they had heard that a sports hunting program would provide money for Grise Fjord if allowed, and they asked if this was true. They added that they thought it would be a good idea if both Eskimo and white people could hunt a few Musk-oxen each year. They explained that sometimes last year Musk-oxen were the only game around and they would have liked to have killed a couple for emergency food. Mr. Parker asked what annual quota would be appropriate for such emergency use and they replied that 8 would be sufficient. They added that they thought white hunters should be allowed to hunt also, and that this would be a great help to the local economy.

The people said the kill should be spread out over a period of time and that the Government should set a hunting season on the species. They said that August would be the best time to start the hunting, and that May would be a particularly good time because the other trapping and hunting would be over. They also said that May would be the best time for sports hunting as the people were not otherwise occupied, there is light 24 hours a day, and aircraft would have no difficulty with landing or with the weather.

Mr. Parker said that any sports hunting would take place some distance from the community and would be reached by aircraft.

The people reported that in recent years some Musk-oxen have died, but whether of starvation or old age they could not be sure. They suggested that a mixture of animals be killed, (some young, some old, some male, some female) because to kill only the old animals (who have much wisdom) would be to remove the defence of the herds. (They added that they thought the former practice of killing only male caribou had caused the decimation of caribou herds in their area by removing the protectors.)

The people said they thought Mr. Kwaterowsky's guiding and training, which was carried out near Grise Fjord, was very successful and they expressed full approval of it. Replying to a question by Mr. Parker, the people said they did not know whether sports hunting should be run by the Co-op itself, but agreed it should be a co-operative venture. They said they thought it would be fine for white hunters to hunt other species, providing the species were not in any way depleted. (They insisted that walrus should be the one species not available under any circumstances to white hunters.)

They spoke strongly against the presence of white photographers, who they say chase game, and drive it farther from the communities. They felt that photographers were not utilizing resources, and were very wasteful and detrimental.

The meeting concluded at 10:00 p.m., again after a discussion of other game matters.

Grise Fjord - April 23 - 10:30 a.m.

(Attendance: 7 men plus 1 RCMP)

The people reiterated the views expressed at the first meeting relative to Musk-oxen. They explained that the reason that they would like to be able to shoot Musk-oxen in cases of emergency as early in the year as August is because there are no caribou available then. Some people present felt that even if the local people could shoot a total of 5 Musk-oxen in emergency situations they would be satisfied.

They modified their statement of the previous evening on walrus hunting somewhat by saying that outsiders could shoot a few, perhaps up to 25 per year provided that the meat was not wasted and was used locally. They anticipated being guides and helpers in such a hunt, thereby gaining further revenue.

The Committee Members saw a young (4 or 5 year old female) Musk-oxen which one of the hunters had found dead several miles from Grise Fjord. The animal was very thin, and apparently died from starvation. The unusually heavy snow fall experienced this past winter had made feeding more difficult for the animals.

Resolute Bay - April 23 - 7:30 p.m.

(Attendance: 11 men, 7 women)

The people reiterated views expressed at the first meeting, and added that they understood sports hunting would begin this season, but had later heard that the matter was not settled. They asked if the Committee could now give definite word and Mr. Parker explained the steps to be taken, involving reporting to Council on the Committee's findings, and then Council's consideration of the whole matter, possibly resulting in enabling legislation at a later time. Sudlovnick, speaking for the people, said he didn't mind the white man's slowness, so long as his grandchildren could hunt Musk-oxen!

Again the people expressed interest in the Fort Chimo Musk-oxen transplant and asked if the Quebec Musk-oxen were to be hunted. Mr. Parker said that hunting had not been the intention of the transplant, although game laws in Quebec were under the control of the Quebec Government.

The meeting closed at 9:15 p.m.

B. PLANS FOR CONCLUSION OF COMMITTEE STUDY

Your Committee plans to seek the views of a number of known experts who have had experience in dealing with Musk-oxen. These meetings are planned for the first week of October, 1968. The Committee will then review its findings in the light of the information gathered at public hearings in the settlements and the advice received from biologists acquainted with Musk-oxen and prepare a report with recommendations for presentation at the January 1969 Session of Council.