

## **Inuvialuit Environmental and Wildlife Co-Management in Canada's Western Arctic**

Since the signing of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) in 1984 – the first comprehensive Land Claim Settlement in Canada – the Inuvialuit and many government agencies have expended considerable effort to make the co-management process brought into being by the IFA work. The IFA established a system of co-management that, more than ever before, provided for a heightened level of community participation in resource management along with increased institutional accountability. The IFA provided for the establishment of five co-management bodies that are responsible for management of the wildlife and environment, including habitat, as well as screening (and possibly public review) of potential development activities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, which is 1.1 million km<sup>2</sup> or roughly the size of Texas and California together. Each co-management body is made up of 50% representation from the Inuvialuit and 50% representation from the Federal and/or Territorial governments, with a mutually agreed upon Chairman.

In order to promote the efficient and informed operation of these co-management bodies, the Inuvialuit approach to sustainable development and environmental management includes support for a full range of wildlife research programs, traditional knowledge studies, harvest monitoring and the establishment of protected areas. The Inuvialuit have also been pioneers in the field of wildlife management with such examples as the co-signing with the Inupiat of Alaska of the International Polar Bear Management Agreement for the Southern Beaufort Sea (1988). This was the first ever wildlife management agreement between user groups that was initiated and concluded by aboriginals in two different countries. The co-management system under the IFA has allowed the Inuvialuit to be equal partners in resource management with involvement at the individual and community level, up to the international level.