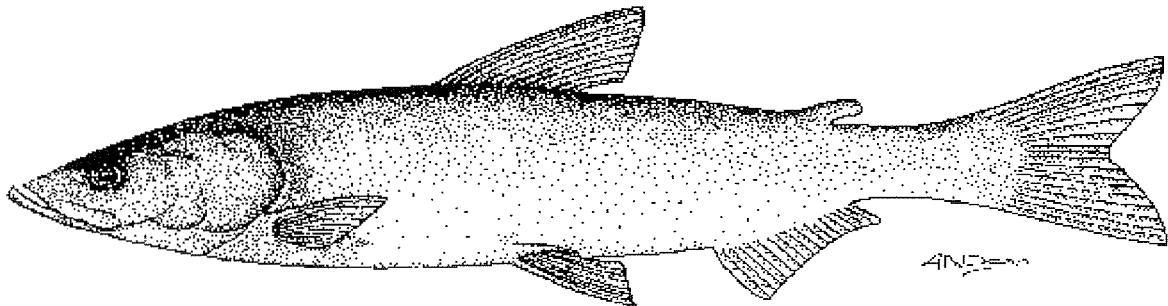


# QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

## COMMUNITY CONCERNS ON CONEY (INCONNU) IN THE GWICH'IN SETTLEMENT AREA

### DRAFT REPORT



Prepared by

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January 1998

**Please contact the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board before citing this document.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board distributed a questionnaire in July 1997 about coney in the four communities of the Gwich'in Settlement Area. The overall goal of the survey was to gather traditional information, concerns and priorities on coney populations to help in the development of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for coney.

A total of 22 filled questionnaires were received; 8 from Aklavik, 3 from Inuvik, 8 from Fort McPherson and 3 from Tsiigehtchic. The results of the questionnaire are summarized in this report.

People in the Gwich'in Settlement Area rely on coney for food and dog feed. The act of fishing for coney is also important for maintaining a traditional lifestyle. The respondents knew little about spawning, wintering and rearing locations of coney. Most of the respondents did not report any changes on coney abundance, size or taste from the past. Most people consider that the coney are healthy. They were however not sure if environmental changes (temperatures, changes in break-up/freeze up, water quality) had an impact on coney.

When asked if they would like to have commercial or sport fisheries, the respondents were divided. Most respondents that were in favour specified that the fishery must be economically viable and sustainable. Some people were afraid of potential conflicts with subsistence activities that may arise from commercial and sport fisheries. Others were optimistic about the economic benefits that these activities could bring to the communities.

The concerns identified during this survey are similar to the ones collected for other fish species; contaminants, industrial developments, the need for more research and the need to distribute scientific knowledge to the communities in a plain language format. The results of this survey suggest that many findings of past scientific research on coney in the Gwich'in Settlement Area are not known at the community level.

The information collected will be used as a part of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for coney currently under development for the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, the Sahtu Settlement Area and the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is developing an Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for coney (Inconnu; *Stenodus leucichthys*) in cooperation with the Fisheries Joint Management Committee (FJMC), the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) and the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board (GRRB). The four groups (DFO, SRRB, FJMC, GRRB) met on June 5, 1997 in Inuvik to develop a workplan and schedule for the management plan.

Community concerns on coney were needed to develop an effective management plan. Developing a questionnaire was found to be the best way to collect community concerns with the budget available. The questionnaire provided an opportunity for people to give their concerns, priorities and traditional knowledge on coney. Similar information will be collected from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and the Sahtu Settlement Area.

This report summarizes the results obtained from the coney questionnaire. The results are briefly discussed in the context of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. This was the first time that information on community concerns on coney was collected in the Gwich'in Settlement Area by mean of a questionnaire.

## METHODS

A questionnaire was developed by the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board and circulated for reviews by staff of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Appendix A). The questionnaire was pre-tested on two harvesters from Inuvik. This improved the clarity and the wording of a few questions. Choices of answers were provided to most questions and sufficient room was available for the respondent to write comments. A final version of the questionnaire was sent to the Fisheries Joint Management Committee and the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board for them to use in their respective jurisdiction areas.

The questionnaires were sent to the RRC Coordinator of each community of the Gwich'in Settlement Area. A letter was attached to explain the rationale for the questionnaire and to present the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for coney (Appendix B). This was followed by a telephone discussion to ensure that the objectives of the questionnaire were understood. A poster describing the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for coney and facts about coney biology were distributed with the questionnaire in the four communities. This was done to enhance community awareness of the process.

The RRC coordinators have a good knowledge of their community and of who are the key informants. They were asked to circulate the questionnaire to 5-6 Gwich'in that fish or have fished for coney. The questionnaire was self-administered but assistance was provided by the RRC coordinator when required. However, no formal interview was conducted. Participation in the study was voluntary. The respondents were ensured that their name would remain anonymous.

A total of 22 filled questionnaires were received; 8 from Aklavik, 3 from Inuvik, 8 from Fort McPherson and 3 from Tsiigehtchic. Some respondents left a few questions unanswered so the number of respondent may vary between questions.

The results of the survey may not represent the general feelings of the Gwich'in on coney as the respondents were not selected randomly. The questionnaires were pooled to summarize the answers. The results are discussed based on the information from the questionnaires.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To report the results, we divided the questions into five categories: Present Use of Coney, Traditional Knowledge, Changes Observed, Community Concerns and Commercial Fisheries.

### Present Use of Coney in the GSA

Most people thought that coney are abundant in their region (18 out of 22). Two people thought that coney were scarce. People in the GSA use coney for human consumption and for dog feed (Table 1). Coney is used throughout the year, but most catches are during July and August.

**Table 1. Use of Coney by the Gwich'in for human food and dog feed.**

Number of Answers	Used for Human Food	Use for Dog Food
22	21	8

Coney are captured mainly by using gillnet of 5" and 5½" mesh size (Table 2). One respondent mentioned that only 5½" gillnet should be used to have healthy coney stocks. Three people reported jigging for coney in the winter.

**Table 2. Mesh size used to fish coney in the Gwich'in Settlement Area.**

	Mesh Size					
	3½"	4"	4½"	5"	5½"	6"
Number of people	1	3	4	7	11	1

The coney caught are generally healthy and have few parasites. Only one respondent reported that the liver of some coney was dark and that other had white worms in their flesh. Another respondent reported scars on the skin of some coney. Nobody noticed more parasite/disease from one area over another.

When asked about the present harvest, only one respondent mentioned that the harvest was too high (1 out of 19). Seven people thought the harvest could be higher and 11 were not sure (Table 3).

**Table 3. Is the present harvest level for Coney too high?**

	Too High	Could Be Higher	Not Sure
Number of Respondents	1	7	11

### **Traditional Knowledge on Coney Habitat**

We asked a few questions about important habitats for coney (spawning areas, overwintering habitats, juvenile habitats). When asked if they knew of any spawning area, most respondents did not know (20 out of 21). Areas up the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers were identified as potential spawning sites. One person mentioned Bear Creek, Paddle Creek, Snake River and Peel River Canyon as coney spawning areas.

Most people also did not know where coney were during the winter (19 out of 22). One respondent mentioned catching coney in the Mackenzie River at the mouth of flowing streams throughout the winter. Another mentioned that they can be found everywhere in the winter because the water is clear. One said that coney are in the ocean. We also asked where the young coney (1 year old; less than 1 lb) were but none of the respondent knew (0 out of 21).

When asked if they thought enough traditional knowledge was collected on coney, the answers were divided. Eight persons said that there was enough while 10 mentioned that we need more. Traditional knowledge has been collected on coney in the GSA between 1994-1997 by the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board. The results were reported in the book entitled: "Gwich'in Words About the Land". The book has been released in December 1997 and documents much traditional knowledge about Sruh (coney). Further traditional knowledge is probably still needed on aspects such as exact spawning place locations and where they migrate.

## Changes in Coney (the past versus today)

A few questions focused on changes in the size of coney populations. Most respondents were either not sure or did not notice a difference in coney number over the years (Table 4). Most people find that coney are as easy to catch today than in the past (Table 5).

**Table 4. Are coney number the same now as they were in the past?**

	More	Same	Less	Not Sure
Number of Respondents	3	6	2	11

**Table 5. Are coney easier to catch today than in the past?**

	Easier	Same	Harder	Not Sure
Number of Respondents	3	14	0	5

Over 50% of the respondents thought that coney are the same size today as in the past (Table 6). Two persons (out of 21) answered that coney are smaller today than in the past (Table 6). Eleven respondents (out of 20) mentioned that is less harvest today compared with historic harvest (Table 7). Some respondents replied that harvest is greater because more people are going back to a traditional lifestyle. Other mentioned that harvest is lower because there are not as many dog teams to feed anymore.

**Table 6. Are coney smaller or bigger today than in the past?**

	Smaller	Same	Bigger	Not Sure
Number of Respondents	2	12	3	4

**Table 7. Is there more or less harvest for coney today than in the past?**

	More Harvest	Same Harvest	Less Harvest	Not Sure
Number of Respondents	3	6	11	0

Most people were not sure if there were environmental changes that have influenced coney harvests (Table 8). Only two respondents (out of 21) mentioned that environmental changes have influenced coney harvest (Table 8). The changes identified were warmer temperatures, late river freeze-up and early river break-up. Nobody reported a change of taste of coney flesh or liver since the past (Table 9).

**Table 8. Have there been any environmental changes in recent times that may have influenced coney harvest?**

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Number of Respondents	2	7	12

**Table 9. Do coney taste the same today than in the past?**

	Same Taste	Different Taste	Not Sure
Liver	9	0	10
Meat	11	0	6

## Community Concerns about Coney

Comments regarding general concerns about coney are as followed:

- 19 out of 21 respondents mentioned that more information on coney is needed to manage them better. Migration studies are needed to find out where they go. Spawning locations should also be mapped. A study of coney in Campbell Lake was also suggested.
- Most respondents thought that the youth did not know enough about coney (19 out of 22). People suggested teaching about fish and wildlife in schools.
- A little over half the respondents (12 out of 22) mentioned that developments

(mining, forestry, oil and gas, roads) are threats to coney. The mining activity up the Peel and Bonnet Plume Rivers, the ferry landings, the contaminants flowing down the Mackenzie River, and the contaminants at Caribou River were identified as present threats to all fish populations. Potential developments near Travaillant Lake, Sandy Lake and Sunny Lake were also identified as threats to fish populations.

- 10 respondents (out of 21) would like to have some protection given to coney spawning areas. Community fishing areas also need protection against developments.
- Some respondents thought that restrictions were needed to protect coney populations. Five people (out of 21) thought it was necessary to limit the number and size of coney caught and the number of nets and mesh sizes used.
- A few respondents had concern about the health and contaminants levels of coney.

## Commercial and Sport Fisheries for Coney

The respondents were divided over the potential establishment of commercial and sport (tourist) fisheries for coney (Table 10). Most of the respondents that were in favour specified that the fishery must be economically viable and sustainable. Some people were afraid of the potential conflicts with subsistence harvesting that commercial and sport fisheries could bring. Others were optimistic on the economic benefits that these activities could bring to the communities.

**Table 10. Number of respondents that were in favour and not in favour of a commercial and sport (tourist) fisheries for coney in the Gwich'in Settlement Area.**

	In Favour	Not In Favour	Not sure
Commercial Fishery	7	9	5
Sport (Tourist) Fishery	9	10	2

## CONCLUSION

A general agreement among the participants was that there is a need to preserve coney and all other fish populations for future generations. People feel strongly about the maintenance of traditional and cultural activities and the respect of the land and all of the resources it provides. This should be the driving principle of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for coney.

From the results of the questionnaire, it is clear that most people in the community are not aware of the scientific information collected on coney during the past few years. The more recent projects include a migratory study in 1997 and an ecological research project by DFO and University of Alberta in 1994-97. The findings of these projects are presently under analysis and the results should be presented to the communities in a plain language format to enhance knowledge on coney biology.

Information for this questionnaire was not collected randomly and may not represent the general feelings of the Gwich'in on coney. The results provide an indication of the present concerns regarding coney from the key users within the Gwich'in Settlement Area. The concerns identified are similar to the ones mentioned for other fish species such as; contaminants, industrial developments, the need for more research and the need to distribute scientific knowledge to the communities in a plain language format.

The questionnaire provides the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans with feedback about where the key users of coney stand on the development of a commercial or sport fisheries. The results indicate that more discussions and consultations between the different users groups will be needed to come to an agreement regarding commercial exploitation of the fisheries resource. The Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for coney will act as a guide when proposed fisheries activities come forward.

The information collected will provide the co-management boards and DFO with a valuable outlook on what are the community priorities and concerns regarding coney management.

**More information on coney can be obtained from:**

Fisheries Biologist  
Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board  
Inuvik, NWT  
867-777-3429  
867-777-4260 (fax)  
e-mail: grrbps@inuvik.net

Stock Assessment Biologist  
Department of Fisheries and Oceans  
Inuvik, NWT  
867-777-3314  
867-777-4330 (fax)

Harvest Study Coordinator  
Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board  
Inuvik, NWT  
867-777-3429  
867-777-4260 (fax)  
e-mail: grrbim@inuvik.net

Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board. 1997. Nanh' Kak Geenjit Gwich'in Ginjik. Gwich'in Words about the Land. Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board. Inuvik, NWT. 212 p. [Can be obtained from GRRB office.]

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank everybody that took the time to answer the questionnaire. The cooperation from the participants was very good and we appreciate the extra effort they showed in completing each question. The comments we received will help developing an Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for coney that reflects the needs and priorities of the communities.

The four Renewable Resource Council Coordinators: Sheldon Bernard, Mariah Itsi, Neil Firth and Dan Andre provided invaluable help in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. Their help was greatly appreciated.

Doug Chipczak, Robert Moshenko, Peter Clarkson, Ian McDonald, and Doug Villeneuve reviewed the questionnaire and provided useful comments. Steven Charlie assisted in summarising the results. Doug Chipczak, Peter Clarkson and Ian McDonald gave useful suggestions on earlier drafts of this document.

Mahsi cho!

# Appendix A

## Coney Questionnaire

# Coney Questionnaire

Note: This is the first attempt to collect community concerns on Coney. The results will be used to assist in writing the first draft of the Coney Management Plan. This is **not** the last chance you will have to mention your concerns about Coney. We will present a draft of the Coney Management Plan to the RRC in the fall of 1997.

Goals of Questionnaire:

- to inform Coney users about the Coney Management Plan
- to collect community concerns on Coney
- to identify areas where more information is needed on Coney
- to provide DFO with some community information on Coney

.....  
*Please circle your answer and provided comments if needed*

1. Do you have any concerns about Coney in general?

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2. What do you use Coney for?	Human food?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>
	Dog food?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>

Comments (time of the year, amount):

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3. Are there many Coney in your region?

<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>
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If yes, when are they present? When are they absent?

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4. What fishing equipment is used to fish Coney?

<b>NETS:</b>	<b>3'</b>	<b>3 1/2'</b>	<b>4'</b>	<b>4 1/2'</b>	<b>5'</b>	<b>5 1/2'</b>	<b>6'</b>
--------------	-----------	---------------	-----------	---------------	-----------	---------------	-----------

Comments (size of net, other method used):

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5. Are Coney numbers the same now as they were in the past? (5, 10 or 25 years ago?)  
**MORE                  SAME                  LESS                  NOT SURE**

Comments:

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6. Are Coney easier to catch today than in the past?  
**EASIER                  SAME                  HARDER                  NOT SURE**

Comments:

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7. Are Coney smaller or bigger today than in the past  
**SMALLER                  SAME                  BIGGER                  NOT SURE**

Comments:

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8. Is there more or less harvest for Coney today than in the past?  
**MORE HARVEST                  SAME HARVEST                  LESS HARVEST                  NOT SURE**

Comments:

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9. Is the harvest level for Coney  
**TOO HIGH                  COULD BE HIGHER                  NOT SURE**

Comments:

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10. Is there enough traditional knowledge collected about Coney?  
**YES                  NO                  NOT SURE**

Comments:

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11. Do you think the youth know enough about Coney?  
**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

Comments:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Are there any developments (mining, forestry, oil and gas, road) that may be a threat to Coney? (Spawning areas, community fishing areas)  
**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, where?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Are there any areas that should be protected because they are important for Coney?  
**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, where?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you know where Coney spawn?  
**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, where?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you know where Coney are in the winter?  
**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, where?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Do you know where the young (1 year old; less than 1lb) Coney live?  
**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, where?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. Do we need more research on Coney?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, what type?

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18. Have there been any environmental changes in recent times that may have influenced the Coney harvest?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, what changes? (e.g. Changes in break-up or freeze-up, river flow or water quality change, ice thickness, temperature...)

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19. Are the Coney caught in your area healthy?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If no, what have people seen that may have made the fish look sick?

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20. Are there many parasites in/on Coney?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, can you describe them (e.g. Worms, lumps, scars, in flesh or guts, etc.)?

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21. Do Coney that live in some places have more parasites or diseases than other places?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If yes, where?

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22. Do Coney taste the same today as they did in the past?

Liver?                      **YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

Meat?                      **YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

If no, what is different?

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23. Would you like to have a commercial fishery for Coney?  
**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

Comments:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

24. Would you like to have a sport (tourist) fishery for Coney?  
**YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**

Comments:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. Do you think it is necessary to limit:  
The number of Coney caught?                      **YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**  
The size of Coney caught?                      **YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**  
The net and mesh size used?                      **YES**                      **NO**                      **NOT SURE**  
If yes, why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

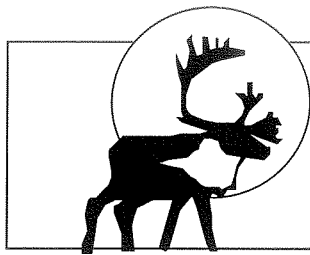
26. Other comments about Coney?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

27. Do you have any comments about this questionnaire?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mussi cho

## Appendix B

### Letter to the Renewable Resource Councils



## **Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board**

Box 2240, Inuvik, NT, X0E 0T0  
Phone (867) 777-3429, Fax (867) 777-4260  
E-mail [grrbps@inuvik.net](mailto:grrbps@inuvik.net)

July 24, 1997

To: RRC Coordinator  
All Renewable Resource Councils

### **RE: Fisheries Management Plan for Coney (inconnu) - WE NEED YOUR INPUT!**

Dear President, Coordinator and RRC members,

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is developing a Fisheries Management Plan for Coney in cooperation with the Fisheries Joint Management Committee (FJMC), the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) and the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board (GRRB). We would like to have your input on this plan, especially on concerns you may have regarding Coney. Community concerns regarding Coney will guide the development of the Management Plan. Therefore, your participation is important at this early stage.

#### **Background**

The four groups (DFO, SRRB, FJMC, GRRB) met on June 5, 1997 in Inuvik to develop a workplan and schedule for the Coney Management Plan. DFO will lead the process. We decided that community concerns should be gathered at RRC/HTC meetings for now. If there is a need, a regional workshop may be held to present what we know about Coney and to gather additional community concerns, but it is more likely that this information will be exchanged during RRC/HTC meetings only as the funds available to do this Management Plan are limited.

The Coney Management Plan will follow the same format as the Grizzly Bear Management Plan for the GSA and the Porcupine Caribou Management Plan. This format was found to be "user-friendly" and community-oriented. A first draft of the Plan will be presented to you late fall for your comments.

### Why does it involve DFO, FJMC, SRRB and GRRB?

Coney are known to use water that includes the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, the Sahtu Settlement Area and the Gwich'in Settlement Area. Although we have limited scientific information, they are likely part of the same stock. People from the three land claim areas fish for Coney. There is a need to work together to protect this resource for future generations. DFO will lead the development of the Coney Management Plan and FJMC, SRRB and GRRB will act as partners to DFO.

The role of GRRB (and SRRB, FJMC) is to gather community concerns and to provide harvest data to DFO (through the harvest study). GRRB will also provide DFO with our concerns. This information will be used by DFO to develop the Management Plan.

### Why Coney?

Coney was selected as the first fish species in the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan to work out the process of having Inuvialuit, Sahtu and Gwich'in work together with DFO in the management of fish species. Next year, we will start working on the management plan for Broad Whitefish, which will follow the same process used for Coney. It is important that you give us feedback on the Coney Management Plan so we can be better prepared to work on Broad Whitefish and other species.

### What will the management plan include?

The Management Plan will summarize the information we know about the Coney stocks in the Mackenzie River (migration routes, traditional knowledge, spawning habitat, harvest level, health, etc.). Concerns mentioned by the different user groups will be reported along with a list of potential solutions to answer them. Research concerns will be identified. The management plan will also include a worksheet stating the potential responsibilities of the different groups involved.

Priorities will be established after discussions with all the groups involved. Consensus between all groups will provide the means to carry out the Management Plan.

### What do we need from the RRCs?

For this first step, we would like to know if you have any concerns/questions about Coney, where they live, feed, spawn and overwinter. We have attached a questionnaire that asks about general concerns people may have. **Please circulate this questionnaire to, at least 5-6 people in your community that fish or have fished for Coney.** Feel free to circulate the questionnaire to as many people as you wish.

It is important that we know what your concerns are in order to address them in the management plan. Please forward your completed questionnaires to me before **November 30, 1997**. This is **not** the last chance you will have to comment on the Coney Management Plan. When a first

draft of the management plan is completed, we will present it to all the RRC's. Other concerns may then be expressed based on this information.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 777-3429. I will keep you informed of any developments regarding the Coney Management Plan.

Mussi cho,

Patrice Simon  
Forestry/Fisheries Biologist

Enclosure

c.c. Robert Moshenko, DFO  
Doug Chipertzak, DFO  
Mae Cockney, FJMC (Joey Amos)  
Bob Bell, FJMC  
Robert Nowosad, SRRB  
RRC's

PS/ps