**Symposium on the Human Dimension of Biodiversity Conservation and Management**

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**Title:** Community-based lake sturgeon conservation in the Cree community of Nemaska, James Bay, northern Quebec

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**Abstract**

Lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) is a long-lived fish species that is either threatened or vulnerable to extinction throughout most of its range. The traditional territory of the Nemaska Cree First Nation has long been reputed for its abundant sturgeon population, particularly in Lake Nemiscau, located at the confluence of the Nemiscau and Rupert Rivers of the James Bay/*Eeyou Istchee* region of northern Quebec. The Nemaska Lake Sturgeon Conservation and Management Working Group was formed in 2009 following concerns raised by local and regional stakeholders regarding harvest rates along the Rupert River as well as possible negative synergistic effects with the partial diversion of the river by Hydro-Québec. The Working Group is composed mainly of local actors, land users and elders, as well as regional stakeholders from Niskamoon Corporation, the Cree Nation Government and Hydro-Québec. From the outset, the Group made a series of recommendations that they have been mandated to implement by the local Chief and Council, namely building public awareness as well as restrictions on the sale of sturgeon outside the community. In 2012, largely as a result of public education campaigns, the sturgeon harvest significantly decreased throughout the territory. However, more work remains to be carried out by the Working Group, including the coordination of a sensitization campaign directed at youth and greater control measures with local authorities. Our presentation will include a discussion regarding the benefits of developing collaborative fora for community-based conservation as well as their challenges, based on our five-year experience.