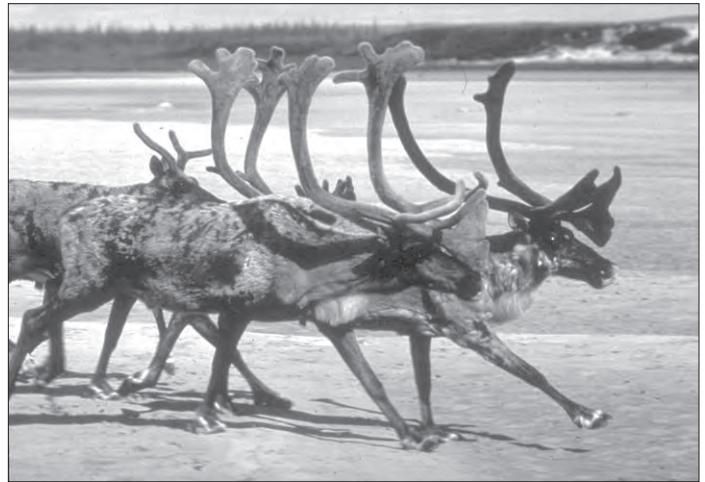


With populations plunging for at least four NWT barren-ground caribou herds, the BQCMB voted overwhelmingly at its November meeting to recommend satellite collaring in 2006 for the Beverly herd, which has never been tracked by satellite. Dene elders in northern Saskatchewan had opposed collaring the Beverly caribou, fearing collars might harm the animals, or that caribou might not return to their area once collared. However, biologists associated with the BQCMB have said that without collaring caribou, census results can't be trusted because they may be missing large concentrations of caribou. And community representatives from Nunavut, Manitoba and NWT have previously pointed out the advantages of collaring, including continuously tracking the movements of caribou.



Courtesy of Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT

“This is good news, definitely,” says BQCMB chairman Jerome Denecheze, who hails from Lac Brochet, Manitoba and has seen the benefits of tracking Qamanirjuaq caribou since collaring of some

For more news, see our web site:
www.arctic-caribou.com



Articles in Dene or Inuktitut are available upon request.
Dırı ?erihł'is sí dēne chu ?etēna yatı chu tth'ı t'á ?erihł'is
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Around the Range

Manitoba-Nunavut road consultations

New chairman Jerome Denechezhe is the BQCMB's representative on the project advisory council for the Manitoba-Nunavut road route selection study, looking at a proposed winter road that connects Rankin Inlet with Manitoba's all-weather road system at either Lynn Lake, Thompson or Gillam. The Port of Churchill will also be connected to the route. Long-awaited community consultations are now set to start in 2006, with visits to Arviat, Baker Lake, Brochet, Chesterfield Inlet, Churchill, Fox Lake, Gillam, Lac Brochet, Lynn Lake, Nisichawayasihk, Rankin Inlet, South Indian Lake, Tadoule Lake, Tataskweyak, Thompson and Whale Cove. For updates, check out www.nu-mbrss.snclavalin.com

Who has mining interests on the calving grounds?

Sometimes a map says more than words ever can. Case in point: a map of companies with prospecting permits, mineral claims and mineral leases on the calving grounds of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds, created by WWF-Canada and posted on the BQCMB's website at www.arctic-caribou.com/mining.html. Current to September 2005, it shows the reach of 17 companies that have dibs on the calving grounds. Once new prospecting permits granted by INAC are announced in February 2006, an updated map will go online.

Since industrial activity occasionally results in human-caused disturbances to caribou, visitors to the BQCMB website are

asked to report any incidents they've witnessed through an online submission form at www.arctic-caribou.com/caribou_form.html. English, Inuktitut and Dene PDF files based on pocket-sized observation cards can also be printed out from the website. The actual cards are available from caribou-range communities, as well as BQCMB board members and secretary-treasurer Ross Thompson.

Meadowbank final hearing

The BQCMB will be an intervener at the Nunavut Impact Review Board final hearing of the proposed Meadowbank gold mine, 70 kilometres north of Baker Lake. The hearing is scheduled for the week of March 27, 2006 in Baker Lake, Chesterfield Inlet and Rankin Inlet, says NIRB executive director Stephanie Briscoe. Check the website nirb.nunavut.ca for more details.

Owner Cumberland Resources Ltd. submitted its final environmental impact statement in November. Meadowbank, with Canada's largest pure gold open pit reserves, would have a 12-year project life, with two years of construction, eight years of operation and two years of mine closure. If NIRB gives Meadowbank the go-ahead, the project proceeds to the Nunavut Water Board for review.

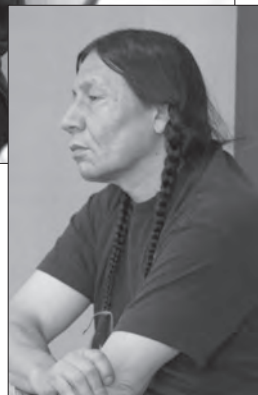
BQCMB meetings

The spring 2006 meeting is slated for the end of May in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. As usual, the fall get-together will be in Winnipeg in November 2006.



Photos by Karen Hunter

The BQCMB's November meeting in Winnipeg drew visitors from around the caribou ranges, including Hatchet Lake First Nation chief Louis Josie and Wollaston Lake's Thomas ShaOulle (above, centre and right), chatting with BQCMB alternate member Pierre Robillard. Right: Black Lake councillor Edwin Boneleye



Continued from page 1

of those animals began in 1993. “We’re looking forward to it because (it brings) a lot of information that is very useful for our people and also the government.” BQCMB vice-chairman Darryl Hedman agrees, with the identification of calving grounds, which aids population surveys, leading the list of benefits.

The expense of collaring 40 animals is expected to top more than \$300,000, including the cost of the collars, reconnaissance flights to locate caribou, fuel, and deployment (putting collars on caribou). Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is leading the funding charge with \$200,000, while the government of the NWT has committed \$80,000, and World Wildlife Fund Canada (WWF-Canada) and the BQCMB are providing \$10,000 apiece. The BQCMB has also approached mining companies on the caribou ranges for financial help, with encouraging results.

GPS collars, the latest generation of radio collars, are much lighter, more accurate, and more energy-efficient. A satellite system still collects the data from collars to be downloaded to computers. NWT South Slave regional biologist and BQCMB member Deb Johnson adds that it’s mandatory for her government to use break-away collars – collars programmed to automatically drop off the animal once the battery is almost finished. Each collar will probably be worn for four years.

Populations dipping down

Surveys of three NWT caribou herds in the summer of 2005 found their numbers were shrinking – dramatically, in two cases. The Cape Bathurst herd dropped by 86 per cent to just 2,400 animals (from 17,500 in 1992), while the Bluenose West herd fell by 79 per cent to 20,800 (from 98,900 in 1987). The Bluenose East herd, with 104,000 caribou in

2000, dwindled by 36 per cent to 66,600.

This follows a June 2003 survey that discovered the mighty Bathurst caribou herd, which shares its range with two diamond mines, a gold mine and two proposed diamond mines, had dropped to 186,000 from 350,000 in 1996.

“That’s a big loss of numbers,” stresses Fort Smith Métis Council president Kenny Hudson. He has raised the concern with different groups, including the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, which has just made a motion calling for a halt on development (like building diamond mines) until a review of the health of caribou herds determines whether development is sustainable.

Climate, humans play a role

“We are seeing declines in all our herds so far,” says the NWT’s Johnson. “From that, we think that the Beverly would be down in numbers from 1994, but we have no idea how significant the decrease would be.”

The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds were last surveyed in 1994, when the Beverly was estimated at 276,000 and the Qamanirjuaq

was pegged at about 496,000. According to the BQCMB’s harvest calculations, the Beverly herd is thought to be close to or below its sustainable harvest limit. The BQCMB won’t recommend new harvest quotas for either the Beverly or Qamanirjuaq herd without up-to-date population estimates.

Some scientists believe two big pressure systems are flipping weather conditions around in the northern hemisphere almost every 10 years, affecting caribou populations on a sub-continental scale (see *Caribou News in Brief*, December 2003). While caribou numbers go up and down over time, there is concern that human activity could worsen a decline, and perhaps take herds to levels so low that they can’t recover.

Hudson adds that the danger in talking about natural caribou population cycles is that “people are going to ignore any concerns related to it” and suggest the population is going to go back up.

“Then you won’t blame (a population decline) on industry, you won’t blame it on overhunting, you won’t blame it on wastage.”



Photo by Karen Hunter

From left, BQCMB NWT member Deb Johnson, Nunavut biologist Mitch Campbell and BQCMB Manitoba member Albert Thorassie. The NWT and Nunavut governments will co-ordinate the deployment of collars

Akaitcho Dene win first step to protect land

In February, when INAC hands out the 2006 permits carving up federal Crown lands for prospecting, certain areas surrounding Great Slave Lake won't be up for grabs.

That's because the Akaitcho Dene of the Northwest Territories, which includes the people of Lutselk'e, persuaded INAC in November to stop issuing prospecting permits on certain important lands in their traditional territories while treaty implementation negotiations are being hammered out. These areas will be unveiled in January as part of the Akaitcho's Interim Measures Agreement.

Akaitcho traditional lands, which include the uranium-rich Thelon Basin, have become a hot

prospecting area as global demand for nuclear power to create electricity has inflated the price of uranium. The

BQCMB and

others have worked with the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and the NWT Treaty #8 Tribal Corporation since June to plan ways to protect caribou, water and the upper Thelon watershed from industrial development. Many parties are concerned about conservation of the watershed, which lies to the south and west of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary. The Bathurst, Ahlak and Beverly caribou herds migrate through this area, and the Beverly calving ground, which is downstream, is vulnerable to any pollution of its waters.

These parties plan to send INAC a joint letter backing the Akaitcho's claims for controlling development on their land,



Photo by Karen Hunter

BQCMB member August Enzoe (left) and alternate Joe Catholique, both of Lutselk'e, with WWF-Canada's Monte Hummel in back. The BQCMB supports the Akaitcho, as do WWF-Canada, the Athabaskan Dene, the North Slave Métis Alliance, the Baker Lake HTO, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and local outfitters.

and calling for research on the Beverly herd (including population surveys), implementation of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary Management Plan, and protection of Beverly calving and post-calving areas.

Calving grounds overrun with mineral rights

In Nunavut, a slew of prospecting permits, mineral claims and mineral leases pepper the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq calving grounds — more than 100 on the Beverly calving grounds and more than 250 on the Qamanirjuaq calving grounds as of September 2005.

Three uranium exploration firms held the 81 mineral claims on the Beverly calving grounds: Titan Uranium Inc., Cameco Corporation and UraVan Minerals Inc. De Beers Canada holds all but one of the 14 prospecting permits issued in 2004 and 2005 on the Beverly calving ground. On the Qamanirjuaq calving ground, 100 prospecting permits were issued in the last two years to companies that include BHP Billiton Diamonds, Kennecott and 4579 Nunavut

Limited. Dr. Felix Kaminsky and KM Diamond Exploration, as well as Full Metal Minerals Ltd. (specializing in gold and copper-gold discoveries), led in the mineral claims category with a total of 107 claims issued in the last three years. Mineral claims and leases reflect more advanced stages of exploration than prospecting permits.

Land use update still on hold

Efforts to update the land use plan regulating development in the region where most of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds' calving grounds are located remain stalled. Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) acting executive director Adrian Boyd says the government of Nunavut withdrew from NPC land use planning processes in January 2005. The process is in limbo until the government of Nunavut, the federal government, NPC and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) establish current board planning policies, objectives and goals for the Nunavut Settlement Area according to section 11.4.1 (a) of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

Courtesy of Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT



Lutselk'e

BQCMB going places, thanks to funding

A new injection of \$60,000 from WWF-Canada will, in part, permit the BQCMB to travel to important face-to-face meetings with northern residents and organizations in 2006 in its quest to help protect the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds and their habitat.

WWF-Canada's contribution goes to:

- continuing work with Lutselk'e on a Thelon Basin Strategy to conserve the Beverly calving grounds amidst growing regional mining activity (see "Just the tip of the iceberg," *Caribou News in Brief*, July 2005)
- travelling to Baker Lake for more meetings about the BQCMB's position paper on protecting the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds and their habitat, and to interact with mining interests there, such as Cumberland Resources Ltd.
- participating as an intervener at the Nunavut Impact Review Board's final hearing of the proposed Meadowbank gold mine
- strategic presentations to groups, such as band councils, in a bid to get resolutions supporting BQCMB recommendations
- a youth scholarship
- satellite collaring of the herds (\$10,000).

WWF-Canada strongly supports the BQCMB's position paper, says its president emeritus, Monte Hummel, "particularly the recommendations that permanent protection be given to the calving grounds and post-calving areas of both the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq." For the past five years, WWF-Canada has worked with Baker Lake and Lutselk'e along similar veins. Hummel hopes that BQCMB presentations to other northern groups will prompt action that advocates "protection of specific pieces of the landscape, citing the Board's recommendations."

Being an intervener at the NIRB final hearing on the Meadowbank gold project

"is not so much to intervene and object and raise hell" as it is to work with Cumberland Resources Ltd., "a company that's expressed some goodwill to work with them to help implement the Board's recommendations."

"It's clear to us that communities do want to protect areas for caribou," says Hummel "but equally, a significant slice of the community wants to pursue economic development, jobs."

New initiatives for all ages

Making the most of spare dollars in its budget, the BQCMB is launching four valuable new initiatives in 2006.

A season-oriented questionnaire designed by Manitoba board member Albert Thorassie will be used to conduct interviews with elders in Lac Brochet. This adds to interviews done with elders in Arviat and Baker Lake in May 2003 as part of the Board's Nunavut community-based caribou monitoring pilot project. A second new initiative will recruit candidates for a BQCMB youth intern program, an endeavour to involve young up-and-coming hunters and wildlife managers who can some day step into the shoes of long-time Board members. Both initiatives stem from recommendations of the Board's recently completed community-based caribou monitoring priorities project.

Youthful perspectives and energy will aid the Board, as caribou management efforts continue to deal with unprecedented industrial development activity on the ranges. Documenting the value of caribou to northerners, both economically and culturally, in a peer-review journal will demonstrate that caribou are as important to caribou-range residents in 2006 as mining jobs. The BQCMB's third initiative is to author such a paper.

Finally, the Board will contribute \$10,000 to satellite collaring of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds in 2006.



Photo by Karen Hunter

Left to right: BQCMB member Joe Kaludjak, alternates Joe Martin and Pierre Robillard, member Dan Shewchuk and alternate Carl McLean listen attentively

Getting the message out, and feedback in

Meetings with northerners this year are continuing to find out what they think of BQCMB recommendations for protecting the caribou herds and their habitat in the face of growing industrial development.

In October, consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn journeyed to Baker Lake to meet with the Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO) about the BQCMB's 2004 position

paper, *Protecting Calving Grounds, Post-Calving Areas and Other Important Habitats for Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou*. Some board members were not present, so the full HTO board was to consider later whether they would support the BQCMB's recommendations in principle, and whether they would write to appropriate government ministers to make their support clear.

Unfortunately, bad weather axed a planned meeting with Arviat's HTO and a visit with regional NPC staff later the same week. Still, Wakelyn hopes to discuss the BQCMB's recommendations with the Arviat HTO in early 2006, and may also return for more talks with the Baker Lake HTO at that time.

The NWT, Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments back the BQCMB's recommendations in principle while the government of Canada has offered assistance and financial support to stage meetings with regulators in Nunavut in order to kickstart discussions. Nunavut, which, like the other governments, is a signatory to the *Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Barren Ground Caribou Management Agreement*, has not commented on the BQCMB's position paper. The Qamanirjuaq caribou calving grounds and much of the Beverly herd's calving grounds are in Nunavut, where the booming mineral exploration industry was expected to top \$200 million in spending in 2005.

Wakelyn has also offered to meet with people in Lutselk'e to explain the BQCMB's recommendations and the need for protecting Beverly caribou and habitats. No meetings have been pegged for Saskatchewan, though, as the Athabasca Land Use Planning process is on hold.

In Manitoba, the BQCMB hopes to make a presentation to the Split Lake Resources Management Board in January, with chairman Jerome Denechezhe and vice-chairman Daryll Hedman likely to attend. In the fall of 2005, Qamanirjuaq caribou migrated south to the Split Lake Resource Management Area near Churchill River for the first time in 40 years, says Hedman.

BQCMB loses a true friend

Barry Roberts, the BQCMB's first secretary, died Sept. 15, 2005 at the age of 77.

His life was defined by his love for writing, as a reporter, a technical writer, a consultant on the Arctic, and finally, as an author. Roberts, originally from England, worked as a northern service officer with the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources in Salluit and Kuujuaq during the 1960s. After later relocating to Ottawa, he and sons Michael, Steven and David co-founded Nortext Multimedia Inc., an advertising and communications company specializing in aboriginal content.



"Barry was of immense assistance to me and the Board in the early years," says former Board member and secretary-treasurer Gunther Abrahamson, who spearheaded the BQCMB's creation in 1982.

Following a late-night meeting with government officials in Winnipeg, Abrahamson and Roberts worked till after midnight drafting the Board's guiding blueprint, the *Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Barren Ground Caribou Management Agreement*. It was approved the next morning.

Roberts also designed *Caribou News*, the precursor to today's much smaller *Caribou News in Brief*. The 16-page tabloid-size newsletter, vital to improving communication at a time of a perceived population crisis of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds, first came out six times yearly, and was supported by governments for a decade at a cost of \$100,000 a year.

Roberts, BQCMB secretary from 1982 until 1988, made sure a balanced overview was also present in meeting minutes – he "was scrupulously fair in ensuring that the minutes reflected the aboriginal point of view," says Abrahamson.

And in persuading the BQCMB to produce a four-volume Caribou Schools Program kit drawing on both traditional knowledge and science, Roberts helped introduce caribou management to caribou-range schools and a new generation that would depend on the vast herds.

Save caribou corridors from fire

As BQCMB community members call for better fire protection for caribou ranges, one government is aiming to improve the way its fire management strategy is implemented by getting more details on important spaces and current values at risk.

Certain NWT communities will be asked in a pilot project to identify areas important because of wildlife, traditional/cultural significance or other reasons, says Susan Corey, director of forest management for NWT's Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Corey joined counterparts Darryl Jessop of Saskatchewan Environment and Gary Freisen and Tom Mirus of Manitoba Conservation for a discussion on fire management at the BQCMB's November meeting.

NWT's department will also update its

Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT



If resources are available, governments should protect what few

narrow corridors remain for caribou to migrate within, says BQCMB member Earl Evans (above) of Fort Smith

list of values at risk. Wildlife habitat areas, migration routes, transmission lines, roads and more will be added to a database that already includes properties. (For more details, see forestmanagement.enr.gov.nt.ca.)

Corey says, though, "that doesn't mean because we identify an area and it has significance from a caribou point of view, that we'll have the resources to go to that fire and do full suppression on it."

BQCMB member Earl Evans of Fort Smith says that if resources are available, the government should take a pro-active stance to protect the few narrow corridors left for caribou to travel within, rather than waiting for fire to block off access completely.

"From the treeline down, there's huge tracts of land that have burnt," says Evans. The 1979 fire season devastated the region "but every year is getting worse because they're not actioning any fires" unless it's a threat to the community.

"A lot of this caribou habitat, it takes a hundred years for this stuff (to grow back)."

As policy, Manitoba does not battle fires in the caribou range. In northern Saskatchewan, a 20-kilometre buffer zone

protects communities, but fires elsewhere are individually assessed.

Allowing fires to take their course creates natural barriers and fire breaks, says Jessop. "If you were to try and totally protect some of these areas, you're setting up a large catastrophic fire that could potentially wipe out the whole habitat area in one season."

Corrections

In the July 2005 issue of *Caribou News in Brief*, the "People and Caribou" column incorrectly stated that Matt Fredlund of Rankin Inlet was the first caribou-range winner of a BQCMB Scholarship Fund award. Several past recipients hailed from caribou-range communities. Also, the article "Spreading the word to protect the herds" said that the federal government is one of five governments responsible for managing the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds. It is, in fact, responsible for management of Crown lands.

Photo by Karen Hunter



NWT's Susan Corey leans in for a question. Beside her is Darryl Jessop of Saskatchewan

People and Caribou

Photo by Karen Hunter



New BQCMB chairman Jerome Denechezhe (left) and vice-chairman Darryl Hedman

The BQCMB's longest-serving board member is back at the helm. Manitoba community member **Jerome Denechezhe** of Lac Brochet returns as chairman, replacing **Jimmy Laban** of Black Lake, who has chaired the Board since 2003. Denechezhe, a BQCMB member since the Board's inception in 1982, was also chairman from 1993 until 1998. Teaming up as vice-chairman is Manitoba Conservation wildlife manager **Darryl Hedman**, who replaces Saskatchewan Environment wildlife ecologist **Tim Trottier**, vice-chairman since 2003.

The BQCMB's November meeting saw several new faces around the board table: **Carl McLean** of INAC's Nunavut Regional office,

sitting in for board member **Stephen Traynor**, and **Joe Catholique** of Lutselk'e, who attended with board member **August Enzoe** of Lutselk'e.

Enzoe and BQCMB consulting biologist **Leslie Wakelyn** were in Vancouver in mid-November to attend the second annual meeting of the CircumArctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment Network (CARMA), an international caribou monitoring network bringing together representatives from Russia, Greenland, Canada, Norway, Finland and the United States.

Sturgeon and caribou may not seem to have a lot in common, but **Glen Smith** and **Hubert Folster** of the Nelson River Sturgeon Co-Management Board, who sat in on the

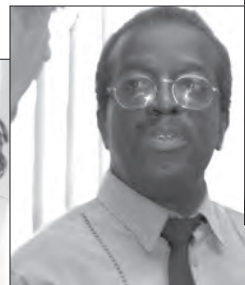
BQCMB's November meeting, saw similar challenges facing the two co-management boards. Primarily, how the BQCMB goes about "to convince their people and other people to conserve the caribou," says Folster, a board member for Norway House. Although sturgeon were plentiful a century ago, their numbers are low today. Educating the public about conservation is key.

"It's a real challenge because we have to deal with people with Treaty and Aboriginal rights," says Folster. His board's aim is not to take away any rights from people, but to encourage them to take only what they need.

Finally, the BQCMB was saddened by the death this winter of **Harold Etegyok**, former chair of the Baker Lake HTO, and a longtime caribou management supporter.



Guest presenters at the BQCMB's November meeting included (clockwise from top left) **Martin Gebauer** of Cumberland Resources Ltd., speaking about the proposed open pit Meadowbank gold mine near Baker Lake, NTI associate director of wildlife **Bert Dean**, talking about his land claim organization's role and opportunities for possible partnerships, **Mike Patterson** of SNC-Lavalin Inc., addressing the Manitoba-Nunavut road route study, and Manitoba Wildlands director **Gail Whelan Enns**, who updated listeners on her group's efforts to see protected areas established in Manitoba.



All photos by Karen Hunter

Publisher's Box

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Caribou News in Brief
Editor: Marion Soublière
1865 Leclair Cres.
Ottawa ON K1E 3S2
Tel.: (613) 841-6817
E-mail: caribounews@arctic-caribou.com

Beverly and Qamanirjuaq
Caribou Management Board
Secretary-Treasurer: Ross Thompson
P.O. Box 629
Stonewall MB R0C 2Z0
Tel.: (204) 467-2438
E-mail: rossthompson@mts.net
Website: www.arctic-caribou.com