

Beverly herd survey looks hopeful for 2007



Photo by Karen Hunter

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Articles in Dene or Inuktitut are available upon request.
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Around the Range

The fight for green corridors

The director of forest management of NWT's Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) says her division plans to fund satellite collars on Beverly cows and study the resulting data in order to understand how important habitat south of Lutselk'e – thought to be among the last unburned strips of land – is to the herd. Working with the department's wildlife division and the BQCMB, Susan Corey says her division wants to find out if these corridors are lost to fire, "is there going to be a gap in there being nothing available . . . until another area comes on stream again?"

"Our policy is such that we consider fire natural but at the same time, we're trying to look at, where there are values, trying to provide protection of those values."

BQCMB member Earl Evans of Fort Smith says the large burn areas have altered the Beverly herd's migration patterns and more head to the Abitau River area of Saskatchewan these days. "There's a few green areas southeast of Snowdrift (Lutselk'e) and southwest, there's a little bit of green in there, around Gagnon Lake." There are also some green patches around Thuben Lakes and along the Great Slave Lake but caribou have a tough time getting to those areas because of burn patches. What's more, many of their well-travelled corridors are heavily eaten out now. When caribou are forced to feed in burn areas, "there's not much for them to feed on except a few willows and grass and a few sedges . . . and that's not their preference for food."

"They'll eat it if it's there but the food value is pretty minimal." Evans, who collected samples last winter for an ENR

Photo by Karen Hunter



And now, introducing the BQCMB of 2007 and beyond.

(Seated, left to right): August Enzoe, Jerome Denechezhe, Laurent Angalik, Thomas Elytook. (Middle row, left to right): Deb Johnson, Daryll Hedman, Albert Thorassie, Dennis Larocque, alternate Carl McLean, Dan Shewchuk and alternate Joe Martin. (Back row, left to right): Earl Evans, secretary-treasurer Ross Thompson, Tim Trottier and alternate George Tsannie

study on caribou conditions, noticed that the fetuses were "so tiny compared to what they used to be" and wonders if the combined effects of fires, climate change and resource development are taking their toll.

Speaking out for the herds

In 2006, the BQCMB, via consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn, continued efforts to protect Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou and their habitats by submitting comments to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board and the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) on preliminary screenings for land use applications in NWT and Nunavut by uranium mineral exploration companies Ur-Energy, UraVan and Pacific Ridge Exploration Ltd.

Ur-Energy's application to conduct drilling at Screech Lake in the Thelon Basin, south of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary, has since been referred to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) due to public concern, and is undergoing an environmental assessment – the next level of review. Wakelyn provided comments on MVEIRB's workplan and information requests for the developer, and is preparing a presentation for a public hearing in Lutselk'e in January.

BQCMB meetings

The BQCMB descends on Thompson, Manitoba for its spring gathering May 29-31, 2007. It will head back to Winnipeg in early November for its fall get-together.

Funding in new fiscal year

How much governments kick in won't be clear until the new fiscal year in April, but Saskatchewan has been approached for \$80,000, and NWT and Nunavut (which includes the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, or NWMB) have been asked for \$90,000 apiece. Of that, the Government of Nunavut has already provided \$30,000 worth of fuel. WWF-Canada has pledged \$20,000 and donations are also coming in from mining companies.

The survey's price tag, estimated earlier at \$250,000, has risen to \$300,000. Most of that pays for "air charter, which has gone up," says NWT South Slave regional biologist and BQCMB member Deb Johnson, who is leading the project. Since fewer satellite collars were deployed on Beverly caribou this year than planned and less location data have trickled back, "we're using two planes

(instead of one) to do reconnaissance" in order to demonstrate that a large area has been covered.

Plane-pooling to save dollars

Cutting travel costs is where the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) would like to step in.

Many Nunavut organizations need aircraft to do everything from environmental monitoring to search and rescue, sovereignty patrols and more, so this past summer the NPC leased a Canadian-built Found Brothers bush plane, outfitted it with a camera and began proving its viability by doing aerial photography work for groups such as the Kivalliq Inuit Association (see chart.nunavut.ca).

The concept, known as the Canadian Holistic Arctic Reconnaissance Team, aims to get partnerships to make it possible to buy the \$350,000 plane as a common resource for

Nunavut organizations. Peter Wilson, NPC's director of informatics and communications, says the plane is much cheaper to purchase and run than a helicopter, estimating the cost of a four-hour round trip from Arviat by helicopter at \$6,000 compared to \$1,000 for the bush plane. The NPC is in talks with the BQCMB now about the possibility of using the Found Brothers aircraft in the Beverly herd survey.

Range-wide map of land use activities

The BQCMB, with the help of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), has compiled a map of mineral rights and other land use activities permitted by governments across the ranges of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds in Saskatchewan, NWT, Nunavut and Manitoba (see www.arctic-caribou.com).

Exploration continues to be intense, particularly for uranium. The number of mineral rights on the Beverly calving ground, for example, has jumped by 150 per cent since February 2006, with 163 new mineral claims issued by the federal government to a single uranium mining company.

Meanwhile, the future of mining in Nunavut should soon become clearer. The Nunavut Mineral Exploration and Mining Strategy is tentatively due to be released in late January, says Gordon MacKay of Nunavut's Department of Economic Development and Transportation.

AREVA, BQCMB to sign agreement

Uranium mining company AREVA Resources Canada Inc. will soon ink a five-year funding agreement with the BQCMB, providing about \$25,000 a year over five years to further caribou research and best mining practices.

AREVA has interests in five Saskatchewan uranium mines and mills (a sixth, Cluff Lake, is being decommissioned) and owns the Kiggavik-Sissons uranium deposits in Nunavut. "Our company, and many modern mining companies, have sustainable development policies that require no negative impact on the environment from the mining activity," says Barry McCallum, AREVA's manager of Nunavut affairs. "To protect the caribou from activities, we have to first understand them better and we believe decisions should be made on sound science and the best way to get that

Photo by Karen Hunter



AREVA's Barry McCallum (right) with BQCMB chairman Jerome Denechezhe

sound science is to work co-operatively with the (BQCMB), which has similar goals."

Through a separate initiative, AREVA channelled \$10,000 into satellite collaring of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou in 2006 and will add another \$10,000 to the 2007 collaring of more Beverly caribou.

More Beverly cows to be collared

Fifteen more GPS satellite collars, courtesy of INAC, will be placed by NWT government staff on Beverly caribou in 2007 to bring that herd's sample size to 20. It's been proposed that the work take place on the post-calving ground.

In March, 20 collars were deployed on what were believed to be Beverly animals. But South Slave regional biologist and BQCMB member Deb Johnson later discovered that when the animals migrated to their calving grounds, only six were Beverly cows. Twelve were Ahlak animals and one was a Qamanirjuaq cow. The 20th animal died in late March, and one Beverly cow has also since died.

At least one mining company has offered to let the satellite collaring team stay at one of their exploration camps. Johnson says companies with camps located even closer to the collaring area will be approached, too. "That will definitely help us do the work a lot quicker, more efficiently, too," she says.



Courtesy of Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT

Fifteen new GPS satellite collars will be placed on Beverly cows

"Excellent" Qamanirjuaq CD

Maps of collared Beverly animals can be found on the GNWT wildlife division website with a two-week delay on locations (see www.nwtwildlife.com). Nunavut's Department

of Environment, meanwhile, has tracked the entire history of satellite collaring on the Qamanirjuaq herd (from 1993-2006) as well as the Lorillard and Wager Bay herds with a CD showing their animated movements colour-coded by seasons and the caribou life cycle. BQCMB secretary-treasurer Ross Thompson declared it "excellent" after BQCMB member and Nunavut Department of Environment wildlife manager Dan Shewchuk presented it at the Board's November meeting. Kivalliq regional biologist Mitch Campbell, who was instrumental in creating the CD, says it will be updated annually, and data from the Beverly and Ahlak herds will be added to the next version, along with vegetation maps. Two hundred copies of the CD have already been distributed. Watch for an online version on the BQCMB's website (www.arctic-caribou.com) in early 2007.

Calling all caribou observers!

There's lots of hustle and bustle on the caribou ranges. As of September, companies and individuals held almost 500 mineral rights on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds' calving grounds alone.

The BQCMB, and people working on the land, need to find out how caribou react when humans are around, and if caribou have, or have not, been bothered by human activity. Of special concern are activities on calving and post-calving areas, and near important water crossings. Research has found that when caribou are disturbed, they move away from the disturbance. This increases stress, activity and possible separation of calves from cows,

all using up more energy.

Caribou are upset by things like low-level flying and loud noises, and are especially vulnerable to disturbances during calving and post-calving. Cows need to feed for an uninterrupted period in order to produce milk until calves can forage themselves about three weeks after birth.

People who spend a lot of time outdoors, like hunters, pilots and mineral exploration staff, may want to pick up some of the BQCMB's Observation Cards to fill out. Answering questions such as roughly how far the caribou were from the site of human activity, and how the caribou reacted, will help

efforts to change the way developments take place on the caribou ranges so that the herds can continue to live undisturbed.

Cards (in English, Inuktitut or Dene) are available from the local offices of territorial and provincial environment departments, from BQCMB members and from BQCMB secretary-treasurer Ross Thompson (phone: 204-467-2438). Mail completed cards to the addresses on the back of the card. Cards can also be printed from the BQCMB's website at www.arctic-caribou.com/caribou_form.html, or fill in the online submission form.

Stiff rules for mining uranium in the Kivalliq

A new formula to implement the *Keewatin Regional Land Use Plan's* conformity requirement that “any future proposal to mine uranium must be approved by the people of the region” clearly places the onus on mining companies to obtain widespread support.

The formula, created by the NPC, states that for any uranium development or mining proposal to conform to the land use plan, the Kivalliq Inuit Association must pass a motion in favour of it. Baker Lake – in the heart of the region's uranium deposits – plus three or more other Kivalliq communities representing half of the remaining population must also all pass hamlet council motions backing the proposal.

Kivalliq hamlets, Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) and Community Land and Resource Committees will get information to help them carry out Term 3.6, as the requirement is known, when they and others attend a workshop in Baker Lake that will allow the NPC, NIRB, the Nunavut Water Board (NWB) and the NWMB to review the social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of uranium exploration and development, as required by Term 3.5 of the land use plan. These organizations will merge information gathered into their responsibilities.

Tentatively set for Feb. 27 to March 2, the workshop is also inviting community representatives, uranium exploration and development specialists, and other interested parties to make presentations and join talks.

NTI policy a separate issue

Elsewhere, a third and final version of the draft uranium policy penned by the Lands Policy Advisory Committee of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) is expected in March 2007, says Carson Gillis, NTI director of lands and resources.

The document goes to the boards of NTI and Regional Inuit Organizations in April or May for final approval.

The BQCMB has registered many concerns over the pro-uranium policy with NTI, but has received no response or copies of further policy drafts. Gillis spoke to BQCMB

Courtesy of Cameco Corporation



Flooding at Cigar Lake mine propelled global uranium prices to record levels

members about the policy at their November meeting but was unaware of the Board's complaints, and did not address them.

A Nov. 17 letter sent to NTI first vice-president James Eetoolook by BQCMB chairman Jerome Denecheze took issue with the fact that the BQCMB wasn't being included in consultations or a review of the second draft.

“The issue of uranium mining in Nunavut is highly relevant to the BQCMB,” writes Denecheze. “Our past involvement . . . has included participation in environmental assessments of proposed uranium mines in Nunavut and Saskatchewan, and reporting on the impacts of Saskatchewan uranium mining.”

NTI is responsible for subsurface Inuit-

owned land (IOL), amounting to just two per cent of Nunavut's land mass. Yet its draft policy favours uranium mining for the entire territory. However, NPC director of informatics and communications Peter Wilson says that his organization's current uranium-related conformity requirement work is independent of the NTI policy. “The NTI policy only applies on IOL.”

The North's A-bomb link

In November, RBC Dominions Securities Inc. boosted its uranium price forecast for 2007 to \$100 a pound from \$55 following a flood at Cameco's majority-owned giant new Cigar Lake mine in northern Saskatchewan that has delayed production for two years. Global demand for nuclear power-fuelled electricity is being led by the exploding middle-class economies of China and India.

Canada is the world's largest producer of uranium and its biggest customer is the United States. That relationship stems back to the Second World War, when refined uranium from the Port Radium mine in NWT was sold to the U.S. government to build nuclear bombs – a fact not mentioned in the history of the Port Radium mine in NTI's draft uranium mining consultation document.

Flanking moral questions about the use of uranium are health concerns about the radioactive material. The recent Indigenous World Uranium Summit, held in early December in Window Rock, Arizona, called for a ban on uranium mining, processing, enrichment, fuel use, weapons testing and deployment, and nuclear waste dumping on indigenous lands. Its ban was based on what the Summit termed “disproportional impacts” of the nuclear fuel chain on the health, natural resources and cultures of indigenous peoples.

Will winter talks warm to caribou protection?

The BQCMB hopes to sit down with the Baker Lake and Arviat HTOs in February or March to get feedback on recommendations from its position paper, *Protecting Calving Grounds, Post-Calving Areas and Other Important Habitats for Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou*. Both HTOs held December elections, so the timing is ideal to provide information and get input from the new HTO boards.

The BQCMB's new Nunavut members, Thomas Elytook of Baker Lake and Laurent Angalik of Arviat, have expressed interest in having BQCMB consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn meet, or follow up, with their HTOs. Wakelyn met with the Baker Lake HTO in October 2005 but not all board members were present.

Former BQCMB member David Aksawnee, a guest at the BQCMB's November meeting, also suggested the BQCMB speak to the Kivalliq



The BQCMB's recent magazine ad. Read it in full at www.arctic-caribou.com

Wildlife Board, of which he is chair. That board next meets in February or March.

Meanwhile, the cancellation of a NWMB regular meeting in November iced the plans of BQCMB secretary-treasurer Ross Thompson to highlight the Board's recommendations there. Still, the BQCMB reached a large northern audience when, with the help of WWF-Canada and *above&beyond* magazine, it placed a full-page colour ad in the magazine's September/October 2006 issue, encouraging readers to contact their elected leaders to support protection of the herds and their habitat in light of increasing resource development.

The governments responsible for caribou and land management across the ranges (Nunavut, NWT, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Canada) received the BQCMB position paper in late 2004, yet have not implemented caribou protection recommendations. The BQCMB is issuing follow-up letters to once again urge that action be taken – soon.

Nunavut considers a single land use plan

Instead of consulting on, creating and continually updating six regional land use plans for Nunavut, the NPC is looking at switching to a single territory-wide land use plan with regional components defined more by activities than administrative boundaries.

Timelines will be developed as the process is scoped out with government and Inuit organizations, says NPC director of policy development Adrian Boyd, and may not be finalized until the summer of 2007. Groups such as the BQCMB will have several chances to get involved in identifying planning issues, the provision of research, and the development of options to manage the land use planning issues.

Next door to Nunavut, a coalition working with the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and the NWT Treaty #8 Tribal Corporation (among them, the BQCMB) still plans to send a letter to appropriate federal and territorial ministers calling for research on the Beverly caribou herd, protection of Beverly calving and post-calving areas, implementation of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary Management Plan and support for the Akaitcho's claims for controlling development on their traditional lands in the uranium-rich Thelon Basin. Implementing the management plan for the Thelon Sanctuary has been a decade-long effort, with the Plan being approved by the Nunavut government, but not by its NWT counterpart.

In Saskatchewan, the BQCMB provided extensive comments to Saskatchewan Environment in November on the Athabasca Stage I Draft Land Use Plan, which is headed to Saskatchewan's Cabinet for review in 2007. Stage I covers a 50-kilometre wide corridor encompassing the Wollaston Lake winter road to Black Lake, Stony Rapids and Fond du Lac.

The BQCMB supported the Plan's recommended management policies and actions for protecting caribou and caribou habitat, but concluded that "a land use plan for the entire Athabasca planning region is required to effectively implement (these) policies and actions." See a detailed version of this story at www.arctic-caribou.com.

BQCMC flashes caution sign over road

The contractor studying three possible routes for a 1,200-kilometre road between Manitoba and Nunavut is to recommend its choice by March or April of 2007 to its clients, the Kivalliq Inuit Association and the governments of Manitoba, Nunavut and Canada. But the BQCMC has already told SNC-Lavalin Inc. that it has serious concerns about the damage any path a winter and, eventually, all-season road between Manitoba and Nunavut could do to the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds, whose populations may be in decline.

An environmental assessment would be held before any route gets the green light.

Hunting, wastage would rise

In a Nov. 14 letter to route selection study project manager Tim Stevens, the BQCMC says a winter road would have negative impacts, including increased hunting pressure, poaching, wastage and more. An all-season road more than doubles these threats. It would also affect all seasonal ranges, including calving and post-calving areas.

"Select a route with the least impact, with caribou as the prime indicator species," the BQCMC urged. It also recommended developing an enforcement plan, reviewing ways to control access to caribou at critical times and in critical habitat, re-investigating rail, and monitoring all impacts carefully. How roads affect caribou in northern Quebec and around Yukon and NWT's Dempster Highway should be investigated, long-range assessments should assume the winter road becomes an all-weather link, and a land use plan should be developed.

Communities want more info

All three routes link to Churchill and arrive at Rankin Inlet. The western route begins at

Lynn Lake, the central route starts in Thompson and the eastern route in Gillam. All cut through Qamanirjuaq herd habitat, although mixing between the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq winter ranges means the western route may also affect Beverly animals.

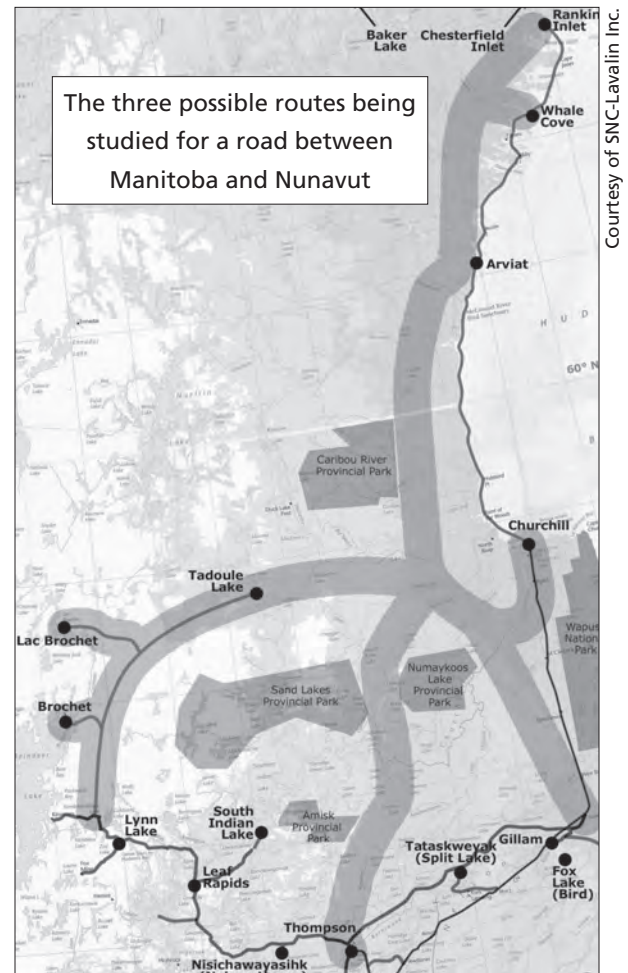
BQCMC member Laurent Angalik of Arviat says when consultants visited his community in March, few people attended, including Angalik, because "we didn't hear about that and they weren't here for a long time in the spring season," a busy hunting period. He also heard that the translation didn't explain a lot of the information.

"If the road is put through our community, what about the fishing, the caribous, if they get all depleted from people down South?" asks BQCMC member Albert Thorassie, whose community, Tadoule Lake, is on the western route and was the first community consulted. "Is there going to be any compensation for stuff like that?"

"They (SNC-Lavalin Inc.) said they were going to give us an answer coming back but nobody came back."

"I can understand why people would wonder what's been happening," says Stevens. Due to bad weather, consultations that started in January 2006 didn't finish until October.

More public meetings are planned for February 2007 but Stevens says they won't be in all 16 communities affected by the road. The BQCMC will be invited to a Project Advisory Council meeting in February.



Will prices truly drop?

As the route selection study winds up, Tadoule Lake's Thorassie worries that the promise of a road lowering prices won't happen, and that private sector monopolies will continue to charge high prices. "When the Manitoba (winter) road was built from Lynn Lake to Tadoule, we were guaranteed that all the prices of the store, gas prices (would decline) but who lobbies for us to the Northern Store? Do you know how much we're paying for gas right now? Fifty-seven dollars for five gallons.

"They're always saying things are going to go down (but) the necessities like milk, Pampers, stuff like that is really outrageous."

People and Caribou

All photos by Karen Hunter



Clockwise from top left: Gord Dumas, David Aksawnee, Tim Stevens, Ray Griffith and Josephine Smart, some of the many faces at the BQCMB's November 2006 meeting in Winnipeg



Dennis Larocque of Camsell Portage has become the newest BQCMB community member for Saskatchewan, replacing former chairman **Jimmy Laban** of Blake Lake.

The Grey Cup match that followed the BQCMB's meeting in Winnipeg last November drew a few more people – but the Board maintained its own crowd of enthusiastic spectators until the clock ran down. In the stands were Lynn Lake conservation officer **Gord Dumas**, NIT's **Bert Dean** and **Carson Gillis**, mayor **David Aksawnee** and teacher/

pilot/caribou supporter **Orin Durey**, both from Baker Lake, and SNC-Lavalin Inc.'s **Tim Stevens** and **Mike Patterson**, providing an update on the Nunavut-Manitoba Route Selection Study.

Also on hand was **Ray Griffith** of WWF-Canada, updating listeners on his organization's efforts to link the Queen Maud Gulf Bird Sanctuary and the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary with adjacent proposed special management areas. AREVA's **Barry McCallum** and Cameco's **Julia Ewing** were also present, as were research consultant

Brett McGurk of Intergroup Consultants and **Josephine Smart** of the University of Calgary.

The BQCMB approved McGurk's proposal to do an economic evaluation

of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds, and to determine the cultural and social importance of the herds to those who rely on them. The last economic evaluation was conducted by the Government of the Northwest Territories in 1990, and that looked only at the domestic harvest. This study, to be completed by May 2007, will examine the domestic harvest and resident licensed hunting harvest (determining value through a replacement such as beef) as well as outfitting and the commercial sale of caribou meat (using the market values of those products). Harvest estimates will be used from sources such as the NWMB, BQCMB annual reports and territorial/provincial wildlife managers.

"It's high time that the BQCMB touted the total economic importance of the herds to illustrate the annual resource value compared to other resource uses or activities which might put them in jeopardy," says BQCMB secretary-treasurer **Ross Thompson**. "The costs of replacing or recovering the herds, or their protein, by-product and cultural value to the communities would be astronomical."

Smart, an anthropology professor, spoke to BQCMB members about a proposed two-year pilot study to develop an early warning system for Chronic Wasting Disease, a neurological disease that has affected farmed and wild mule deer and elk in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and is expected to move north, possibly infiltrating the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds. Funding for the project is pending, and Smart expects to know if it gets the green light by spring 2007.

Students: don't forget that Jan. 31, 2007 is the deadline for applications to the annual BQCMB Caribou Management Scholarship Fund. For more details, check out www.arctic-caribou.com.

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