

Decline suspected in Beverly population



G&R Grambo / www.grambophoto.com

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The logo features the text "SAFEGUARDING CARIBOU" in a serif font, with "1982-2007" below it. A large, stylized "25" is in the background, and a caribou head with antlers is superimposed over the "5".

Articles in Dene or Inuktitut are available upon request.
Dırı ?erıht'is sı dēne chu ?eténa yatı chu tth'ı t'a ?erıht'is
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Around the Range

Save the calving grounds

At December's Dene Nation Caribou Workshop in Yellowknife, several participants stressed that for traditional hunters from NWT communities on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq ranges, protecting caribou calving grounds is a major concern.

Dene leaders made a resolution at the workshop to protect calving grounds. This was partly to follow up on the same action urgently voiced by many of the same Dene leaders at the January 2007 Caribou Summit in Inuvik (see "Around the Range," *Caribou News in Brief*, July 2007). At the Dene workshop, NWT Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Michael Miltenberger pledged to discuss the need to protect calving grounds at his meeting with Nunavut Premier Paul Okalik the following week.

Consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn, who had been invited to give a presentation for the BQCMB, described the lack of recent data on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds' populations, the growing number of land use activities across the caribou ranges, and the BQCMB's attempts to prompt government action to protect calving and post-calving areas and other important habitats. Wakelyn also relayed concerns expressed by BQCMB community representatives (see "Mining issues worry community reps," page 3).

Herd gets "reference" status

The Qamanirjuaq herd has become one of 14 reference herds across the circumpolar north that will be intensively monitored over the next four years to see how global changes affect large migratory herds.

It's part of the CircumArctic *Rangifer* Monitoring & Assessment (CARMA)



CARMA's Gary Kofinas (right) listens as BQCMB members describe their observations of caribou, weather and human activities taking place around their communities.

From left are Jerome Denechezhe, Pierre Robillard, Joe Martin, Earl Evans and Albert Thorassie

Network's International Polar Year (IPY) project to better understand how regional human *Rangifer* (caribou or wild reindeer) systems are responding to climate change. Big changes have been predicted for regional climates across the circumpolar north at a time when exploration and development of non-renewable resources (like minerals, oil and gas) is at an all-time high.

The project features field biology, remote sensing-based habitat monitoring and community-based monitoring projects. BQCMB community members are helping by passing on their knowledge of caribou, weather and human activities taking place on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou ranges. During the BQCMB's November meeting in Winnipeg, several community members met with the University of Alaska Fairbanks's Gary Kofinas, a CARMA co-ordinator, for an initial information-gathering session.

Meanwhile, BQCMB chairman Jerome Denechezhe, vice-chairman Daryll Hedman

and consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn attended CARMA's fourth annual meeting in Vancouver in November. A caribou body condition monitoring manual and training video, as well as a population monitoring manual, are some tools being developed to help CARMA promote consistent monitoring of caribou across the Arctic.

Caribou hunts continue

John Arnalukjuak High School students in Arviat, accompanied by elders and experienced hunters, became the latest group to put yearly BQCMB funding for community-based educational caribou hunts to good use. Watch for a complete account with photos in the next issue of *Caribou News in Brief*.

BQCMB meetings

Fort Smith, NWT, plays host to the Board's spring 2008 meeting, scheduled for May 6-8. Members then return to Winnipeg for the November 2008 meeting.

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NWT's Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) plans to monitor Beverly caribou more closely in 2008. For the first time in years, spring and fall composition surveys have been slated. Johnson warns that the usual spring mixing with neighbouring herds is unlikely to yield many answers about Beverly calf survival rates, though.

In June, the Beverly calving ground will be delineated for the second year in a row. If the caribou densities are again low, a visual survey will likely follow.

ENR also plans to buy more satellite collars to better track the herd. Seventeen cows were collared during the 2007 post-calving season to make sure the animals being collared were indeed Beverly caribou.

(In March 2006, 20 caribou collared on the Beverly range later proved to be from the Bathurst, Ahiak and Qamanirjuaq herds, too.)

Following the 2007 collaring of Beverly cows, six animals died but only one was believed to have died as a result of being collared, says Johnson.

Next up: Qamanirjuaq survey

Meanwhile, a \$322,000 calving ground photo survey of the Qamanirjuaq herd is planned for June 2008, Kivalliq regional biologist Mitch Campbell told BQCMB members. The governments of Nunavut and Manitoba will carry out the work and split the cost. In-kind support from the NWT government will also help, and contributions from the BQCMB and

Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) are being requested.

A spring composition survey will take place, too, and in April 2008, 10 more collars will be deployed on Qamanirjuaq animals.

Like the Beverly herd, the Qamanirjuaq herd hasn't been surveyed since 1994, when its population was estimated at 496,000. Results from recent spring composition work give a glimpse of what the upcoming population survey may reveal.

"I expect there's still lots of animals in the Qamanirjuaq herd but (survey results will be) lower than the last survey," Campbell said. "We're pretty sure there's a decline. We're not sure of the magnitude of it."

Mining issues worry community reps

Protecting caribou calving grounds topped a list of concerns voiced by community representatives at the BQCMB's November 2007 meeting.

They asked that action be taken on a number of urgent matters – most relating to mineral exploration and mining. In that area, community representatives want:

- the BQCMB to continue to make the protection of caribou calving grounds from industrial development its primary concern (as of October 2007, there were 623 prospecting permits, mineral claims and mineral leases on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq calving grounds)
- the BQCMB to do whatever it can to stop mining in the Thelon watershed
- the BQCMB to support Lutselk'e in the development of a land use plan for the Thelon watershed

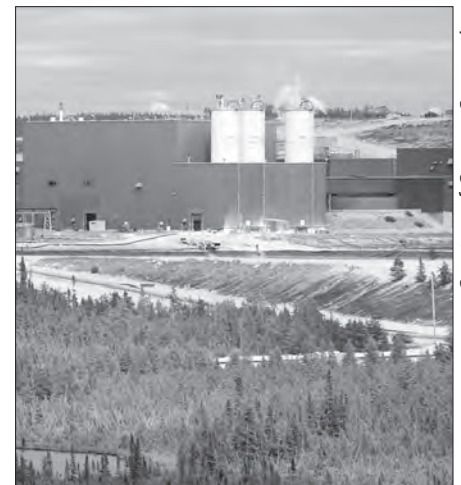
- the BQCMB to write to the NWT government, calling on it to support the Thelon Sanctuary Management Plan, and to write to all relevant agencies, asking that implementation of the plan begin soon

- consultation with communities on land use proposals to be improved so that communities have a say on any proposed industrial activities on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou ranges

- the BQCMB to be more involved in Manitoba mineral development issues, as communities are not being consulted adequately now

- the BQCMB to recommend that more research be conducted on the effects of mineral exploration and development on caribou (including cumulative effects), and

- workshops about uranium exploration and mining to inform and educate communities and boards.



Courtesy of Cameco Corporation

Key Lake in northern Saskatchewan, the world's largest high-grade uranium milling operation. BQCMB community members are concerned about the effects of mineral exploration and mining on the caribou herds

Donations help fuel BQCMB work

Contributions from uranium mining company AREVA Resources Canada Inc. and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) are helping BQCMB projects to move ahead.

Caribou research and monitoring, as well as educational and communication initiatives, are getting a hand from a \$25,000 contribution from AREVA this fiscal year. The contribution is the first in a five-year \$125,000 funding agreement that aims to increase caribou research and improve mining practices. Only projects that both the BQCMB and AREVA agree upon can take place.

Current funding will let the BQCMB cover off its contribution to recent satellite collaring work on the Beverly herd. Some of the money may also go toward the planned Qamanirjuaq calving ground survey in 2008 and monitoring of the Beverly herd. Educational and

communication projects about caribou would involve boards, communities, government agencies and others.

“Ultimately, where we’re heading with AREVA and other companies through these types of agreements is to determine and implement best practices for all kinds of operations and development on the range,” says Thompson, “especially key habitat.”

Meanwhile, a \$30,000 contribution from INAC will help the BQCMB recover some recent costs resulting from communication projects and visits to communities to share information about the importance of protecting the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou and their habitats. The money will also pay for community youth and elder hunts in Arviat and Tadoule Lake.

Working with industry and government to assess permit conditions for roads, mineral

exploration and other activities is another BQCMB initiative that will benefit from INAC’s donation.



Gary Frey

INAC’s funding will go partly towards community youth and elder hunts, like the caribou hunt undertaken by Father Megret High School students in Wollaston Lake in 2007 (above)

Caribou harvest worth over \$20 million

A new socio-economic report from Intergroup Consultants of Winnipeg reveals that the total annual net value of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou harvest is more than \$20 million. Nunavut, by far, depends on these herds the most. The jurisdictional shares of harvest are:

- Nunavut – almost \$12 million
- Manitoba – about \$4 million
- Saskatchewan – over \$3 million
- NWT – less than \$1 million.

Most caribou hunted were from the larger Qamanirjuaq herd. Its population stood at roughly 496,000 when last surveyed in 1994, while the Beverly herd was about 276,000.

The report, commissioned by the

BQCMB in 2006, updates and expands on data about the two herds that were last analyzed in 1990 when the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) assessed the domestic harvest. The Intergroup report, by comparison, determines the value of the domestic harvest and resident licensed hunting harvest using a similar meat sold in stores (beef) to calculate the value of caribou meat harvested. It also assesses the outfitting industry and the commercial sale of caribou meat.

Another key part of the study were the eight detailed community interviews conducted (two per jurisdiction) to better understand the social and cultural importance of the caribou harvest.

“All respondents viewed harvesting caribou as integral to preserving their culture and, where necessary, revitalizing their culture,” the report concluded. Important activities like passing on traditional knowledge and learning outdoor wilderness survival skills take place while hunting caribou.

The report also found that caribou are used mainly to feed northern families – the domestic harvest accounted for more than \$15 million of the \$20 million-plus total net annual value of the herds – and that the outfitting industry accounts for most of the remaining value of the caribou – more than \$4 million yearly.

Download the report from www.arctic-caribou.com.

Wanted: Better Caribou Protection Measures

Companies and individuals applying for prospecting permits and mineral claims on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq ranges will be asked to follow the federal government's Caribou Protection Measures now.

The Measures – established in 1978 to appease Baker Lake residents worried about the effects of mineral exploration on caribou – impose seasonal controls on land use operations in areas used by caribou during calving and post-calving periods, and at designated water crossings. In the past these Measures applied only to land use permits, not to the far more numerous prospecting permits and mineral claims.

It's the first step from a March 2007 report scrutinizing the effectiveness of INAC's 30-year-old Caribou Protection Measures. *Assessment of Caribou Protection Measures* was commissioned by INAC and produced by Anne Gunn with co-authors Kim Poole, Jack Wierzchowski and Mitch Campbell.

Expanding the reach of the Measures, something the BQCMB has long called for, is “a really good, positive thing,” says BQCMB consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn. But the Measures don't protect caribou habitat, and shouldn't be “the only tool we're looking at in terms of caribou protection.”

INAC-Nunavut director of operations Carl McLean, a BQCMB member, told the Board in November that his department was still committed to improving caribou protection “through the tools INAC has available and with the support of our partners.”

Beverly: Method inadequate

INAC distributed *Assessment of Caribou Protection Measures* to the BQCMB, Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., several Nunavut Institutions of Public Government and Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs). To request the report, e-mail INAC at traynorj@ainc-inac.gc.ca.

Among the BQCMB's suggestions in its feedback on the report were the following.

- Caribou Protection Measures should be assessed to see if they will protect caribou sufficiently *now* and in the future – not just if they succeeded in doing what they were designed to do 30 years ago. Industrial activity on the ranges has skyrocketed since then.

- More needs to be done to make sure companies and individuals are following the Measures.

See the BQCMB's full comments at www.arctic-caribou.com/publications_reports.html.

While the report termed the Caribou Protection Measures “relatively effective” given available data, the BQCMB criticized how the Measures were evaluated.

Between 1978 and 1990, the Measures' effectiveness in protecting both the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds was determined based on information from yearly aerial survey monitoring reports. This monitoring program ended in 1990 when INAC withdrew the funding. Conclusions about the Measures' effectiveness from 1993 to 2005 were drawn only for the Qamanirjuaq herd because the assessment was based on satellite collaring location data. The Beverly caribou collaring program began only in 2006, so there wasn't data for a similar assessment of that herd.

Yet “it's the Beverly calving ground where we have the most pressure from land use activities,” Wakelyn points out. “The Beverly herd is also most in question in terms of its population status.”

As of October 2007, there were more than 600 prospecting permits and mineral claims on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq calving grounds, including 430 on the Beverly calving grounds.

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(Left to right): Tim Trottier, Thomas Elytook, Dennis Larocque, Earl Evans, Carl McLean and Florence Catholique examine maps tracking land use activities on the caribou ranges at the BQCMB's November 2007 meeting

Keeping caribou protection front and centre



At the BQCMB's November 2007 meeting, consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn described the large number of mineral rights issued on the herds' traditional calving grounds over the past three years, especially for the Beverly herd

Knowing that the Baker Lake HTO wants to get a non-industry perspective on the mining industry, the BQCMB is helping to organize visits to the Nunavut community by two knowledgeable individuals from Lutselk'e and northern Saskatchewan, areas experienced in dealing with the mining industry. Plans have not yet been finalized.

BQCMB consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn most recently met with the Baker Lake and Arviat HTOs in May to get feedback on caribou protection recommendations in the BQCMB's 2004 position paper, *Protecting Calving Grounds, Post-Calving Areas and Other Important Habitats for Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou*. That's when she learned of Baker Lake's desire to hear about mining from a non-industry viewpoint.

This would balance out recent promotional visits to the Kivalliq Region by uranium mining companies. Nunavut Planning Commission board and staff visited a Saskatchewan mine site with AREVA in September 2007. And in

2005, AREVA and Cameco Corp. brought about 60 people from Nunavut to tour McClean Lake Mill and McArthur River Mine in northern Saskatchewan.

Non-industry perspectives could also help Baker Lake ready itself for its mining future. A gold mine will soon open nearby and a uranium mine may be operating by 2015.

NWMB presentation

The BQCMB was fortunate to be able to address an important audience in December when the NWMB met in Cambridge Bay.

Wakelyn gave a presentation on BQCMB activities, providing briefing notes and handouts in English and Inuktitut. She described concerns about the lack of protection for the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds and their habitats, as well as worries outlined by BQCMB community members (see "Mining issues worry community reps," page 3).

The presentation was well received, and Wakelyn noted that the recent socio-economic evaluation of Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou showing that Nunavut receives the greatest economic benefit from the herds was a much appreciated eye-opener. She expressed the BQCMB's desire to continue ongoing communications, such as presenting regular updates at NWMB meetings.

Ad gets message out

While the BQCMB's caribou protection recommendations have not been implemented yet by pertinent governments and regulatory agencies, the Board continued urging northerners to speak up for the need to protect the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds and habitats through an advertising campaign this fall. Ads were placed in newspapers in Nunavut and NWT, on radio stations in Manitoba, Nunavut, NWT and Saskatchewan, and on cable television in Nunavut's Kivalliq Region.

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Boundaries differ

Another concern is inconsistent descriptions of calving areas in federal and territorial legislation. Boundaries used by the federal government for their Caribou Protection Measures, as well as those that the Government of Nunavut is trying to adopt for conservation areas in its new *Nunavut Wildlife Act*, are "smaller than traditional calving grounds and just not adequate for the Beverly herd in particular," says Wakelyn. The BQCMB passed a motion at its November meeting asking that INAC use the traditional calving ground boundaries for its Caribou Protection Measures.

These boundaries, defined many years ago by the BQCMB and the NWT government, are based on government survey data up to 1994. That's when the two herds last underwent population surveys. Since late 2005, the BQCMB has recommended that the territorial caribou protection measures under the *Nunavut Wildlife Act* be changed to use the boundaries of Beverly and Qamanirjuaq traditional calving grounds.

INAC rejects Ur-Energy proposal

But Thelon land use plan to reward industry by opening an area for exploration

In October, Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl accepted a rare recommendation by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) to reject a development proposal – Ur-Energy’s proposed uranium exploration operation at Screech Lake, NWT, south of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary on key Beverly and Ahiak caribou spring migration range.

MVEIRB’s recommendation underscored the need for a land use plan for the uranium-rich Upper Thelon watershed, a cultural sanctuary for the Akaitcho Dene.

Now, as part of Strahl’s decision, INAC will work with Aboriginal groups, governments, industry reps, resource management boards like the BQCMB and non-government organizations to develop an Upper Thelon Land and Resource Management Plan.

The bulk of work – geologic studies, environmental studies and cultural/traditional knowledge studies – will occur between now and March 2010, according to a Dec. 7 letter issued by INAC-NWT regional general director Trish Merrithew-Mercredi. (The BQCMB has been pegged for help on environmental studies.)

But a short-term goal for March 2008 is to create a “win” for industry to balance out recent achievements for other groups, such as the approved interim land withdrawal for Akaitcho First Nations, who are still negotiating treaty implementation. Working with decision-making partners and others, INAC will “seek agreement for a portion of the Thelon geologic basin to be defined as ‘open for business,’” says Merrithew-Mercredi, “thus allowing at least some mineral exploration to proceed.”

Speaking out for Lutselk’e

The BQCMB became involved in the fight to stop the Ur-Energy proposal after being approached by Lutselk’e for help. Residents feared that a uranium exploration boom, like the diamond rush of the 1990s on lands to the north, would transform the Thelon.

Working with a coalition of like-minded groups, the BQCMB submitted comments and information requests at different regulatory stages after Ur-Energy made its initial application to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board in 2005.

In January 2007, BQCMB consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn spoke at the MVEIRB’s public hearing in Lutselk’e. Her detailed presentation on the potential cumulative effects of mineral exploration on barren-ground caribou was in two parts, one of which was a joint presentation with the

GNWT. See the presentation at www.arctic-caribou.com.

Florence Catholique of Lutselk’e, who sat in for BQCMB member August Enzoe at the Board’s November 2007 meeting in Winnipeg, relayed her community’s deep thanks to the BQCMB and the GNWT. She recalled when her community

realized that under the *Canada Mining Regulations*, “all of a sudden, that little piece of land in your backyard is being sold to a large company.”



Florence Catholique

“It’s not that we’re totally against development,” she continued. “But we have to be the determinator of what’s going to happen because we have to live there.”

Other uranium developments

Manitoba

- *July 2007:* Activity on exploration licenses stopped after the Northlands Dene First Nation called for a halt on uranium exploration near Lac Brochet until a consultation process could be established. Manitoba’s government and the band are working to finalize a Memorandum of Understanding and consultation protocol, says a government spokesman.

Nunavut

- *September 2007:* Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. overturned its long-time ban on uranium and thorium exploration and mining on Inuit-owned land.
- *December 2007:* AREVA Resources Canada Inc., JCU (Canada) Exploration Company Limited and DAEWOO International Corporation announced they’ll go ahead with a two-year feasibility study on their Kiggavik project for a uranium mine and mill complex west of Baker Lake.
- *Spring 2008:* Nunavut’s government is to deliver a uranium policy to Cabinet for approval (source: *Mineral Exploration and Mining Strategy*).

People and Caribou



Stan Struthers



Karen Hunter

Jerome Denechezhe

Communication.

That, in a word, sums up the BQCMB's reason for being. A lack of communication is why the BQCMB was created in 1982 in the midst of a perceived caribou crisis, and an atmosphere of distrust between governments and some Aboriginal people. Constant communication is why the BQCMB has since succeeded.

"Over the past 25 years, one of the most important things that Board members have done is try to see how other people see things," BQCMB chairman **Jerome Denechezhe**, a founding member of the Board, told members and friends gathered in Winnipeg in November for a special anniversary dinner. "We have learned to co-operate and work together."

"We're just catching up to the wisdom

of the caribou," said Manitoba Conservation Minister **Stan Struthers** of the migratory animals who live without regard for man-made boundaries. Struthers, the dinner's guest speaker, commended Denechezhe and all involved with the interjurisdictional BQCMB for their efforts to protect the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds.

In the 63 times the BQCMB has met since its first regular meeting, it "has worked successfully to improve communication and understanding between hunters and governments," wrote the man who engineered the Board's creation, former member and secretary-treasurer **Gunther Abrahamson**. His tribute was read aloud by current secretary-treasurer **Ross Thompson**. "The Board's accomplishments over the past 25 years would not have been possible without the commitment of its members and supporters."

"Right from Day One, I think there was a recognition that there was a need to foster interjurisdictional communication," Manitoba Conservation director **Steve Kearney** later told *Caribou News in Brief*. Kearney, a BQCMB member in the 1980s, said that

while government technical and advisory committees gave biologists and directors forums for cross-border discussions in the days prior to the BQCMB, nothing similar existed for traditional users. That, Kearney says,

remains the key of the Board. "You can do a lot of stuff electronically these days but there is still nothing, in my opinion, that substitutes for a sit-down session where you can put names to faces."

Among the familiar faces at the BQCMB's November meeting were alternates **Pierre Robillard** of Black Lake and **Joe Martin** of Fond du Lac. Presenters familiar to the Board, as well as first-time visitors, were on hand, too. Director **Amar Chadha** and senior planning and development consultant **Dave Duncan** of Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation addressed the final report of the Manitoba-Nunavut road route selection study. **Barry McCallum**, manager of Nunavut affairs for AREVA Resources Canada Inc., spoke about the uranium mining company's Kiggavik project.

Gary Kofinas of the University of Alaska Fairbanks discussed the international caribou monitoring efforts of the CircumArctic *Rangifer* Monitoring & Assessment (CARMA) Network. Student **Archana Bali** assisted Kofinas throughout the meeting. Graduate student **Tracy Smith** provided news on her research project comparing co-management boards.

Kivalliq regional biologist **Mitch Campbell** discussed developments with the Qamanirjuaq herd, NWMB member **Robert Moshenko** apprised members of his board's endeavours, and **Brett McGurk** and **Jeff Crozier** of Winnipeg's Intergroup Consultants disclosed the findings of a near final version of a socio-economic evaluation of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds. Manitoba Conservation's **Vince Crichton**, manager of game, fur and problem wildlife, joined the Board for its anniversary dinner, as did others attending the BQCMB meeting.

Publisher's Box

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