

“The GNWT (Government of the Northwest Territories) is committed to conducting a photographic survey of the Beverly herd in June 2007,”



Courtesy of Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT

The surveys, about \$500,000 total, would be funded by various partners, and the BQCMB will collaborate with governments and others to help governments obtain the needed funds.

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



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

Springing into action

Four priorities top the list of action plans to be developed to accompany the *Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Plan 2005 – 2012*. Buying additional satellite collars and placing them on the Beverly herd is Number One (only six of 20 collars were deployed on Beverly animals during a March 2006 satellite collaring initiative because several herds were intermixed on the Beverly herd's winter range). Ensuring calving ground surveys for the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds go ahead in 2007 comes next, followed by fall composition surveys and spring composition surveys (annual recruitment surveys) for both herds. Then the BQCMB will tackle its next set of priorities: collecting information on caribou body condition, collecting harvest data, and conducting projects involving communities. This last could be accomplished while collaring more Beverly animals and/or doing the calving ground surveys of both herds.

Abandoned mines clean-up

The governments of Canada and Saskatchewan are close to signing a cost-sharing agreement to clean up certain abandoned uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan. During the Cold War, nearly 50 uranium mines and refineries operated there. Prior to the 1980s, mining activities were not regulated by today's strict standards. Most site owners abandoned their operations, leaving old buildings and toxic materials behind.

Gunnar is at the top of the clean-up list, along with Lorado (Encana Corporation, a



Bright lights, big city: BQCMB members, among them Dan Shewchuk (left) and Earl Evans, convened in Prince Albert, the hub to northern Saskatchewan, for the Board's May 2006 meeting

Courtesy of Northern Saskatchewan Tourism. Inset photo: Darryll Hedman



private company that owns part of Lorado, will chip in for costs, too). Both sites are near Uranium City and on the winter range of the Beverly caribou.

Keith Cunningham, a senior industry analyst with Saskatchewan Industry and Resources, says his government will prepare detailed site assessments in 2006 to develop decommissioning and reclamation plans to submit to environmental regulatory agencies. When clean-up starts depends on the level of work involved, and environmental approvals.

Road reaction

Consultations between January and April in 15 communities in Nunavut's Kivalliq Region and northern Manitoba discovered most people were positive about a 1,200-kilometre winter road linking the two jurisdictions, but that "caribou is a universal concern," says

biologist and SNC-Lavalin Inc. subcontractor Ben Hubert. The road, eventually to be an all-season road, would connect Rankin Inlet to Manitoba's all-weather road system at Lynn Lake, Thompson or Gillam. The Port of Churchill would also be linked. Bad weather nixed a consultation in Whale Cove but study team members intend to return. For now, they're analyzing issues following information gathered from communities and doing a technical evaluation.

BQCMB meetings

The annual fall get-together in Winnipeg has been moved up to Nov. 7-9 in order to accommodate schedules and clinch available hotel rooms before Grey Cup fever hits Winnipeg later that month. In the spring of 2007, the BQCMB will find itself in Thompson, Manitoba.

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Mixing thwarts Beverly effort

In early March of this year, government staff from NWT, Nunavut and Manitoba deployed satellite collars. A reconnaissance survey to locate Beverly animals was done before collaring. Abundant Qamanirjuaq caribou were easily found near communities, though.

Ten new and 10 refurbished lightweight break-away GPS collars were placed on Qamanirjuaq cows, with Manitoba Conservation regional wildlife manager and BQCMB vice-chairman Daryll Hedman and a capture crew from Heli-Horizon Inc. attaching 15 collars near Nunalla, north of the Manitoba-Nunavut border. The same capture crew, monitored by Nunavut Environment wildlife officer Joe Savakitaq, outfitted five more cows with collars just north of Arviat.

At the same time, Johnson and a capture crew from Diversified Environmental Services scoured southeastern NWT, about 250 kilometres north of Stony Rapids in Saskatchewan. Affixing 20 new collars to what were believed to be Beverly cows, Johnson later discovered the caribou came from a mix of herds. Bathurst, Ahiak and Qamanirjuaq caribou herd ranges overlap with the Beverly herd's winter range. As animals headed to

Traditional calving grounds: the big picture

Every spring, caribou from each herd return to the same general area for calving but not to the exact same location. The total cumulative area used for calving by a particular herd over many years is called that herd's traditional calving ground, which is much larger than the area that the herd uses in any one year. That's why it's important to track caribou by satellite and to identify boundaries of annual calving areas via surveys for many years – to get the big picture of the traditional calving grounds, all of which need to be protected.

their traditional calving grounds, satellite-furnished location data showed only six collared caribou were from the Beverly herd, 12 were from the Ahiak herd and one was a Qamanirjuaq cow. (The 20th animal died in late March, presumably from wolves near Wholdaia Lake, says Johnson.)

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has pledged to buy another 14 collars to bring the Beverly herd's collared sample size up to 20. "We're also looking at alternative times to put the collars out to make sure that we're going to end up with more Beverly animals," Johnson says. Just when another

satellite collaring effort would go ahead is still being decided. A planned reconnaissance survey of the Beverly herd did not take place this summer due to limited GNWT staffing.

Maps tracking the Beverly caribou's movements will be posted on the GNWT Wildlife Division website (www.nwtwildlife.com), with a two-week delay on locations. Check out the BQCMB's website (www.arctic-caribou.com) for a new animated map, courtesy of Nunavut's Department of Environment, tracking some caribou from the Qamanirjuaq, Lorillard and Wager herds, as well as one or two Beverly cows.

Finding common ground with mines

"A very productive meeting for our first effort" is how BQCMB secretary-treasurer Ross Thompson sums up a May meeting in Saskatoon that he and WWF-Canada president emeritus Monte Hummel had with representatives from uranium mining firms Cameco, Areva (formerly Cogema) and Titan Uranium to discuss caribou conservation issues.

"We don't want to do anything that will ultimately impact the ability for the caribou to reproduce," says Cameco sustainable development director Jamie McIntyre.

"There's 50 companies exploring for uranium in northern Saskatchewan as we speak. As soon as you get that level of activity, it's really important that we step back both as an industry and as government and just make sure we're managing our affairs responsibly."

Thompson says the mining companies "are going to see what they can contribute, financial and otherwise," for satellite collaring data collection. The companies were also asked to help push for calving ground surveys for the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds in 2007.

McIntyre adds that with a better understanding of where the caribou now calve, "there's lots of things we can do to make sure we're not disturbing them or at least keeping our disturbance of the caribou down to an absolute minimum," such as rescheduling airborne surveys.

Photo by Daryll Hedman



Quick capture and release times, along with the use of blindfolds, make collaring less stressful to caribou, like this Qamanirjuaq cow

Pro-uranium position elicits grave concerns

Alarmed by a pro-industry draft uranium policy proposed by land claim organization Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), the BQCMB has lodged numerous concerns and, for the second time, will invite NTI first vice-president James Eetoolook, responsible for lands and resources, to address Board members. He was invited to the Board's May meeting but did not attend.

The March 5, 2006 draft policy and consultation documents, penned by NTI's Lands Policy Advisory Committee, don't adequately prove "that 'the use of nuclear energy to produce electricity is safe, environmentally-friendly and necessary' . . . or that exploration and mining of uranium in Nunavut will result in positive net benefits for Nunavummiut," writes BQCMB chairman Jerome Denechezhé in a May 1, 2006 letter to NTI.

In this and an earlier April 13 letter, the BQCMB lists more than 20 concerns about the documents, which were distributed to government departments, Inuit and Nunavut organizations, uranium mining companies and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The BQCMB was not consulted, but obtained a copy of the files.

"We have received (the BQCMB's) comments, and they will be considered," relays NTI communications director Kerry McCluskey. "The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board is the main wildlife management organization in Nunavut, and they have assured us that they will be commenting on the draft policy also."

NTI expects to receive the last of comments from organizations on its mailing list by mid-August. By September, the Lands

Policy Advisory Committee will meet to review comments, make necessary adjustments and plan next steps, including consultations with Baker Lake and Kugluktuk, the two communities closest to potential uranium mineral exploration. After that, NTI and Regional Inuit Organizations (RIOs) decide on a uranium policy.

Uranium fears voiced before

Uranium mineral exploration is feverish in Nunavut and NWT, which bear geological similarities to uranium-rich Saskatchewan. Uranium has jumped to US\$45.50 per pound from about US\$11 per pound in late 2003, due in part to a huge increase in electricity needs from China and India. Uranium fuel generates nuclear power to create electricity.

But Nunavut is also home to most of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds' calving and post-calving areas, and communities on the caribou ranges – from Black Lake in Saskatchewan to Baker Lake and Arviat in Nunavut – have voiced fears about uranium mining before. In 1989, after listening to Baker Lake residents and hunters from other communities worried about the effects a uranium mine would have on caribou, the BQCMB recommended governments not approve Urangesellschaft Canada Limited's proposal for developing the Kiggavik uranium mine near Baker Lake (governments later heeded this recommendation).

In fact, the outcry spurred NTI to indicate on its Exploration Agreements with mining companies that it does not grant the right to explore for and mine uranium (and thorium) on subsurface Inuit-owned land.



Courtesy of Cameco Corporation

Raisebore drilling at northern Saskatchewan's McArthur River Mine. Canada is the world's largest producer of uranium

Nunavut mostly Crown lands

Now, given that certain conditions are met, "NTI supports uranium mining in Nunavut," says the March 2006 draft policy. Although subsurface Inuit-owned land amounts to only two per cent of Nunavut's land mass, the NTI draft policy states that "NTI has an interest in all matters that impact the lives of Inuit. Thus, this policy includes NTI's position on uranium mining in general for all of Nunavut."

Yet it is INAC that has jurisdiction for Crown lands, the vast bulk of the territory. "Your policy should make it clear that NTI does not have the mandate to dictate policy that applies to all lands and waters of Nunavut," says the BQCMB's May 1 letter to NTI.

According to Spencer Dewar, manager

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of land administration with INAC's Nunavut office, INAC has no specific policy on uranium exploration in Nunavut, and under the Canada Mining Regulations, must issue prospecting and land use permits to companies that provide complete and accurate applications following all rules and regulations.

Dewar adds that if the proposed exploration activity is in a region with an approved land use plan, the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) must first decide if the application conforms to the land use plan.

As the BQCMB points out to NTI, the Keewatin Regional Land Use Plan prohibits uranium development until "the NPC, NIRB, the NWB and the NWMB have reviewed all of the issues relevant to uranium exploration and mining" and, the plan also states, until "any future proposal to mine uranium (is) approved by the people of the region."

The BQCMB notes other problems:

- NTI's draft consultation document and uranium policy's one-sided viewpoint won't allow NTI and RIOs to really weigh the pros and cons
- there's not enough information about the potential impacts of radioactivity released into the environment
- the documents stress that uranium is a clean energy choice that helps avoid climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions – but the fact that uranium exploration, mining and transportation will use fossil fuels and churn out lots of greenhouse gas emissions is never acknowledged.

For a complete list of the BQCMB's concerns with NTI's proposed uranium policy, go to www.arctic-caribou.com.

“NTI think they know the answers”

“The only message we are hearing loudly from our leaders is nothing but positive news about mining,” says a worried Joan Scottie of Baker Lake. Scottie founded the Baker Lake Concerned Citizens Committee to oppose the proposed Kiggavik mine and succeeded, with the backing of a community that in a March 1990 plebiscite voted 90 per cent against a uranium mine.

“People eventually tend to believe and follow the leaders, such as NTI and Nunavut government officials, who make promises or positive guarantees to something that we have reservations about. Then there are the uranium mining companies that have been doing extensive public relations and have very strong input into the uranium policy.

“We, Inuit of Baker Lake, are in a very vulnerable state because of high unemployment,” Scottie adds. “Many people are afraid to speak up. It is understandable, because if you are brave enough to state your concerns, you are pressed down with know-it-all answers that make you look silly for worrying.”

Scottie, whose June 2, 2006 letter to the editor of *Nunatsiaq News* criticized NTI for endorsing uranium mining without first consulting people, received a letter from NTI first vice-president James Eetoolook shortly after.

“We, Inuit of Baker Lake, are in a very vulnerable state because of high unemployment. Many people are afraid to speak up.”

- Joan Scottie, Baker Lake

“NTI responded by telling me that nuclear energy is used for peaceful and environmentally responsible purposes, that uranium mining in Nunavut brings significant economic benefits to the people of the local communities, to the region, to Nunavut and to Canada, that uranium mining is carried out in a manner that protects the health and safety of the workers and all Nunavummiut, that uranium mining will not cause significant adverse effects on the environment or wildlife, and that community members are given an opportunity for full and meaningful participation in both the environmental assessment process and the operations of uranium mining projects,” says Scottie.

“This message pre-tells me about our concerns. Many different projects in uranium mining haven't happened yet and already, NTI think they know the answers.”

Scottie has received many positive responses since publishing her letter, in which she urged concerned Nunavummiut to unite and establish a committee because uranium mining is no longer just a Baker Lake concern.

“We, Baker Lake Inuit, depend entirely on the caribou both from Beverly and Qamanir'juaq,” Scottie told *Caribou News in Brief*. “We have already been affected by simple exploration when migration is diverted by helicopter noise.”

Striving for headway on caribou protection

The BQCMB still hopes to meet with the Baker Lake and Arviat hunters and trappers organizations (HTOs) to get community feedback on recommendations from the Board's 2004 position paper, *Protecting Calving Grounds, Post-Calving Areas and Other Important Habitats for Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou*. Meetings with the Kivalliq Wildlife Board and Nunavut Wildlife Management Board are also a priority.

BQCMB consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn initially met with the Baker Lake HTO board in October 2005 but because some members were not present, the full HTO board was to consider later whether they would support the BQCMB's recommendations in principle. Poor weather halted a planned trip to Arviat at the same time to meet with that community's HTO and regional NPC staff.

Baker Lake has been the hub of intense

development pressures lately and as can be seen by comments raised at the final Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) hearing of the proposed Meadowbank gold mine in late March this year, many organizations are counting on the economic developments the mine promises to bring. (NIRB's website, nirb.nunavut.ca, has hearing transcripts.)

Statistics Canada's 2001 Census pegs unemployment in Baker Lake at more than 26 per cent, and people are said to be afraid to speak out against projects that could bring jobs to the community (see "NTI think they know the answers," p. 5).

On a different note, the BQCMB will write once more to the ministers of Nunavut's Department of Environment, NWT's Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Saskatchewan Environment, Manitoba Conservation and INAC, urging

them to follow up and take action on the recommendations proposed in the BQCMB's 2004 position paper. The Board will be asking what specific plans each government has made or will be making to protect the caribou herds and their habitats.

The BQCMB will also write a letter of support to NWT's Environment and Natural Resources, lauding its caribou management blueprint, *Caribou Forever – Our Heritage, Our Responsibility. A Barren-ground Caribou Management Strategy for the Northwest Territories, 2006 – 2010*. The Strategy identifies numerous field projects and other work that would greatly increase current knowledge of the health of the Beverly caribou. However, no specific work is outlined to achieve protection of caribou habitats.

Consultation shut-out “very disappointing”

After five years in the works, the Nunavut Mineral Exploration and Mining Strategy should be published by early October, says Gordon MacKay, Nunavut's director of minerals and petroleum resources, Department of Economic Development and Transportation.

An update of the Strategy's progress, available at www.nunavutminingsymposium.ca, lists numerous organizations that were consulted. The BQCMB, however, is not among them.

“There's no more consultations planned for the Strategy,” MacKay told *Caribou News in Brief* in late June. Nunavut members on the BQCMB were consulted in the capacity of their

own organizations, says MacKay (in this case, Nunavut's Department of Environment and the Nunavut Regional Office of INAC) and there was a consultation in Baker Lake, although MacKay didn't know if BQCMB community members were in attendance.

MacKay also said his department “had a consultation that involved the World Wildlife Fund.” WWF-Canada is an active BQCMB supporter.

BQCMB secretary-treasurer Ross Thompson called MacKay's comments “very disappointing.”

“The Board is not the government reps, the Board is not the WWF,” he stressed. “We provide a collaborative viewpoint. Our

understanding was that industry was to be consulted first, and now was not the chance to give our input. We were anxiously awaiting our chance to input, and now we've missed that chance.”

WWF-Canada president emeritus Monte Hummel, during a May 2005 consultation in Ottawa, stressed that Nunavut, with its lack of protected areas, should develop a Conservation Areas Strategy in parallel with the Nunavut Mineral Strategy. “I'm not very hopeful,” Hummel told *Caribou News in Brief*. “It's a very hostile agenda to protected areas and very aggressively friendly to mining companies.”

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Obstacles confront land use planning

With no funding for two years now from Saskatchewan Environment – a key partner in the multi-party Athabasca Land Use Planning process – the Athabasca Interim Advisory Panel and Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC) have asked the BQCMB for a show of support.

The first of three planning stages should be submitted to provincial Cabinet for review in 2007, says PAGC land use planning department project co-ordinator Diane McDonald. Stage I covers a 50-kilometre wide corridor encompassing the Wollaston Lake winter road to Black Lake, Stony Rapids and Fond du Lac. The combined Stage II/III covers a much larger area, running from Saskatchewan's borders with Alberta, NWT and Manitoba south to the Athabasca Sand Dunes and Cree Lake area.

The BQCMB will comply with the

PAGC's request to write to the government of Saskatchewan on four issues, including a request for a development freeze on all lands and the withdrawal of Crown minerals until the completion and implementation of the Stage II/III Land Use Plan, and urging adequate funding for the Panel in order to complete and implement the Stage II/III Land Use Plan before the Wollaston Lake road is finished.

Peter Brook, also of PAGC's land use planning department, says Saskatchewan Environment cutbacks along with the province's "very active support for uranium development," intense levels of mineral exploration and mining industry opposition "around protected areas planning for any land use policies that may restrict the current approach to mineral exploration" combine to hurt land use planning. Nonetheless, with the

financial help of environmental groups, Stage II/III work has started and the focus this year is on protected areas planning.

Kivalliq plan still stalled

Meanwhile, efforts to update the Kivalliq regional land use plan remain stalled. The government of Nunavut withdrew from NPC land use planning processes in January 2005, stating that the Nunavut government, federal government, NPC and NTI must first 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. Adrian Boyd, NPC's director of policy development, says NPC will be moving talks on this ahead in the early fall and hopes to resolve the matter by the end of 2006.

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When asked how the Nunavut government's mining strategy ranks with NTI's mining policy – a policy that, according to NTI documents, "presents NTI's position on mining on all lands in Nunavut" – MacKay says that "Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., on Inuit-owned subsurface land, have total say on what happens on the lands that they control" whereas the government of Nunavut is a public government. "NTI has a tremendous influence on what we do and how we do it. They're a very positive and forward-looking organization that works hard with us."

Ultimately, though, INAC still manages Nunavut's Crown lands, which account for most of the territory.

Photo by Scott Hale

25/6/06



Stony Rapids resident Scott Hale photographed this forest fire just north of Al's Place Hotel in late June. Fast-moving fires and numerous community evacuations have prompted renewed criticism of the province's policy to fight fires only 20 kilometres from northern Saskatchewan communities

People and Caribou

Photo by Daryll Hedman



New BQCMB Nunavut members

Thomas Elytook (left) and Laurent Angalik

Thomas Elytook of Baker Lake and **Laurent Angalik** of Arviat are the BQCMB's new Nunavut community members, replacing **David Aksawnee** of Baker Lake and **Joe Kaludjak** of Rankin Inlet, Board members since 2003. Elytook has been a fuel truck driver for Arctic Fuel for the past 25 years. "I hunt whenever I have an opportunity, like a day off or whenever I can," he says. He's also a member of the Baker Lake HTO. Over in Arviat, Angalik hunts part-time as well, working full time at the Northern Store. This past winter, caribou were so plentiful around Arviat that he could see them from his workplace, "like just a mile to see them. There were lots."

Elytook and Angalik met their new BQCMB colleagues in Prince Albert this past May at a meeting which drew, among others, Prince Albert Grand Council vice-chief **Don Deranger**, Fond du Lac chief **Victor Fern**, and Board alternate members **Pierre Robillard** of Black Lake, **Joe Martin** of Fond du Lac and **George Tsannie** of Wollaston Lake.

Earlier in the meeting, NTI associate director of wildlife **Bert Dean** described NTI's consultation process for its draft uranium policy, and WWF-Canada president emeritus **Monte Hummel** outlined the latest efforts of his group, working with Lutselk'e and Baker Lake, to link the Queen Maud Gulf Bird Sanctuary and the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary with adjacent proposed special management areas in a 50-million-acre protected stretch of land. SNC-Lavalin Inc.'s **Mike Patterson** recapped developments with the Manitoba-Nunavut road route study.

Two Fond du Lac Grade 12 students, **Trevor Olson** and **Craig Adam**, got a taste of caribou management when they sat in on the BQCMB's May meeting in Prince Albert. The two, chaperoned by Fond du Lac councillor **Georgie**

McDonald, travelled to P.A. as potential youth delegates to the BQCMB, an attempt to involve young up-and-coming hunters and wildlife managers who could eventually replace long-time

Board members.

Climate, weather, fire, the condition of caribou range, disease and predation – all are suspects in the case of the shrinking Bathurst caribou herd, whose population fell from about 349,000 in 1996 to 186,000 in 2003. Armed with traditional and scientific knowledge, including data from aerial surveys



Courtesy of Ingebjorg Jean Mattson

2005 BQCMB Scholarship Fund
Award winner Ingebjorg Jean
Mattson

and satellite collaring on Bathurst caribou and the wolves that attack them, University of Northern British Columbia student **Ingebjorg Jean Mattson** headed into the field last year to study the links between predator, prey and environment, and earned the 2005 BQCMB Scholarship Fund Award as a result. Mattson, who is completing her Masters of Science degree in the natural resources and environmental science program, plans to return north in early 2007 to share what she has learned with communities. She hopes the answers will help demystify the population declines of other NWT herds, and shed light on similar circumstances shared by the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds.

Publisher's Box

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