

# Uranium mining in the Kivalliq splits opinion

According to the website of MiningWatch Canada, “(w)hen uranium ore is processed, 85% of the radioactivity is left behind in the tailings, and must be managed safely for hundreds of thousands of years.”

Mining will drive Nunavut's wage economy, the Conference Board of Canada predicted in its *Nunavut Economic Outlook*. Exploration in 2006 topped \$200 million, and Nunavut now has a diamond mine, two gold projects in advanced stages and growing interest in uranium, silver, nickel, copper, iron ore and coloured gemstones.

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

### Protect calving grounds: Summit

The top recommendation from a historic January 2007 Caribou Summit, held amid declining NWT caribou populations, was to protect caribou calving grounds. More than 180 delegates – among them elders, mining and oil/gas officials, and wildlife co-management board representatives – came to Inuvik from across NWT, Nunavut, northern Saskatchewan and northern Alberta to identify actions to be taken over the next four years to help herds recover.

BQCMB member Earl Evans of Fort Smith made a presentation, while the BQCMB's Tim Trottier and Joe Martin attended as part of the Saskatchewan delegation. Several NWT herds, including the Beverly herd, calve in Nunavut, and NWT Environmental and Natural Resources Minister Michael McLeod later announced that his department would

meet with Nunavut's government to discuss protecting calving grounds. As of May 2007, there were 285 prospecting permits, mineral leases and mineral claims on the Beverly herd calving ground. None are regulated by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Caribou Protection Measures, which affect land use permits only.

### BQCMB keeps speaking out

The BQCMB continues to comment on potential mineral exploration projects heading through regulatory channels at the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB), the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board (MVLWB) and the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB). Due to limited capacity, the BQCMB only addresses land use applications for particularly sensitive areas such as calving and post-calving areas, and migration routes (comments can be

downloaded from [www.arctic-caribou.com](http://www.arctic-caribou.com)). Many more land use permits are being issued across the caribou ranges in NWT and Nunavut.

The BQCMB also submitted comments on the 2006 Meadowbank Monitoring Report, part of NIRB's monitoring of the Meadowbank Gold Project near Baker Lake. The property was recently purchased from Cumberland Resources by Agnico-Eagle Mines Limited.

Staying in the regulatory loop is critical to protect the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds and their habitats. In future, the BQCMB will strive for even closer communication with another key regulatory agency, the Nunavut Planning Commission.

### The BQCMB wants U

The BQCMB is still seeking youth delegates, an initiative to involve young caribou-range residents with fresh ideas who could some day assume the reins from long-time Board members. As a trial run, Fond du Lac students Trevor Olson and Craig Adam sat in on the Board's May 2006 meeting in Prince Albert. The BQCMB also approached Lac Brochet's Petit Casimer Memorial School and as a result, students Russell Hyslop and Virginia Samuel travelled to the Board's June 2007 meeting in Thompson to speak about a BQCMB-funded project to interview hunters about caribou. The Board has asked the school to consider youth delegates, and further youth-elder-hunter projects.

### BQCMB meetings

It's back to Winnipeg, the BQCMB's regular fall haunt, for its Nov. 6-8, 2007 meeting. Members touch down in Fort Smith, NWT May 27-29 for the Board's spring 2008 meeting.

BQCMB Earl Evans (inset photo) made a presentation at the historic NWT Caribou Summit in Inuvik in January 2007.

BQCMB alternate member Joe Martin (below left, with back to camera) was part of the Saskatchewan delegation, along with Black Lake Chief Fred Throassie (centre) and Fond du Lac Chief Victor Fern



Zoe Ho, Inuvialuit Communications Society

# Storms ground long-awaited Beverly survey

*Post-calving satellite collaring a success, though*

Courtesy of Environment  
and Natural Resources, NWT



Karen Hunter



John Nukik of Baker Lake (left) and BQCMB alternate member Pierre Robillard of Black Lake took part in the survey as community observers

This year's highly anticipated population survey of the Beverly herd – the first since 1994 – came to a disappointing end when early June blizzards and gale-force winds prevented the photo plane from reaching the heights necessary to complete aerial photography of the calving grounds, said survey team leader Deb Johnson.

They were able to complete systematic reconnaissance surveys of the Beverly, Ahiak and Qamanirjuaq calving grounds, though. A reconnaissance survey gathers information in advance of calving ground surveys, flying over caribou migration corridors to see whether all cows have reached the calving grounds.

Results from the Beverly and Ahiak reconnaissance surveys will be announced in September, said Johnson, a BQCMB member who is the South Slave regional biologist with NWT's Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The NWT government will likely suggest next steps for surveying the Beverly herd at that time, too.

Qamanirjuaq reconnaissance survey results will be passed along to the Government of Nunavut, the lead agency on that herd.

## Mining camp helps out

Despite two fatalities, the deployment of GPS satellite collars on breeding cows on the Beverly calving ground in early July was a success. Of 17 collars deployed, 15 were new, paid for by INAC. Two others were retrieved following the deaths of previously collared cows. Titan Uranium let Johnson's crew base operations from its field camp southeast of Sand Lake and employees "were very accommodating and went out of their way to help us out," said Johnson.

Assuming all cows captured were Beverly caribou, this brings the number of collared Beverly animals to 21 – a good sample. The Qamanirjuaq herd has 22 collared caribou.

The collaring effort was necessary because after 20 new collars were affixed to what were believed to be Beverly cows in March 2006, it was later discovered when the cows headed to their traditional calving grounds that they were a mix of Beverly, Bathurst, Ahiak and Qamanirjuaq animals. All

of these herds' ranges overlap.

BQCMB member and Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization chairperson Thomas Elytook observed some of the collaring. He was surprised that the process took only about 10 minutes in total.

"When the guy nets the caribou, it's something like six, seven seconds chase. When I watched and they don't capture it, they go to another so as not to get the animal tired," said Elytook. He was also surprised that caribou quickly returned after the collaring crew was picked up by the helicopter.



Thomas Elytook

Collaring on the post-calving grounds was considered controversial but Elytook fought for community acceptance.

"I felt it was very important with all the mining exploration going on."

## AREVA-BQCMB Agreement



AREVA Resources Canada Inc. vice-president of regulatory affairs and licensing Bob Pollock (left) and BQCMB Chairman Jerome Denechezhe sign a five-year funding agreement giving the BQCMB about \$25,000 a year for monitoring work and other projects that will further caribou research and improve mining practices. A funding arrangement with a mining company

is a first for the BQCMB, but it won't affect its commitment to conservation. For example, the BQCMB expressed concerns to NIRB about disturbances to Beverly caribou as a result of AREVA's 2007-2008 diamond drilling and environmental baseline work at its Kiggavik and Sissons properties west of Baker Lake.



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The BQCMB does not oppose mining – instead, it urges protection of the calving grounds and other key habitats, and promotes co-operative action to protect caribou, based on the best information available. The BQCMB realizes that people living on caribou ranges need jobs through economic development, but it also knows that people from communities across the caribou ranges don't want jobs that harm caribou herds.

In September 2004, the BQCMB made many recommendations for protecting the herds and their habitat from human-caused activity in its position paper, *Protecting Calving Grounds, Post-Calving Areas and Other Important Habitats for Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou*. The BQCMB wants to work closely with communities, governments, industry and conservation agencies to put these and other recommendations into practice.

### Continuous support needed

Today, the Kiggavik property is majority owned by AREVA Resources Canada Inc., which will decide if establishing a mine is feasible after doing diamond drilling and environmental baseline work there and at the adjacent Sissons property in 2007 and 2008.

An ongoing land use plan condition, Term 3.6, requires every mining company to secure widespread community support for proposals to mine uranium.

Earlier this year, Baker Lake, Arviat, Rankin Inlet and Repulse Bay hamlet councils, along with the Kivalliq Inuit Association (KIA), passed motions in support of the Kiggavik-Sissons project following a regional information tour by KIA, AREVA and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Conditions have been attached: the Jan. 5, 2007 Baker Lake motion, for example, stipulates the project must meet

“the highest standards for the protection of the environment and human health,” and provide maximum economic and social benefits to Baker Lake.

These motions, however, don't give a uranium mine the go-ahead. They only allow the Kiggavik-Sissons project to proceed to the next stage of exploration – bulk sampling – and the regulatory process.

If AREVA submits a proposal for bulk sampling, the motions would be compared to the land use plan to see if they meet the requirements for community support, says

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**The price of uranium has  
soared from US\$7/pound in  
2001 to more than  
US\$100/pound in 2007.**

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NPC director of policy development Adrian Boyd. The proposal would also have to meet all other land use plan requirements. Then it would head to the Nunavut Impact Review Board for environmental screening and, possibly, an environmental assessment. The Nunavut Water Board would also have to issue a licence and government regulatory requirements would have to be met, too.

### GN “adds to the list”

In June, Nunavut's Department of Economic Development and Transportation tabled a list of uranium development management plan principles in the Nunavut Legislature. But NPC policy specialist Heidi Wiebe points out that “the development of a new policy does

not change the government's obligations to implement existing approved land use plans” in accordance with Section 11.5.9 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. “It simply adds to the list of requirements and considerations in place for uranium mining through existing land use plans and legislation.”

If a uranium development proposal doesn't conform to a land use plan, a proponent could apply for ministerial exemption.

Meanwhile, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) will decide whether to accept its Lands Policy Advisory Committee's uranium policy at a Sept. 11-13 meeting.

### Dangers of cumulative effects

Industrial development is setting records across the caribou ranges, and the BQCMB has warned of the dangers of cumulative effects (see sidebar, page 6). In northern Saskatchewan, where a third of the world's uranium is produced, more than 100 mostly uranium and gold mining companies are at work. In NWT, more than 1,000 claims have been registered over the past five years in the uranium-rich Upper Thelon geological basin. In northern Manitoba, the search is on for diamonds, copper, zinc, and north of Lac Brochet, uranium.

Lac Brochet has had a few meetings with one of the companies, CanAlaska Uranium Ltd., but that's because “we're making noise,” says BQCMB chairman Jerome Denecheze, who lives in Lac Brochet. “We still have treaty land entitlement selections,” he adds. “The (mineral exploration) permits are all in the same area.”

“Governments cannot work in isolation. Our community members need answers.”

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# Community caribou projects teach r-e-s-p-e-c-t

Gary Frey



Gary Frey

Father Megret High School students from Wollaston Lake learned how to skin caribou (left), and then tasted the fruits of their labour (above). Below right: Modest Antsanen and Petit Casimer Memorial School students from Lac Brochet fill out forms during interviews with elders

This spring, students from Father Megret High School in Wollaston Lake and Petit Casimer Memorial School in Lac Brochet became the first to transform funds for caribou-range community-based projects into caribou meat, new skills, stories and experiences. In return, the BQCMB gained valuable information.

The students gained butchering skills and an appreciation for using as much of a harvested caribou as possible. They had fun, too.

“As years go by, I get more knowledgeable,” Russell Hyslop of Lac Brochet, already an experienced hunter at 15, told BQCMB members in June. “I even begin helping my dad cut up caribou meat and also not to disrespect caribou like some people do. They shoot caribou and only take certain parts like the head, tongue and hindquarters.

“The elders say, ‘If you do not respect the caribou, the caribou will stop coming.’”

Funding is available yearly through the BQCMB for each caribou-range jurisdiction – Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut and NWT – for projects ideally targeting school-age youth.

Petit Casimer Dene Ch’ anie’ (Dene Culture) class students interviewed 19 Lac Brochet hunters for their observations of caribou and weather. Meanwhile, the Wollaston Lake project sent students on successful caribou hunts followed up by caribou body condition and harvest data collection. A similar project in Lac Brochet, organized by BQCMB Chairman Jerome Denechezhe in co-operation with the school there, is slated for this fall.

“The caribou have always been important to the Denesuline people even until today,” said 18-year-old Virginia Samuel, who accompanied fellow Petit Casimer schoolmate Hyslop and teacher Glenn Tsessaze to the BQCMB’s Thompson meeting. Samuel summarized observations from the 19 Lac Brochet hunters interviewed. “Many families depend on the caribou meat, as store-bought meat is quite costly in the community. Most of the hunters say that it is important to respect the caribou at all times by making use of all its parts after hunting them.”

This “was a very worthwhile experience for students,” wrote Father Megret High School principal Gary Frey in an April 12 letter to the BQCMB. “Students were able to partake in the skinning and butchering of the animals and gain valuable experience, which I am sure they will use in the future.”

Based on the success of the Wollaston Lake and Lac Brochet projects to date, the enthusiasm of participants, and the promising and useful results, BQCMB members want to see more projects like these taking place through schools in all jurisdictions.



Courtesy of Glenn Tsessaze

## Developer on key Beverly range blocked – for now

As of press time, Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice had not announced if he would accept the MVEIRB's May 7, 2007 recommendation to reject 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. The development, which would have included a small camp, envisioned drilling up to 20 holes. All access would have been by helicopter from Yellowknife.

The MVEIRB said Ur-Energy's operation would "cause adverse cultural impacts of a cumulative nature to areas of very high spiritual importance to aboriginal peoples."

The significance of the upper Thelon

watershed to the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation cannot be overstated, Chief Adeline Jonasson later emphasized in a letter to INAC Minister Jim Prentice. "To allow mineral exploitation to proceed in the region without careful planning and consideration is tantamount to allowing the desecration of our church, our grocery, our graveyard, and our museum."

"The Dene have always maintained that the most important aspect of their culture is the material, cultural and spiritual relationship to caribou."

Presentations were made to a January 2007 MVEIRB public hearing in Lutselk'e by the BQCMB, in part jointly with the Government of the NWT (GNWT), and by the

Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN), the Treaty #8 Tribal Corporation, the Deninu Kué First Nation, the Fort Resolution Métis Council, Athabasca Denesuline from Saskatchewan, WWF-Canada, ecotourism companies that stage canoe trips in the Upper Thelon, and INAC. Many Lutselk'e elders and others from Akaitcho communities also spoke out.

"Many cultural and social concerns were raised based on the long history of aboriginal land use in the Upper Thelon River basin," stated MVEIRB. And it noted the concern raised by the BQCMB and the GNWT that "the proposed development is on the main caribou migration route of the Beverly caribou herd, and . . . would be operating during the pre-calving migration period when pregnant caribou are particularly vulnerable." Part of their recommendation to the Minister was that "(a) regional Caribou Cumulative Effects Study should be conducted on the status and sustainability of the Beverly caribou herd."

Disruption of an ecotourism destination considered one of the last spectacular wildlife areas on Earth and concerns that development was happening before land use planning had taken place also factored into the MVEIRB's decision. Another recommendation was that "(a)n Interim Land Use Plan should be developed and implemented incorporating the cultural values of the area."

"Although the proposed development is physically small," the MVEIRB concluded, "the potential cultural impacts are not."

After Ur-Energy first submitted its application to the MVEIRB in 2005, Lutselk'e approached the BQCMB for help. Residents feared that a uranium exploration boom was taking hold in the Thelon, much like the diamond rush of the 1990s on traditional

Continued on page 7

### The dangers of cumulative effects

- What are cumulative effects? Combined environmental effects from similar activities that accumulate over time and space.
- Barren-ground caribou travel far and wide, and are exposed to many land use activities.
- While stress and disturbance from each activity may seem minor, the combined effects can have serious impacts. Together, they influence the health of caribou and their ability to cope with such things as disease, predators, forest fire, climate change and other land use activities.
- Potential impacts from uranium development projects include disturbance (from helicopters and drilling), habitat loss (resulting when animals avoid areas because of project activities) and contamination of food or water sources.
- Caribou reactions to disturbance are not always as obvious as seeing them run away from aircraft or vehicles. For example, a caribou's head might remain lowered when a plane flies over but an observer may not see that the caribou has stopped feeding.
- Caribou need to feed continuously – frequent interruptions during spring migration through to late summer can lead to more calf deaths, and fewer pregnancies and calves the following year.

Visit [www.arctic-caribou.com](http://www.arctic-caribou.com) to learn more.



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lands to the north. The Akaitcho Dene worried that land they considered sacred might be forever damaged.

Since then, the BQCMB has worked with a coalition of like-minded groups spearheaded by the NWT Treaty #8 Tribal Corporation and the LKDFN to participate in the screening and assessment of Ur-Energy's proposal. The BQCMB submitted comments and information requests at various stages along the way. BQCMB consulting biologist Leslie Wakelyn gave a two-part presentation at the hearing in Lutselk'e on the potential cumulative effects of mineral exploration on barren-ground caribou. One part, a joint presentation with the GNWT, focused on common concerns and what conditions should be imposed if the Screech Lake operation was permitted. The second part described the BQCMB's broader concerns and made recommendations concerning the need for research, range-wide cumulative effects impact analysis, regional land use planning and a range-wide system of conservation planning for Beverly and Ahiak caribou.

Prentice has received a rash of letters voicing outrage against or support for MVEIRB's actions (see [www.mveirb.nt.ca](http://www.mveirb.nt.ca)). The BQCMB will send a letter of support, too.

Lutselk'e Chief Jonasson also wrote an open letter to prospective developers of the Upper Thelon watershed, advising them that "if you proceed in filing your application, we will insist that your proposed project be referred to an environmental assessment."

"The potential for cumulative effects from past, present and reasonably foreseeable future developments is huge, especially given the current high market prices, and we will not 'open the door.'"

Continued from page 4

## Voices of dissent

Uranium exploration has intensified across Canada but it's been hobbled by opposition in places like British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Moncton, New Brunswick.

Scottie says people concerned by uranium mining in the Kivalliq Region can contact the Baker Lake Concerned Citizens Committee at [qatqa@yahoo.ca](mailto:qatqa@yahoo.ca) or c/o P.O. Box 17, Baker Lake NU X0C 0A0.

"Inuit are traditionally generous folks," she says. "At the present time they are being taken advantage of. They are being told the uranium near Baker Lake is an answer to the world's problems." (Proponents say nuclear power, used to create electricity, emits fewer

greenhouse gases.)

"Our people feel responsible . . . (as if they) must contribute and share the uranium to counteract climate change."

Says 22-year-old Jesse Tungilik, "I'm not convinced that the local Inuit will see significant benefits from the development." The Rankin Inlet native, currently working in Ottawa, still has family living at home.

"The thing with these (mining) companies is that they only care about money," Tungilik adds. "They don't have to live near these mines. They don't have to deal with the pollution that's left from these mines."

*Read an extended version of this story at [www.arctic-caribou.com](http://www.arctic-caribou.com)*

## Road study backs eastern route

The final report of the Manitoba-Nunavut road route selection study, hopefully due out from contractor SNC-Lavalin Inc. by the end of summer, will endorse the shortest of three possible routes: the Gillam/Churchill/Rankin Inlet corridor.

The two other alternatives for the eventual all-season road started at Lynn Lake (the western route) and Thompson (the central route). All routes linked to Churchill and ended at Rankin Inlet.

The BQCMB has stated that any route will inflict damage on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou.

But of the three routes, BQCMB vice-chairman and Manitoba Conservation wildlife manager Daryll Hedman says he thinks the Gillam-Churchill-Rankin Inlet route "would have the largest impact. That's usually (the Qamanirjuaq caribou herd's)

travel corridor when they're going home." Hedman recalls seeing about 100,000 caribou travelling along the coast from the Seal River north to Nunavut two years ago, during spring migration.

Hedman also voiced concern about three major rivers (the Seal, Churchill and Caribou) the eastern route would cross.

Project manager Tim Stevens says a scoping study revealed that the same broad range of environmental issues, such as caribou, rivers and fisheries, were encountered with each route alternative so "the shorter the route, the better in terms of overall environmental impacts."

The project's next phase will study environmental and engineering aspects of the eastern route in more detail, a process Stevens estimates could take two years.

## People and Caribou



Susan Fleck (far left), Don Deranger (left) and (group photo above, left to right) Glenn Tsessaze, Virginia Samuel and Russell Hyslop: some of the many people at the BQCMB's June 2007 meeting in Thompson

Among the guests at the BQCMB's June meeting in Thompson, Manitoba was AREVA Resources Canada Inc. vice-president of regulatory affairs and licensing **Bob Pollock**, La Ronge Chief **Harry Cook**, Petit Casimer Memorial School teacher **Glenn Tsessaze** with students **Russell Hyslop** and **Virginia Samuel**, and INAC environmental policy analyst **Janice Traynor** who, along with BQCMB member **Carl McLean**, spoke about a recent report evaluating INAC's Caribou Protection Measures. NWT Environment and Natural Resources wildlife director **Susan Fleck** sat in for BQCMB member **Deb Johnson**, who was out attempting to survey the Beverly herd.

**Martin Gebauer** gave an update on aerial surveys Agnico-Eagle Mines Limited is doing to monitor wildlife near the Meadowbank

gold site, construction of a four-season access road, and more. **Brett McGurk** of Intergroup Consultants reported on a socio-economic evaluation his firm is conducting of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds. It's been determined that the harvest of the two herds has an annual net value of more than \$19 million. Intergroup will study how to incorporate cultural values into the evaluation next. A final report should be out this fall.

Graduate student **Tracy Smith**, who is working with **Gary Kofinas** at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, elaborated on a research project comparing different co-management boards and how they address industrial development. Smith may compare the BQCMB with the Western Arctic Herd Working Group.

Also on hand was Prince Albert Grand Council Vice-Chief **Don Deranger**, Manitoba

organizations' missions, support provided to the BQCMB, and mutual projects.

BQCMB Vice-Chairman **Darryl Hedman** and his wife **Sherry** hosted a lavish barbecue one evening for Board members and affiliates at their beautiful log home on Paint Lake outside Thompson. Head chef Sherry was ably assisted in the kitchen by family friend **Connie Roberts**.

BQCMB member **Billy Shott** of Uranium City is now an alternate for new member **Dennis Larocque** of Camsell Portage. That shuffle opens up another Saskatchewan seat, and **George Tsannie** of Wollaston Lake has been appointed to fill it. Hatchet Lake Band Chief **Louis Josie** will be his alternate. Longtime alternates **Pierre Robillard** and **Joe Martin** will continue in their roles.

Simon Fraser University student **Tyler Kuhn** snared the 2007 BQCMB Caribou Management Scholarship Fund award with his plans to analyze ancient DNA from subfossil caribou remains from southwest Yukon. Read more about Kuhn's project at [www.arctic-caribou.com](http://www.arctic-caribou.com)



Tyler Kuhn

Courtesy of ACUNS

### Publisher's Box

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Conservation director **Steve Kearney** and biologist **Vicki Trim**, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board member **Robert Moshenko** and WWF-Canada's **Ray Griffith**. Both Moshenko and Griffith presented overviews of their