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Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board

BQCMB Meeting #92 May 3-5, 2022

# **BQCMB Seeks Essential Funding**

Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) members fear that without increased support from its public and Indigenous government partners, the Board's effectiveness will wane, reducing four decades of important work in support of caribou and the way of life of thousands of Indigenous peoples across northern Canada.

"It is for the people that this Board must continue its work," BQCMB Chair **Earl Evans** stresses. "Across the range, Cree, Dene, Inuit and Metis communities have relied on these herds to meet their nutritional, cultural, and spiritual needs for millennia. We need to ensure they can continue to rely on them, today and in the future."

At its virtual board meeting, held from November 30-December 2, 2021, the BQCMB members heard details of a proposed new management agreement which will carry the Board through to 2032, make Indigenous governments equal partners in its management, and bring the Board's operations—and budget—into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Incoming Executive Director **Tina Giroux-Robillard** presented the proposed new agreement. "Our goal is two-fold," she explained. "We need to strengthen the BQCMB's ability to play a strong, effective role in conservation and management of the two caribou herds for the future, and we need to more successfully engage Indigenous communities, youth and Elders."

The Board has been a crucial voice for barren-ground caribou and caribou-dependent communities over a very large range since 1982. Its successful co-management model builds trusting relationships amongst territorial, federal and Indigenous governments and communities, making it essential to the well-being of the herds and their habitat and the people who rely on them.

Continued on Page 3



Photo: Mathieu Dumond / Umingmak Productions Inc.

"It is for the people that this Board must continue its work."

Earl Evans, Chair

## What's Inside:

- What's in the Proposed New Barren Ground Caribou Management Agreement?
- BQCMB Profile: Outgoing Executive Director Ross Thompson
- From the Archives: The Caribou Situation (1983)

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### Ejâ yazî etthén ghâ nohehél hudi

### **Nunavut Land Use Plan**

The Nunavut Land Use Plan has been under development by the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) since 2005, and the BQCMB has been providing written submissions and verbal input to NPC at hearings and workshops since 2010.

In October 2021, the BQCMB submitted comments on the current 2021 Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan (DNLUP). The Nunavut Planning Commission's Kivalliq and Kitikmeot regional public hearings, originally scheduled for November 2021,were re-scheduled for March 2022, and are now delayed until September- November 2022.

The BQCMB has prepared a summary of its recommendations submitted last October. You can view it at: <u>https://</u> <u>bit.ly/3hvPJK7</u>

#### **Collar Information Discussed**

The Government of Nunavut Department of Environment (GN-DOE) employs satellite tracking collars on caribou to gather information about the herds and ensure they are being protected. But with this information comes requests from hunters - where are the caribou?

GN-DOE currently does not share maps showing collared caribou information until the information is at least three months old, and this rule is unlikely to change until new population estimates are available.

BQCMB member **Mitch Campbell**, during November's BQCMB meeting, explained the policy is due to the significant decline in both the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds. "Most people are hunting responsibly, but a few are not, making the delayed release of collar information necessary," he explained. **Jan Adamczewski** explained that the Government of Northwest Territories Department of Environment (GNWT-ENR) also doesn't provide recent collar information for the herds it monitors.

Chair **Earl Evans** added the government has no other choice, given the drastic declines in the herds. "As a hunter myself, I'd like to go to an office, get a map, see where the caribou are, and go find them. It's a hardship for the hunters to travel long distances to search for caribou, but it's the reality of the way things are now. If we want caribou we have to control how we give out information."

#### **Chronic Wasting Disease**

The BQCMB heard presentations about Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) from two wildlife health experts at its November board meeting. Dr. **Naima Jutha**, GNWT-ENR Wildlife Veterinarian presented on CWD in NWT, and Dr. **Iga Stasiuk**, the Provincial Wildlife Health Specialist for the

### **CWD: Help Prevent the Spread!**

- Promote CWD awareness, encourage others to learn.
- Support CWD research and ongoing efforts to stop its spread.
- Do NOT take carcasses or meat of deer, moose or elk harvested in AB or SK into caribou range unless results of testing for CWD show they are not infected (negative test).
- Learn about import regulations for caribou, deer, moose and elk harvested outside your province/ territory.
- Report sick, injured and dead wildlife to your local Wildlife Office or Wildlife Veterinarian.
- Report information about movements of deer and sightings of deer on caribou range.
- Participate in sampling programs to monitor for CWD by submitting heads (caribou, deer, moose and elk), or tissues from heads (requires training).

Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment presented on CWD in that province.

Jutha provided an overview of CWD and the risk of infection of barren-ground caribou. The disease is spread when an infected animal sheds cells into the environment and another animal ingests them. CWD can live in the environment for many years, particularly in clay soil. Usual signs of CWD in animals are shakiness and disorientation. There is no treatment for CWD, and it is always fatal. In North America, CWD has infected deer, elk, and moose, but not caribou. There is no evidence that CWD has infected humans, although it is recommended that people not eat infected meat.

Stasiuk described the history of detection of CWD in Saskatchewan, where the first infection was found in imported elk in 1996. By 2018 it had spread significantly, primarily through deer, and there is now concern about spillover into boreal caribou. She noted management challenges include baiting and artificial feeding, deer range expansion, carcass movement, and increasing infections in game farms near the boreal forest. There is a government testing program which requires head samples. Live animals and meat can't be tested.

Both experts emphasized the need for brain tissue samples, and support and engagement from Indigenous communities with testing, research and preventing spread of the disease to the north and east. There has been one confirmed case in south-western Manitoba (November 2021). It has not yet been detected in the NWT or Nunavut.§

# Planning for the Future of the BQCMB

#### Continued from Page 1

However, "The BQCMB has been under-funded for many years," noted Giroux-Robillard. "This new agreement is an opportunity to build on what the Board has done for 40 years while making Indigenous governments equal, contributing partners in its management."

The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds are in decline, and the Board fears they may eventually face the same fate as the Bathurst herd, whose numbers dropped from about 470,000 in the mid-1980s to less than 8,000, with the decline continuing today. "We don't want to see the same thing happen to the Beverly or Qamanirjuaq herds," said Evans. "Too many people depend on them."

The BQCMB monitors the many threats facing caribou, including exploration and development, climate change, predators, wildfires, and disease, among others. "Without proper oversight, the consequences of these threats to the herds – and the people who rely on them – could be dire," Evans warned.

The Board has distributed the proposed new agreement to the governments of Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Canada. It expects the modernized agreement will be embraced in the same spirit of cooperation and reconciliation in which it is being offered, and which has made the BQCMB a model of co-management since 1982.



#### What is included in the Proposed New Agreement?

The BQCMB's 10 year management agreements have not changed markedly in 40 years and updates are required. So is increased funding, as the amount of operating funding in the current Agreement has not kept up with inflation or the operational demands on the Board.

Building a true Nation to Nation relationship within the BQCMB, and reconciliation, will be keystones of the new Agreement.

Major changes being proposed include:

- An increase to the budget from \$125,000 per year to \$300,000 per year. Indigenous governments would contribute \$10,000 each, and contractors would become paid staff members.
- A request for public governments to increase their annual contribution from \$25K to \$50K. They would still be responsible for funding attendance by community members at BQCMB meetings.
- Modernization of the Management Agreement In addition to the five government signatories, Indigenous governments will become signatories and full partners. These include the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, Athabasca Denesųliné, Ghotelnene K'odtineh Dene, Inuit of Kivalliq Region, and Akaitcho Dene First Nations.§

#### It Takes a Village

The future of the BQCMB may be in jeopardy but for the dedicated work of a number of individuals over the past several years.

Incoming Executive Director **Tina Giroux-Robillard** has been busy working toward a stronger, better-financed board since fall 2020, including consulting with Indigenous and public governments since spring of 2021. The BQCMB would be in a far weaker position now without her excellent work. There have been and continue to be many challenges for the BQCMB, but Tina has been creative and adaptable, much to her credit. The Board is very thankful to have her as incoming Executive Director.

The Board has also been very fortunate for the opportunity to have a long transition period between Executive Directors. This is a credit to outgoing ED **Ross Thompson**, who gave ample notice of his intentions to retire and made himself available to help Tina with the transition.

Vice-Chair **Jan Adamczewski** initiated the crucial planning work in spring 2020 to develop a cost-shared funding proposal that made hiring Tina possible. Without this push, the Board would have been unable to fund her position.

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada funded this work for the 2020/21 fiscal year. CIRNAC's early provision of support enabled the Board to hire Tina in fall 2020. Without WWF-Canada's quick confirmation of support for the following year, we would have been unable to do any work on this project for the first half of 2021-22. GNWT's initial confirmation of funding and their accommodation regarding delaying their support until 2021-22 made ongoing work possible. The governments of Manitoba and Nunavut have also committed to funding this work in 2021-22 and 2022-23, respectively.

The BQCMB truly appreciates the recognition from all parties that the Board is an integral and essential part of barren ground caribou conservation in northern Canada.

## **BQCMB** Profile

The BQCMB is facing the end of an era this spring, with the retirement of long-time Executive Director Ross Thompson.

Thompson, who attended his first BQCMB meeting in 1983, just one year after its formation, has served the Board in virtually every available role over the years.

From his first meeting as an observer, to being appointed the member for the government of Manitoba, to Vice-Chair, to Chair from 1990-1993, to his current role which he has filled for the past 18 years, he has been a staunch supporter and cheerleader for the Board.

He describes that first meeting as being "pretty stiff and formal." Bringing government biologists and Indigenous community leaders together to manage the two herds was unprecedented. Thompson describes those early days as everyone "trying to stake out their territory. But those who were simply posturing soon lost interest in being part of a 'working board' and I found that things started to get done."

Back then, meetings were often held in caribou-using communities. During its first year, the Board met in Lutsel K'e, NT (then called Snowdrift), followed by a meeting in Yellowknife, NT, then Black Lake SK.

Thompson recalls meeting in Arviat in the 1980s, when members stayed in tent camps out on the land and passed their non-meeting time playing cribbage. "It was a time where we would sit around at night, and have sandwiches and tea, and it was a real bonding, team-building environment," he says. "The co-chair, Paul Kaludjak and I would take on all comers in double cribbage. I think Paul still has the cribbage board!"

Born and raised in Kapuskasing, ON, Thompson moved to Manitoba to begin his career as a park biologist with Manitoba Environment in Whiteshell Provincial Park in 1971. Following stints as regional biologist for the Southeast and Interlake regions, he was promoted to Chief of Wildlife Management in the late 1980s.



## "We appreciate each other and treat each other with friendship and respect."

#### **Ross Thompson**

In 1991-1993, Thompson was tapped to take a lead role in the new department of Rural Development and in managing a Memorandum of Understanding between Manitoba and Nunavut. "A lot of the community economic development was based around caribou, so I had some good insight." He also was able to reconnect with many members of the BQCMB. "A lot of the movers and shakers that were on the BQCMB were also involved in community development up in Nunavut."

It's no surprise, then, that when he retired from the Manitoba government in 2003, after a 10-year absence from the BQCMB, his name came up as a potential replacement for retiring Secretary-Treasurer Gunther Abrahamson. "I was really honored and surprised," he says, but adds overseeing the finances of the Board was also intimidating. "As chair, I could just say 'Gunther, can you look after that?' And of course, he did. So now I'm the staff member, and instead of leading the board I'm a servant of the board."

His intimidation soon dissolved as he received a warm welcome and soon formed a very comfortable working relationship with members.

It wasn't until a meeting in Thompson a few years later that his title changed from Secretary-Treasurer to Executive Director. He recalls he and Leslie Wakelyn, the BQCMB's biologist, were instructed to go for a walk. "There we were, Leslie and I, standing outside the boardroom wondering what's this all about? Are they going to fire us?"

"I cooled my heels for a while, and they called us back in. I remember everybody was looking at me and I said, well, am I out? And they said, 'okay now Ross, we've had a discussion and we've decided to call you Executive Director.

"Needless to say, I was expecting something different! So, I replied 'Wonderful. That means more pay.' But no, the job still came with my 1982 wage which has persevered right up until now." (He points out that underpaid has never meant underappreciated.)

Working for little pay has not been the only challenge. Thompson describes losing sleep over the need to continually do more with less. Already operating on a shoestring budget, Thompson has had to work within the confines of a Management Agreement that hasn't always been honoured. "You know, a deal's a deal" he says about the soon to expire 10-year agreement. "I found it hugely frustrating that some jurisdictions weren't able to, or willing to honor a 10-year agreement. So that's been my biggest challenge in the budget."

Out of necessity, the Board has always taken opportunities to apply for funding through other organizations – not for operating expenses, but for projects that directly benefit the herds and the

# **Outgoing Executive Director Ross Thompson**

## "That's my hope for the board—that governments and other parties will continue to recognize how important it is and the crucial work it has to do."

#### **Ross Thompson**

communities that rely on them. "This was a concrete action we could take to offset the other budget challenges," he explains.

When he thinks about the future of the BQCMB, Thompson hopes it is recognized and appreciated for the noble work it is doing, and "appreciated for the people that are slugging it out, under trying conditions, environmentally and economically, and sometimes socially. That's my hope for the board—that governments and the other parties will continue to recognize how important it is and the crucial work it has to do."

"And having said that, I think the Board needs to emphasize how efficient it is, in terms of doing terrific work all correlating into pure dollars for caribou from other sources rather than each individual jurisdiction having to do some semblance of work for caribou on its own, which just wouldn't happen."

Anyone who knows Thompson knows he brings a fun and lighthearted presence to every BQCMB meeting. So it's no surprise that, during this interview (which took place right before Christmas) he expressed his wishes for the Board as peace, hope and joy. "And I don't say joy lightly because people take each other too seriously at times. I hope the board members and the staff can look for the joyful, important things that the board is doing. And having a bit of fun every now and then is important to keep the board as a team and cohesive."

The beginning of a new term is, he says, the right time to step back. "But also, when you get to be an elder, it's time to recognize the importance of more youthful opinions, skills and talent. The sign of a good manager, and a good leader, is to be able to delegate," he explains. "And so I figured it would be nice to just leave with good friendships, good relationships, and hopefully accomplishments."

Retirement will come a bit easier knowing his shoes will be filled by incoming Executive Director Tina Giroux-Robillard. "This Board has to be a safeguard for the caribou, and I'm very comfortable that we have the staff and the dedication and the talent there."

Thompson's plans for retirement do not include slowing down. More time with family is a priority, and he's still involved with volunteer activities at home in Stonewall, MB and beyond in the region. He and his wife Lynne are avid travellers—they recently returned from Portugal and enjoy cruise vacations.

Once summer arrives, they will continue creating new friendships at their campsite north of Gimli, MB. He also has a tropical fish hobby that includes three fish tanks (soon to be four, he hopes. Although Lynne's comment is 'sure, go ahead, get a fourth fish tank, just make sure it's out in the yard beside your bed!")

Turning emotional, Thompson notes he will miss the people. "When I think of the community people, I get a tear in my eye," he says, no doubt recalling his first meeting, back in 1983, filled with distrust and formality. Now, he says, "we appreciate each other and treat each other with friendship and respect. Without a doubt that is what I'll miss the most."

"And I just wish the Board goodwill and encourage them to keep working on relationships with each other, and keep putting forth their best efforts for the caribou. Because this work IS worth our best effort."§

#### Quotes from BQCMB Vice-Chair Ross Thompson, 1984

"I would be the first to emphasize that wildlife managers can learn a lot from users. I think that the Board members together can sit down and roll up their sleeves and come up with projects that can really accomplish something."

"I think the Board is moving in the right direction in holding as many meetings as they can in the communities. This not only allows the users to come and see the types of issues being discussed and the kinds of responses from community members and government people, it gives them insight into how things are not quite as simple or cut and dried as they may seem on the surface. They get to see the wider considerations that the Board must handle."

"For there to be better communication between all the people concerned with the herds, there must be mututal understanding. About a year ago I gave some wild rice to Peter Alareak and I said 'here is something very important to the life of the Ojibway down in northwestern Ontario.' He had never seen it before...he really didn't know what it was. Sometimes something that seems insignificant to one person can be a vital part of the lives of others."



## **People and Caribou**



#### Welcome

The Board officially welcomed **Matthew Tokaruk** to his first BQCMB meeting as Government of Saskatchewan member in November 2021. Matthew is based out of Prince Albert, SK where he is an Area Wildlife Ecologist.

**Katherine Mehl**, Director, Habitat for Saskatchewan Environment will continue on as the alternate member.

#### **Honourary Board Member**

The BQCMB honoured former Government of Manitoba member and BQCMB Vice-Chair **Daryll Hedman** during its last meeting. The Board carried a motion to nominate Hedman as a BQCMB Honourary Board Member. Hedman is the second Honourary Board Member in BQCMB history. The first is former Secretary-Treasurer Gunther Abrahamson.

#### **Passages**

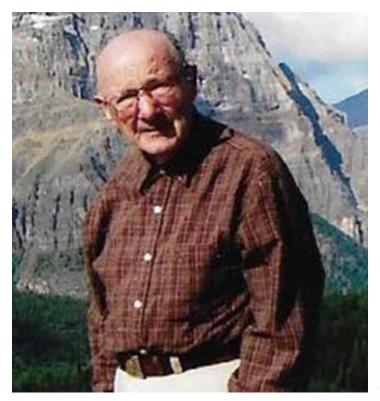
Black Lake Denesuliné First Nation Chief **Archie Robillard** passed away on August 6 at the age of 60.

Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Chief **Bobby Cameron** said Robillard will be sorely missed and fondly remembered by many. "He was a respected leader and a wellknown hunter and fisherman, who would always make a point of delivering his harvest to the elders in his community, making sure they were always provided for."

The BQCMB was also saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. **George Scotter** on July 14, 2021. Dr. Scotter was a founding member of the BQCMB in 1982, along with Jerome Denechezhe, Gunther Abrahamson and 12 others (see 'From the Archives' on facing page).

As a Canadian wildlife biologist based in Edmonton, Dr. Scotter studied caribou, reindeer, muskox and polar bears in the Arctic until his retirement. §





Pictured top left, L to R: Tina Giroux-Robillard, Incoming BQCMB Executive Director; Matthew Tokaruk, Government of Saskatchewan member; and James Laban, Black Lake Denesuliné First Nation member. Photo taken at the Saskatchewan 'node' of the BQCMB fall 2021 virtual meeting.

Top right, L to R: : Earl Evans, Chair; Leslie Wakelyn, Biologist; Jennifer Jonasson, Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation Alternate member; and Jan Adamczewski, Government of Northwest Territories member. Photo taken at the NWT 'node' of the BQCMB fall 2021 virtual meeting.

Bottom right: Dr. George Scotter. Photo: Kelowna Capital News



# From the Archives - The Caribou Situation (1983)

Although accurate figures of historical caribou populations are hard to arrive at, scientists generally accept that at the turn of the century the western mainland population of barren-ground caribou (including the Beverly, Kaminuriak and Bathurst herds) numbered somewhere between 2.5-3-million animals. (This figure is disputed by some native people.)

No actual attempt to count the herds was undertaken until 1948-49 when concern began to be expressed about apparently large declines in caribou numbers. The first large-scale survey, which made use of aerial techniques, put the population at about 670,000. When a similar survey was carried out in 1955 the figure was put at about 270,000. Since then the population figures for the Beverly and Kaminuriak herds have fluctuated widely from an estimated high of 300,000 in 1966 to an estimated low of 140,000 in 1981 (all estimates plus or minus 20 percent).

## "The Beverly and Kaminuriak herds have fluctuated widely from an estimated high of 300,000 in 1966 to an estimated low of 140,000 in 1981."

The possibility that this decline might continue until one or both of the herds faced extinction brought about the formation of a Caribou Management Group in 1979, consisting of representatives of those governments who had some jurisdiction in the matter. They included the Governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

The group came to the conclusion that no attempt to institute effective caribou management measures would be successful unless there was the full involvement of the traditional users. As a result, a series of meetings was held between government representatives and native leaders and organizations to develop a joint approach to caribou management. At first, the native representatives were sceptical of government intentions, regarded the formation of any advisory body as being inadequate, and pressed for autonomous native control of what they regard as a native resource.

However, with good will apparent on all sides, a tentative agreement was reached in December 1981 for the formation of a joint management board that would consist of five government representatives (one from each of the government jurisdictions involved) and eight user representatives. §

(This article has been lightly edited from original version.)



#### Joint Management Agreement

To legalize this arrangement and empower the government jurisdictions to provide the required funding, a Joint Management Agreement was drawn up and signed by government ministers or their representatives at a special ceremony in Winnipeg on June 3, 1982.

The first official meeting of the new board took place on August 18 and 19, 1982 in Saskatoon. Its founding membership was as follows:

- Jim Schaefer, Fort Smith, the Métis Association of the NWT
- Felix Lockhart, Snowdrift, the Dene Nation of the NWT
- Peter Kritaqliluk, Eskimo Point, Keewatin Wildlife Federation
- Hugh Ungangai of Baker Lake, the Keewatin Wildlife Federation
- Jerome Denechezhe, Lac Brochet, the Northern Manitoba Chiefs
- Peter Yassie, Tadoule Lake, the Northern Manitoba Chiefs
- Phillip Stenne, Camsell Portage, northern Saskatchewan
- Matthew Yooya, Stony Rapids, northern Saskatchewan
- Rich Goulden, Winnipeg, Government of Manitoba
- Bill Richards, Prince Albert, Government of Saskatchewan
- Hugh Monaghan, Yellowknife, Government of the Northwest Territories
- Dr. George Scotter, Edmonton, Environment Canada
- Gunther Abrahamson, Ottawa, the Northern Affairs Program
- Lome Anderson, Ottawa, the Indian and Inuit Affairs Program
- Hiram Beaubier, the NWT Region of the Northern Affairs Program

Source: BQCMB 1982-83 Annual Report

Pictured: Jerome Denechezhe (Northern Manitoba Chiefs) and MP Raymond Chenier (Indian and Northern Affairs) sign the inaugural Caribou Management Agreement on June 3, 1982.

# Around the Board Table

### From the November 2021 BQCMB Meeting:

"This new agreement is an opportunity to build on what the Board has done for 40 years while making Indigenous governments equal, contributing partners in its management."

Tina Giroux-Robillard, incoming Executive Director

"In order to manage the herds and make decisions on surveys, we need the information the collars give us."

Chair Earl Evans, Northwest Territory Métis Nation

"As a member of the Dene community, my goal is to see the herd come back up."

#### James (Jimmy) Laban, Black Lake Denesuliné First Nation

"In our tradition, we're not to chase caribou with a log or a stick. Everybody knows that. You have to have respect for these animals, otherwise they won't come around."

#### Napoleon Denechezhe, Northlands Dene First Nation, Lac Brochet

"Last winter people had to go a long way up north to go hunting, nobody has any meat. The price of food and gas is way up. No one is trapping now, and many aren't working. It's hard right now."

#### Joe Marten, Fond du Lac Denesuliné First Nation

"Sometimes local HTOs buy ammunition and gas for people that are hunting for single parents, or widows, or elders that can't go hunting, to help the people in need."

Simon Enuapik, Vice-Chair, Kivalliq Wildlife Board

### Tuktu, the caribou and its uses

The days are long gone when Inuit depended solely on wild animals to survive. Each of the different species that Inuit hunted in the Arctic was useful, not only for its food value, but because it provided materials for making tools, hunting weapons, utensils, clothing, shelter, as well as toys and games for the children. Tuktu, the caribou, was one of the most useful animals to the Inuit, as it is today. Besides the meat, various other parts of the tuktu were used as food in the following ways:

- **Intestines**: boiled along with the meat.
- **Stomach:** usually eaten raw and tastes best when eaten with seal fat.
- Heart: boiled or put away for later use.
- **Lungs:** sometimes eaten, but usually thrown away.
- Liver: usually eaten either raw or boiled with seal fat, providing the human body with lots of iron.
- **Blood:** after the tuktu has been gutted, the remaining blood was put into a sack and put away, and later used to add more flavour to stews.
- **Head:** for a feast the heads of several tuktuit were boiled. Inuit elders in particular were invited to such a feast.
- **Hooves:** cooked until soft and tender, a very special treat.
- Jaws: cooked and the meat around the jaw eaten.
- **Bones:** crushed with stones into bonemeal and saved in case there came a time when there was no meat left. It was added to stews and was very tasty.

Source: Caribou News in Brief, June 1984

### **Publisher's Box**

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