

CARIBOU NEWS

in Brief

Keeping people in touch with the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB), and with issues affecting caribou.



Volume 26 No. 1 * March 2023

BQCMB Meeting #94
May 16-18, 2023
Yellowknife, NT

No Time to Gamble with Future of Caribou

People from across Canada's North gathered at five regional public hearings held by the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) last fall to discuss the 2021 Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan (NLUP). The BQCMB participated in two of these hearings and delivered a strong message: this is no time to gamble with the future of caribou.

BQCMB Chair **Earl Evans** made a presentation in Rankin Inlet, NU on the need for the land use plan to include full protection for the most important caribou habitats in Nunavut, both for caribou and for the people who rely on caribou.

"Our concern is that mining companies, governments and others want the proposed level of protection—known as "Limited Use"—reduced to allow mining and other development activities in caribou calving and post-calving areas," says Evans.

The 2021 draft NLUP proposes year-round prohibition of certain land use activities on specific areas important to caribou (calving areas, post-calving areas, key access corridors and areas near fresh-water crossings), as well as seasonal restrictions for most land use activities during calving and post-calving periods. The BQCMB supports this, because even during times of year when the herds aren't using these areas, their key calving and post-calving habitats need to remain

undisturbed. Otherwise, cows and calves may be forced to look for new habitat elsewhere when they are most vulnerable, which creates stress on the animals and can contribute to decline of the herds.

The BQCMB is not against development in Nunavut. "We understand the need for economic development," says Evans. "But action is needed to protect the most important caribou habitats in Nunavut."

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BQCMB Executive Director Tina Giroux-Robillard made a similar presentation at the Thompson, MB hearing. She emphasized that while caribou are crucial for Inuit of Nunavut, caribou are very important to people in other regions as well. "Barren-ground caribou are shared by many regions, communities and cultures," she explained. "Inuit, Dene, Métis and Cree people all rely on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds for their physical, cultural and spiritual survival."

Continued on page 8

Photo credit: Lynn Rollin

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Around the Range

Qamanirjuaq Survey Results

People across the caribou range are eagerly awaiting the results of the Qamanirjuaq survey conducted in June, 2022 (see story “First Qamanirjuaq Survey in Five Years a Success” in the August 2022 edition of Caribou News in Brief). With many hours of visual survey results and approximately 4,000 aerial survey photos taken for counting caribou, compiling the data takes time. The Government of Nunavut (GN) hopes to complete its report and release the results in fall 2023.

A population survey of the Beverly herd is being planned for June, 2023.

Guardians of the Land

Land use was a key agenda item at the BQCMB’s November 2022 meeting in Prince Albert, SK and the need for monitoring land through guardian programs was highlighted. Community Land Technicians **Sabrina Fern**, **Jean Tsannie**, **Margaret Powder**, and **Derek Cook**, with Ya’thi Néné Lands and Resources, made a presentation to the BQCMB about their work.

Stephanie Behrens, Wildlife Biologist with the Tlicho Government, also made a presentation to the board about the Ekwo Nàxoèhdee K’e (Boots on the Ground) program conducted by the government with community groups on the Bathurst caribou range.

Guardians have important roles to play including conducting research on caribou, monitoring the land and waters, monitoring industry, utilizing land use plans, sharing Traditional Knowledge, and acting as the “eyes and ears” on the ground.

Caribou in Northern Saskatchewan

There was happiness and gratitude in northern Saskatchewan in early December when caribou were spotted in the area for the first time in a number of years. Ian Donard, from Black Lake Denesūliné First Nation, posted a picture of caribou on his Facebook page (see photo on p. 5) and commented “been a while since I seen caribou on Selwyn Lake”. A scouting trip from Wollaston Lake also saw a large number of caribou only a few hours north of the community!

Nunavut Caribou Summit

Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) has been holding regional meetings to discuss caribou issues, and is planning to hold a territory-wide caribou summit in 2023. The main purpose of the summit will be to allow representatives from all three regions to share their ideas about caribou and what should be done to take care of caribou herds across Nunavut.

Wolf Harvesting

Jan Adamczewski, BQCMB member representing the Government of NWT, reported to the Board at its fall 2022 meeting that a March 2022 survey of the Beverly herd showed a good ratio of calves to cows, with 51 calves:100 cows. This is similar to the good results from surveys in March 2020 and 2021.

When asked if this might be a result of the wolf cull in the Northwest Territories over the past three years, Adamczewski noted a total of 69 wolves were harvested in the incentive area in 2021-22.



Photo courtesy of Government of Northwest Territories

Caribou Guardians Coalition to Host Summit

With recent population estimates showing only 6,200 Bathurst caribou remaining, the need to help the herd recover is immense. The Caribou Guardians Coalition, formed in 2020, is working to establish a secretariat and plans to host a summit to organize the many guardian programs across the range to share information about the herd.

“There’s a lot of different communities, and a guardianship program from every jurisdiction where they gather information relevant to their area that’s having detrimental effects on the herd,” said Coalition representative Earl Evans, who is also the chair of the BQCMB.

“In some areas, forest fires will be a big issue, in others there’s longer summers, more bugs, and permafrost thawing.”

Evans said along with protecting the Bathurst caribou, the coalition hopes to send out the message to local people: “You have to conserve this herd and to stop hunting this herd—we can find other food sources.” •

Planning for the Future of the BQCMB



Management Agreement Update

The BQCMB continues to work on a new 10-year agreement with the governments of NWT, NU, MB, SK and Canada. We have received positive indications that some of the parties will sign the revised agreement, which includes an increase from \$25K to \$50K per year for the board's core work. Indigenous governments, who will become signatories for the first time in the new agreement, have accepted the terms and will contribute \$10K each.

The BQCMB hopes to hold a signing ceremony with all parties at its meeting in Yellowknife, NWT May 16-18, 2023.

Management Plan Update

BQCMB staff and several board members have formed a working group tasked with outlining the framework and overseeing revisions to the next BQCMB Management Plan. This plan will be the board's guiding document for the next 10 years.

Community consultation on the management plan began in 2022 with caribou range communities in northern Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba.

It continued in early 2023, with BQCMB Executive Director Tina Giroux-Robillard and Biologist Leslie Wakelyn travelling to Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation, NWT and Baker Lake, NU to gather Indigenous Knowledge to incorporate into the plan. (A meeting in Whale Cove, NU was rescheduled due to weather-related mechanical issues—it was -60 with windchill.)

In mid-late February, Wakelyn presented to the annual general meeting of the Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB). She also held meetings with the Kangliqliniq (Rankin Inlet), Arviat and Issatik (Whale Cove) Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) to present information, ask for input for management plan revisions, and discuss the BQCMB's Kivalliq Harvest Reporting Project.

The BQCMB appreciates the financial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (ECCC-ASFAR) and the Nunavut General Monitoring Plan (NGMP) for these projects •

Pictured at left, top to bottom: welcome sign in Lutsel K'e, NWT; Tina Giroux-Robillard at the Lutsel K'e band office; meeting with the wildlife committee and band council in Lutsel K'e

Pictured at right, top to bottom: Leslie Wakelyn (l) and Tina Giroux-Robillard; Sunset over Baker Lake, NU; meeting with HTO board members in Baker Lake

Photos credits: Leslie Wakelyn



People and Caribou

In Memoriam: Albert Thorassie

The BQCMB was saddened to hear of the passing of **Albert Thorassie** (pictured below) on December 11, 2022 at the age of 76.

He will be greatly missed by his community of Tadoule Lake, MB, Sayisi Dene First Nation, and his many family members and friends, including those across the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou ranges.

Albert was a beloved father, grandfather, great grandfather, brother, and uncle. He was a voice and advocate for the Sayisi Dene people and a dedicated member of his community.

Throughout his lifetime he worked in various capacities for Sayisi Dene First Nation. He was the Elder advisor for the North of 60 Land Claims and for over three decades was a board member, and then chair, of the BQCMB.



Photo credit: Lynne Berezka

Tim Trottier Honoured

BQCMB members at the November 2022 BQCMB meeting in Prince Albert, SK took the opportunity to present former board member **Tim Trottier** (above right, with Chair Earl Evans) one of the board's longest-serving members, with an honorary membership.

Tim served 25 years as an official board member for the Government of Saskatchewan, 37 years as a strong contributor to the board, and a number of years as vice-chair on the executive committee.

He was also a champion for caribou-harvesting communities. Former BQCMB Secretary-Treasurer Gunther Abrahamson called Tim "the soul of the board" on the government side.

Chair Earl Evans Recognized

The BQCMB celebrated Chair Earl Evans during its last meeting with a lunch of caribou stew. Earl has served as chair of the board for 10 years and has made many personal sacrifices to represent the people and caribou on the range.



Photo credit: Lynne Berezka

BQCMB members and staff paid tribute to Earl during the lunch:

- "Earl always speaks from the heart and he's not afraid to talk about the hard things."
- "Earl has built important relationships with the Inuit and the Dene. I hope Earl continues for another 10 years."
- "Earl is respected because he respects everyone else and treats everybody the same."
- "At public hearings Earl gives the information the Board needs to provide, but also offers his own perspective—from the heart—and it is invaluable. He's the rock star!"

Thank you, Earl, for your dedication to the BQCMB!



Photo courtesy of Tina Giroux-Robillard

BQCMB ED attends COP15

BQCMB Executive Director Tina Giroux-Robillard (above, seated far right) recently attended COP15, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, in Montreal, QC. Giroux-Robillard was not attending on behalf of the BQCMB, however she did have an opportunity to make a presentation and show the Board's latest video about the BQCMB at a COP15 public event while in Montreal. •

Elders Caution Against Drugs and Alcohol

Drug and alcohol use while out on the land is a serious problem that comes up time and again at BQCMB meetings. Members keep raising the issue because they see it happening in their communities, and are concerned for the well-being of the hunters and the people around them.

Drug and alcohol use also contributes to wastage of caribou meat and improper hunting practices. Wastage is a serious problem at any time, but with both herds in decline, it is even an even greater threat.

During the BQCMB meeting in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan in November 2022, we asked several Elders to talk about the problems drugs and alcohol create out on the land, for people and for the caribou.

BQCMB Chair Earl Evans Northwest Territories Métis Nation Fort Smith, NT

Drugs and alcohol are a problem when hunting caribou because of the dangers they bring with them. A person out there under the influence of drugs and alcohol is not thinking properly, is not acting properly, and there's a huge safety aspect that is ignored when you're in that state. It's dangerous not only for the hunter but for the people around them. It also sets a bad precedent; younger people see them doing it, think it's ok, and it kind of snowballs from there. I think the Elders bringing it to the attention of the younger people is a good way to convey the message. We've had people injured and we've had a lot of animals wasted and left because of impaired judgement while under the influence. It's not a good situation, it's not helpful for wildlife or for people who like to go out and enjoy the wilderness as it is.

James Laban Black Lake Denesųliné First Nation Black Lake, SK

The drugs and alcohol issue has been coming up for three or four years now. It's creating a problem everywhere...not only in Saskatchewan, but across the whole caribou range. As First Nation people we need to talk about this very seriously. Some people are very lucky that they're still alive. People shouldn't do that. They can go hunting where the rivers are sometimes not

that good, but they are lucky. It's alarming and it is happening in every community. We need to work on it otherwise it's going to get out of hand. We need to put something in place for that...I don't want anybody to get hurt.

Dennis Larocque Camsell Portage, SK

Drugs and alcohol and hunting are a very, very bad combination. There are a lot of accidents when you're disoriented. If you want to hunt, do it clean. Do not take drugs or booze out on the land. You don't need that...you'll have more fun if you do it normally. If you want to do anything like that, do it on your own time, when you're at home, but not when you're out on the land. There is very scary stuff...you might go through the ice, at night you might get lost and freeze, or separated from your friends. So please, don't drink or do drugs.

Louis Josie Hatchet Lake Denesųliné First Nation Hatchet Lake, SK

Caribou is a sacred animal; we must treat it with respect. We must teach about the laws of hunting caribou and the land that provides. We must teach the young people that hunting while impaired, or under the influence of drugs is unacceptable. We want to avoid mishaps because anything can happen under the influence that alters thinking. We must respect the caribou, they sustain us, this is for our future. It is our job as Elders to give advice to people. We want young people and hunters to hunt caribou respectfully, otherwise it will jeopardize future hunting. Our people must respect each other and take care of each other. We must teach our young people to hunt, respect the land because if they do not know the land, it may cause grief. Therefore, it is very important to teach about the land and caribou.

These videos can be viewed on the BQCMB's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/BQCMB>. •



Youth and Caribou

BQCMB Youth and Elder Engagement Project

The importance of youth voices speaking for the caribou was highlighted at the BQCMB meeting in Prince Albert, SK from November 22-24, 2022.

The meeting was the 93rd board meeting in the BQCMB's 40-year history and drew guests and observers from across the range, including many Denesųliné community members and Elders from northern Saskatchewan. Three youth members were also selected by their communities to attend.

The youth active participants in the meeting, **Dion Tsannie** (Hatchet Lake Denesųliné First Nation) and **Denver Olson** (Fond du Lac Denesųliné First Nation) performed a traditional Dene drum song to open and close the meeting, while **Romeo Fern** (Black Lake Denesųliné First Nation), gave a presentation titled "Important Values of the Caribou".

The youth all expressed the need to learn from their Elders to ensure caribou would be available for future generations. "Our Elders tell us the caribou have been here for us, and now we need to be there for the caribou," explained Romeo.

Denver agreed. "What we need as youth is to go out on the land and learn how to hunt and do things right from wrong and do things for our community. If we don't, nobody's going to be there to teach us. The last of the people who know how to do these things are the Elders and once they're gone, we're going to be lost, and I don't want that. We need the caribou, and if we respect the caribou, the caribou will respect us—we just have to learn how to take care of it."

Funding for travel and meeting participation by the youth was provided to the BQCMB by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) through the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) and the Species at Risk Act (SARA) Consultation, Cooperation, and Accommodation Project. •



Top: Romeo Fern presenting "Important Values of the Caribou"

Bottom: Denver Olson, Dion Tsannie, Modeste Tessessage, and David Bigeye

Photo credits: Lynne Bereza



Zach Hunter, a 17-year-old Grade 12 student at Stonewall Collegiate in Stonewall, Manitoba, recently completed a project in French about barren-ground caribou, using information found on the BQCMB website at arctic-caribou.com. Well done, Zach!

Share YOUR caribou project!
Email it to info@arctic-caribou.com
and it might be in the next issue of
Caribou News in Brief!

BQCMB Communications

The Power of Video

There is nothing quite like the power of video to share the passion people feel toward caribou. The BQCMB has a YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@BQCMB> where we have recently added several new videos.

Nunavut Land Use Plan (NLUP) – 11 minutes

In September 2022, the BQCMB travelled to Rankin Inlet, NU and Thompson, MB to participate in the Nunavut Planning Commission's (NPC) final public hearings for the NLUP. We were struck by the passionate arguments from participants ranging from community representatives, other individuals, and organizations who emphasized the need for full protection of caribou and key caribou habitat in the plan. We created a video summarizing some of these presentations, which is intended to serve two purposes:

- form part of the BQCMB's submission to the NPC on the 2021 draft NLUP, and
- inform the organizations who will approve the final NLUP and the public about requests from people across the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou ranges that development will not have a higher value than caribou in the plan.

We Are the Caribou – 7 minutes

In September 2022, caribou people from the Kivalliq region of Nunavut and northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba made strong statements about the importance of caribou for their cultural and spiritual identities at the NPC public hearings in Rankin Inlet, NU and Thompson, MB. These Inuit and Dene people spoke passionately about the need to ensure future generations can continue to have a lifestyle that includes caribou.

This video shares some of their words.

Who is the BQCMB? – 5 minutes

The BQCMB re-released its "Who is the BQCMB?" video recently. This 5-minute video was originally created in 2019 and has been updated to reflect the current activities of the board. •



Pictured top to bottom: Bernadette Dean, Rankin Inlet, NU

L to R: Katie Rasmussen, Athabasca Denesųliné Néné Land Corporation; Chief Coreen Sayazie, Black Lake Denesųliné First Nation; Chief Kevin Mercredi, Fond du Lac Denesųliné First Nation; and Ian Donard, Black Lake Denesųliné First Nation

BQCMB Executive Director Tina Giroux-Robillard

Heard around the BQCMB Board Table

“The ‘let it burn’ policy burned animals, too. Right now, no one has meat in Fond du Lac. Last year three of my boys went north of Snowdrift—took them 14 hours, 3 skidoos, cost almost \$3,000. If you spend that much money, you’re not going to waste any meat.”

Joe Marten, Fond du Lac Denesųliné First Nation, Fond du Lac, SK

“We used to do everything the way we were taught. Something I really want to do is educate the kids in the school about the importance of caribou—it’s our livelihood. We need protocols, guidelines for the people of the future to work with.”

Napoleon Denechezhe, Northlands Denesuline First Nation, Lac Brochet, MB

“Every community is different, and the more people you can get information from the better information you’ll have on the whole herd.”

Earl Evans, Northwest Territories Métis Nation, Fort Smith, NT

“Governments seem to be focused on the amount (of core funding the BQCMB receives annually) ‘doubling’ when in fact the board is just playing catch-up from being underfunded. What does \$25K represent in government? Very little. What does it represent to caribou people? A great deal.”

Leslie Wakelyn, BQCMB Wildlife Biologist, Yellowknife, NT

“Caribou are the litmus test on the health of the environment. We have to stand together and united and we will have a stronger voice, no matter which treaty we belong to.”

Ernie Bussidor, Sayisi Dene First Nation, Tadoule Lake, MB



Clockwise from top left: Katherine Mehl and Matthew Tokaruk, Government of Saskatchewan;

Dennis Larocque, Ernie Bussidor, Jimmy Laban, and Tina Giroux-Robillard Derek Cook, Fond du Lac Denesųliné First Nation, and Leslie Wakelyn

Joannie Kennah (l) and Vicki Trim, Government of Manitoba

Photo credits: Lynne Bereza

“No Time to Gamble” continued from page 1

The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds have their calves each summer in Nunavut, before making their way back to their winter range, primarily in the Northwest Territories, northern Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba. During the winter months, the presence of caribou plays a huge role in food security for the Indigenous peoples of these regions.

That is why the BQCMB is so focused on the Nunavut Land Use Plan including full protection of the land and water in crucial areas for caribou. “Ensuring that these important habitats are free from exploration and development is key to a healthy calving cycle, which is needed to bring the numbers up and keep the herds strong,” stressed Giroux-Robillard.

“It is a critical time for barren-ground caribou,” Evans added. “We are all—individuals, communities, and governments—responsible for taking care of the herds, as well as the lands and waters they need to thrive. Now is not the time to gamble with their future.” •

Publisher’s Box

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Opinions expressed are those of the editor and contributors. Back issues available at www.arctic-caribou.com. Comments and suggestions are welcome, and may be sent to:

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