

# CARIBOU NEWS

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



Beverly and Qamanirjuaq  
Caribou Management Board

## in Brief

Volume 26 No. 2 \* July 2023

**BQCMB Meeting #95**

**November 21-23, 2023**

**Churchill, MB**

## Climate Change a Hot Topic

Board members, guests, and observers from Nunavut, northern Manitoba, northern Saskatchewan, and Northwest Territories made their way to Yellowknife, NWT for the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB)'s spring meeting May 16-18, 2023. It was the Board's first meeting in NWT since spring 2013.

Climate change was a key issue. The meeting took place as Hay River and Kát'odeeche First Nation, NWT residents were being evacuated from their homes due to nearby active forest fires and a very early start to the NWT wild-fire season, which was attributed to climate change. Many BQCMB members and observers expressed growing concern about the potential effects of climate change on the caribou herds and their habitat.

**Brad Woodworth**, an Ecologist from Government of Northwest Territories Environment and Climate Change (GNWT-ECC) shared a presentation explaining that climate change is likely to mean many changes for migratory caribou—both positive and negative. Earlier green-up could lead to caribou arriving at calving grounds too late to receive enough high quality nutrition to support newborn calves and nursing mothers. On the other hand, warming temperatures could also increase foraging opportunities for caribou in some instances. He

also described how changing climate conditions might lead to:

- increased insect harassment,
- changing snow and ice conditions that may affect the migration routes
- reduced access to food in winter due to more frequent extreme weather, and
- altered diets due to changes in tundra vegetation.

Woodworth suggested any decisions regarding the northern landscape should be climate-informed going forward. For migratory caribou, he stressed it's especially important to ensure their seasonal ranges are connected so the herds can move between them effectively. "Things like roads and developments can disconnect these habitats, which makes it harder for wildlife to move throughout the landscape and adapt to a changing environment."

Changes are already being observed by people who rely on the caribou and the land. Elder Doris Enzoe, from Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation said, "It's so hot now, the Elders want to be by the lake for gatherings. Even our water is getting warmer. It's nice information, but I want to know what you're going to do with it. We should be teaching this in schools, maybe they'll learn from it." •

### Inside this Issue:

- **New BQCMB Agreement: 2023-2032!**
- **New BQCMB member: Tłitcho Government**
- **Meet the new Board Member**
- **National Indigenous History Month**

Photo: Milehightraveller/iStock Photo

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# Around the Range

## Caribou and Habitat Monitoring Update

**Qamanirjuaq Herd:** The wait continues for the results of the June 2022 population survey of the Qamanirjuaq caribou herd. The Government of Nunavut (GN) is not releasing the preliminary results yet as further analysis is needed, but has indicated a slow, steady decline of the herd continues. The GN is not planning to recommend any harvest restrictions, and final survey results are expected by the BQCMB's November 2023 meeting.

**Beverly Herd:** The first population survey of the Beverly herd since 2018 was completed in June 2023. BQCMB GN member **Mitch Campbell** is the project lead, and Saskatchewan member **Dennis Larocque** participated in the survey, thanks to funding from the Government of SK. A GNWT composition survey of the herd in March 2022 showed a healthy ratio of calves to cows.

There are 26 satellite collars placed on the Beverly herd (13 on females and 13 on males). Additional collars deployed in spring 2023 will be designated by herd (including Beverly) during this year's calving period. The goal is to have up to 50 Beverly caribou tracked by satellite telemetry.

The GNWT's wolf harvest incentive program is addressing severe declines in the Bathurst and Bluenose East caribou herds. Last year a total of 125 wolves were harvested by participants, including Inuit and Tlicho harvesters and outfitters. Since the Beverly herd was also in the incentive area, the wolf harvest should have a positive benefit to that herd as well. The program will continue for one more year.

## Final NLUP Recommended for Approval

The Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) submitted its 2023 Recommended Nunavut Land Use Plan (RNLUP) for approval on June 20, 2023. The enormous plan (129-pages, plus appendices and maps) sets out requirements for how 3.3 million square kilometres of Nunavut's land and marine areas will be used. The RNLUP now goes before

the plan's signatories—the Government of Nunavut, the Government of Canada, and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI). There is no set timeline for approval of the plan.

In late 2022, the BQCMB travelled to Rankin Inlet, NU and Thompson, MB to participate in the final hearings for the plan for the

Kivalliq region. The BQCMB created a video capturing some of the passionate arguments of participants at these two hearings emphasizing the need for full protection of caribou and key caribou habitat in the plan. The video can be viewed at [bit.ly/3XO1m3y](https://bit.ly/3XO1m3y).

In March 2023, the Government of Nunavut flipped its position on resource development on caribou calving grounds. The territorial government now supports a "prohibition of development within calving grounds and key access corridors, with seasonal restrictions on activities in post-calving grounds." BQCMB Chair **Earl Evans** hopes the GN's change in position will help to achieve an approved plan, saying "I think the government sees the value of the caribou to the people, to their culture and livelihood and overall health."

The NPC's submission letter, supporting documents, and reports on all five regional public hearings held from September to November 2022, in English and Inuktitut, are available from NPC's website at <https://www.nunavut.ca/>

## Meliadine Mine Extension Project

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) is reviewing a proposal by Agnico Eagle to add an extension onto the existing Meliadine Gold Mine, which has been in operation since 2017 (commercial production since 2019). The mine is located in the post-calving/late summer range of the Qamanirjuaq herd, 25 kilometres northeast of Rankin Inlet, NU.

**Katie Rasmussen**, biologist with the Athabasca Denesuliné Ne Ne Land Corporation, made a presentation at the BQCMB's May/23 meeting about ADNLC's involvement in the review process. Key proposed changes to the existing mine site include underground mining at three locations previously approved for open-pit mining, new access roads, and a wind farm with up to 11 turbines. The proposal would keep the mine running until 2043 (an 11-year extension) with increased staff and an expanded campsite. An airstrip originally proposed was removed due to opposition.

Comments related to potential impacts on caribou have focused on the mine's cumulative impacts to date, and concerns about how the proposed additions would impact caribou movements, as a result of noise from wind turbines, dust and roads.

Parties reviewing the proposal have asked for more information on wind farm impacts on caribou. Agnico Eagle is doing a new analysis that was to be presented to reviewing parties in late June. Technical comments to NIRB are due July 26. •





# People and Caribou

## Farewell

The BQCMB was saddened to hear that board member and Elder **August Enzo** passed away peacefully at home in Lutsel K'e, NWT on July 1, 2023. August had battled cancer since 2017, and was laid to rest in Lutsel K'e on July 4th.

August served as a BQCMB member from January 1999 through 2008 and again from 2021 until present. He also served as alternate member in 2017-18.



As a residential school survivor, August often spoke of losing his language and traditional knowledge as a youth. His parents passed away when he was young, and upon return from residential school he was raised by relatives, where he re-learned his language and traditional ways of life.

He often spoke about the need for youth to learn how to respectfully hunt caribou. During a BQCMB meeting in Arviat, Nunavut in 2019, August said: *"My grandfather told me one day you'll go up the hill and look out on the land and see an old caribou trail, and you'll have tears in your eyes."*

August will be missed by many, including BQCMB members and staff who benefited from the knowledge he shared with us over more than two decades. His knowledge will live on with the generations that follow him, especially with his extended family and the youth of his community.

## North American Caribou Workshop

BQCMB Executive Director **Tina Giroux-Robillard** and Wildlife Biologist **Leslie Wakelyn** attended the North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference in Anchorage, Alaska in early May. The theme of the conference, attended by about 600 people from across North America and Europe, was Crossing Boundaries.

Giroux-Robillard participated in a panel discussion called *Caribou Crossing: Collaborative Stewardship in a Changing*

*Arctic*, during which several caribou co-management specialists discussed successful ways Indigenous and local organizations, biologists, and managers work together to conserve herds. BQCMB members **Jan Adamczewski** (GNWT), and **Stephanie Behrens** and **Petter Jacobsen** (Tlicho Government) also attended the conference.

The next North American Caribou Workshop will be held in Yellowknife NWT in 2025.

## Deputy Minister Attends BQCMB Meeting

Deputy Minister **Erin Kelly** brought greetings on behalf of GNWT-ECC to the BQCMB's May meeting in Yellowknife. She noted Minister **Shane Thompson** recently signed the BQCMB's 2023-2032 Management Agreement, pledging collaborative efforts toward conservation of the herds. She recognized the BQCMB's contributions over the past 40 years, and emphasized the department looks forward to continuing to work with the Board.

Kelly was joined at the BQCMB meeting by Assistant Deputy Minister **Brett Elkin** and Manager of Wildlife and Fish **Karin Clark**.

## Bussidor Recognized

BQCMB member **Ernie Bussidor** (pictured below with Manitoba Premier **Heather Stefanson** and Chief **David Monias**, CEO of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak) from Sayisi Dene First Nation, Tadoule Lake MB, was presented the Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee Medal of Recognition on June 6, 2023.

Ernie was recognized for his 40 + years of promoting and taking part in cultural activities such as drum singing, handgames, and land-based teachings for Dene youth, and for creating the Seal River Watershed Initiative.

Congratulations, Ernie! •



# New BQCMB Agreement: 2023-2032!

## ***New BQCMB Member: Tłicho Government***

The BQCMB's recently signed 2023-2032 Management Agreement is significant for several reasons. It includes increased funding for BQCMB core operations. It also recognizes the Indigenous governments which have participated on the Board for decades as signatories to the Agreement for the first time in BQCMB history.

And, notably, it adds a new party, Tłicho Government, to the BQCMB—the first in 24 years.

The new Agreement allows each of the four jurisdictions to have representation from up to three members recommended by Indigenous Governments or organizations whose peoples have traditionally harvested from the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds. Previously only Saskatchewan and Nunavut had this opportunity.

After consulting over several months with seven eligible NWT Indigenous Governments to gauge interest, the GNWT supported Tłicho Government as the new signatory.

Tłicho Government—or “TG” as Northwest Territorians refer to it—joins Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and Northwest Territory Métis Nation as the third NWT Indigenous party to the BQCMB.

A new party to the Management Agreement also establishes new board members, and the BQCMB is pleased to welcome TG staff members Stephanie Behrens, who is profiled on P. 5, and alternate member Petter Jacobsen to the Board. •

It's official—the BQCMB has been given a mandate to continue operations through March 31, 2032.

**The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Barren Ground Caribou Management Agreement** is the 5th Management Agreement in BQCMB history. It has been signed by the following public governments:

- ***Government of Canada***
- ***Government of Manitoba***
- ***Government of Northwest Territories***
- ***Government of Nunavut***
- ***Government of Saskatchewan***

The Agreement is the first in BQCMB history to include as signatories the following Indigenous Governments and organizations:

- ***Athabasca Denesuline***
- ***Ghotelnene K'odtineh Dene***
- ***Inuit of the Kivalliq Region***
- ***Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation***
- ***Northwest Territory Métis Nation***
- ***Tłicho Government***

The Board and Staff thank all parties who made this significant milestone possible. We look forward to continuing our work for the next nine years! •

## ***Did you know?***

Signing of the Tłicho Agreement in August 2003 provided for the first combined land, resources and self-government agreement in the NWT. The Tłicho Government (Treaty 11) was established in August 2005, and includes the Behchoko, Whati, Wekweètì and Gamètì community governments, which are responsible for municipal services and represent and serve all residents in their communities.

# Meet the New Board Member

In early May, the BQCMB gained a new board member when Tlcho Government (TG) appointed wildlife biologist Stephanie Behrens to represent it on the Board.

Behrens says she willingly volunteered for the role. “They asked me who should be on the Board, and I was like, ‘well, I want to be on the Board!’ The work is interesting and one of the things I take pride on is making relationships with other Indigenous groups,” she explains. “I love collaborating, especially when we’re dealing with caribou because caribou have no jurisdiction—they’re trans-boundary.”

She found her first meeting with the Board in Yellowknife in May very informative. “There is so much knowledge around the table and everybody has an opportunity to speak.”

Behrens moved away from her home community of Behchoko in 2005. After graduating from Aurora College’s Environment and Natural Resource Technology program, she obtained a degree in Environmental Science at the University of Lethbridge, AB. She began her career with the GNWT in Norman Wells, eventually returning to Behchoko in 2020 for her current position as wildlife and fisheries biologist with the Tlcho Government.

Behrens laughs when asked to describe a typical biologist’s day. “I don’t actually do much biology work. I’m in a lot of meetings.” She is involved in creating programs that help recover declining caribou herds in hopes that future generations are able to sustainably harvest and continue to practice their culture.

Behrens gets involved in all three divisions of TG’s Lands Department: Land Protection, Land Regulations and Research and Monitoring. She also sits on the Northwest Territories Conference of Management Authorities (NWT-CMA), and leads TG’s wolf harvesting and caribou harvest monitoring programs.

Behrens’ collaborative nature makes her a natural fit for the BQCMB. “I think it’s a great forum to come together and talk about all the work that needs to be done, and how to make sure it gets done. Caribou has been my main file for years, and I want to put words into action and make sure that we’re actually doing something.”

She believes the current BQCMB members feel the same. “They have a lot of knowledge. Earl (Chair Evans) is the type of person that likes to see thing get done. This is a longstanding board. And it only makes sense that TG is a part of this board because we are harvesters of the Beverly caribou.”



That drive is one of the reasons Behrens gets things done when others may just talk. “Once I have my mind set on something I achieve it. I’m also very vocal. If I don’t think something is right, then I’m going to speak up about it or if I have ideas about programs or the way things should be, I’m going to say something about it.”

That doesn’t mean she’s confrontational—just the opposite, in fact. “I have built a lot of relationships where I’ve made the connections needed to get things done. And I’m an open-minded person. I will listen and I will observe, and I’ll take in what people share and I’ll think about it and try to relate it to what I need to do.”

Her free time is minimal, but Behrens enjoys camping and playing volleyball when she can. She also serves on her local council. But her main priority is spending time with her family. The self-described “almost empty-nester” enjoys watching her 21 and 23-year-old sons play handgames and loves quality time with her one-year-old granddaughter, who she describes as “the total light of my life.”

Although she was away for 15 years, Behrens always planned to come back to Behchoko. “My late grandfather was an advising Elder for the negotiating team for my people obtaining self-government. And growing up, he was an advocate for education. He always pushed me to go to school, and I feel like now that I’m back with the TG I’m implementing the vision that he had. I’m kind of doing the work of my grandfather, which gives me so much pride.”

The BQCMB is grateful that Behrens absorbed that knowledge and is now sharing it with others. After all, she is not only giving back to her community and her people, she can now take pride in working to support all Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou range communities, too. •

*“I’m kind of doing the work of my grandfather, which gives me so much pride.”*





# National Indigenous History Month

*June was National Indigenous History Month and the BQCMB used social media to highlight Indigenous communities from across the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq range. We will share these articles with readers of Caribou News in Brief, starting with the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut.*



The Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, 400,00 square kilometres of land in the central part of Nunavut, is home to the Qamanirjuaq herd's calving grounds and much of the annual range of the herd.

The Kivalliq region has been inhabited by the Inuit people for thousands of years. The region was first explored by Europeans in the 17th century, and it became an important trading center for fur traders in the 18th and 19th centuries. The inland Inuit of the Kivalliq region used caribou so much that they were given the name "Caribou Eskimo" by Europeans. The people known as the Ahialmiut subsisted almost entirely on caribou year-round, unlike other Inuit groups that depended at least partially on harvest of animals from the sea.

Today, the region is home to several communities which are predominantly Inuit, each with its own unique culture and history. Arviat, Whale Cove, Rankin Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, and Baker Lake are the communities most closely linked with the Qamanirjuaq caribou. They continue to rely on the herd for subsistence, as it provides essential resources for food security and cultural and spiritual continuity.

Two members of the Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB) represent the Kivalliq Inuit on the BQCMB. They are KWB Chair **Stanley Adjuk** from Whale Cove and KWB Vice-Chair **Alex Ishalook** from Arviat. Alex has often compared the calving ground to a hospital for caribou. "It's nice and clean, it's nice and quiet, there's special plants, there's special habitat," he says. "Our Elders and local people have always told us to keep the land clean. Don't build cabins, houses, even tents in that area, because it's special."

July 9 each year is Nunavut Day and 2023 is especially significant as it also marks the 30th anniversary of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act, which was passed in 1993. The BQCMB congratulates Nunavut on achieving this significant milestone! •



*Pictured top to bottom: Girls wearing caribou skin clothing (photo by Yvette Cardozo); BQCMB member Stanley Adjuk (photo by Cody Punter, NNSL Media); Caribou skins (photo by Yvette Cardozo); BQCMB member Alex Ishalook; Caribou on the tundra (photo by Barnyard Studio)*

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**Nunavut**  
— Day —



# Youth and Caribou

*“Winter roads, so much meat wastage; it’s painful to see that. I always try to tell people not to waste meat; to have respect for animals, for nature, and one another.”*

*Roger Catholique*

Traditional knowledge and observations by Indigenous Peoples are essential for identifying changes to caribou and the land and making decisions that affect caribou.

But the Chair of the BQCMB says caribou-using communities are finding it harder to find youth who want to carry on traditional ways of life. “We go looking for youth to go hunting, and they’re sitting at home and don’t want to go outside,” says Earl Evans.

That is why the BQCMB regularly invites Indigenous youth to attend its meetings to learn and share information about caribou.

NWT youth representatives **Quinn Rabesca** (below left), a Tlicho citizen from Behchoko, and **Roger Catholique** (below right), a youth from Lutsel K’e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) attended the BQCMB’s spring meeting in Yellowknife. The youth were accompanied by Elders **Doris Enzoe**, from Lutsel K’e, and **Joseph Moosenose**, from Whatì, NWT.

Rabesca told the BQCMB he has loved hunting since he was a child. “My grandpa

used to drag me out. He’d say, ‘You’re going to be the future provider for this family’, so he’d pack my stuff and say, ‘let’s go’. Now I do that with my friends. I try to encourage them to come with me hunting. I don’t like them sitting at home.”

Catholique also learned from his grandpa. “He taught me to respect the land and the animals, the caribou. There’s a few my age that go out, not so much though. I always try to tell people to not waste meat; to have respect for animals, for nature, and one another.”

These future leaders have also observed the effects of climate change. “Climate is really different; it’s warmer than before,” says Catholique.

“I think the main disturbance is humans; we’re the apex predators of the world here. We have to make a change right now before it’s too late. Why wait until the last minute to do the change; why not take action now? That’s what I say.” •

*“I try to encourage my friends to come with me hunting. I don’t like them sitting at home.”*

*Quinn Rabesca*





# Heard Around the BQCMB Table

## From the May 2023 BQCMB Meeting:

“It’s not only the amount of animals they harvest; it’s how they do it that is really troubling.”

*Chair Earl Evans, Northwest Territory Métis Nation*

“Skidoos are faster, rifles are bigger, and that creates a lot of wastage and a lot of wounded animals out there every winter. Also, not everyone can differentiate between bulls and cows. We need to find better ways to ID pregnant females.”

*Ernie Bussidor, Sayisi Dene First Nation*

“Caribou are really important to the Dene people. There is a lot of support for youth programs to be set up to educate about traditional knowledge, learn about the herd.”

*Jimmy Laban, Black Lake Denesuliné First Nation*

“Since the mine came up, the caribou are far away from my hometown...they used to be right across the bay. Since its declining I’ve had to change my food. We’ve lived off muskox for eight years, because we want the caribou to come back.”

*Elder Doris Enzoe, Lutsel K’e Dene First Nation*

“I worked in mining for 14 years. Caribou won’t cross roads.”

*Elder Ronald Beaulieu, Northwest Territory Métis Nation*

“For this Board connectivity is a crucial aspect – we need to give these caribou herds the freedom to keep moving between areas and adapting to vegetative changes.”

*Jan Adamczewski, GNWT-ECC*

“In my meetings with Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) I hear one question repeatedly: Will this stop the caribou from coming across to the post-calving area? In a cumulative effects sense, this is the bigger question.”

*Leslie Wakelyn, BQCMB Wildlife Biologist*



## Publisher's Box

Caribou News in Brief is published by the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board.

ISSN 1489-3436.

Opinions expressed are those of the editor and contributors.

Back issues available at [www.arctic-caribou.com](http://www.arctic-caribou.com).

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Top photo, L to R:

Elders Ron Beaulieu (Northwest Territory Métis Nation); Doris Enzoe (Lutsel K’e Dene First Nation); and Joseph Moosenose (Whati, Tlicho Territory, NWT)

Middle Photo, L to R:

BQCMB Executive Director Tina Giroux-Robillard and Chair Earl Evans. Giroux-Robillard and BQCMB Biologist Leslie Wakelyn presented Chair Evans a book provided by the North American Caribou Workshop.

Bottom photo, L to R:

BQCMB northern Saskatchewan member Jimmy Laban (Black Lake Denesuliné First Nation, SK); Government of Manitoba alternate member Joannie Kennah; Government of Manitoba member/Vice-Chair, Administration Vicki Trim; and northern Manitoba member Ernie Bussidor (Sayisi Dene First Nation, MB)