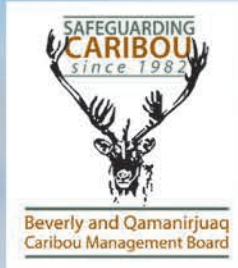


# CARIBOU NEWS

## *in Brief*

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

Volume 24 No. 1 • Summer 2021



BQCMB Meeting #91  
November 30-December 2, 2021



## BQCMB Supports Federal Species-at-Risk Listing

The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) wrapped up its 90th meeting on May 13, 2021 with a significant decision: it passed a motion to support designating barren-ground caribou as a Threatened species in Canada.

This outcome was the result of three years of consultation with Environment and Climate Change Canada – Canadian Wildlife Service (ECCC-CWS) around the proposed listing of barren-ground caribou under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA).

The BQCMB initially was supportive of the conservation benefits of the proposal but concerned about the potential implications of listing for Indigenous harvesting rights.

The Board's decision to support listing is in part based on ECCC-CWS's assurance that existing Indigenous harvest rights would be maintained upon listing and a legal Duty to Consult will be required if any changes that might affect those rights are considered in the future. The Board's expectation is that full and meaningful consultation would take place if this situation occurs.

BQCMB Chair Earl Evans says this topic generates a lot of conversation wherever he goes. "With the federal government consulting communities about listing these caribou, it creates an awareness out there of the dire situation the caribou are in," he explains.

Eight barren-ground herds, including the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds, are already listed as a Threatened species in the Northwest Territories (NWT) under territorial Species at Risk (SAR) legislation. The BQCMB contributed to development of an NWT recovery strategy that was finalized in 2020. Recovery strategy implementation by six NWT Management Authorities is in the works.

A federal listing would provide protection for all barren-ground caribou herds on federal lands across the country and add another layer of protection to ensure they don't decline past the point of no return, according to Evans.

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### What's Inside:

- **BQCMB Sounds Alarm on Hunting Practices**
- **Tracking the Caribou Part 2: Why satellite collaring programs are so important**
- **Meet the BQCMB Member: Vicki Trim**
- **NEW: From the Archives**



# Around the Range

## Kivalliq Hydro-Fibre Link

The Kivalliq Inuit Association (KIA) made a presentation about a proposed Kivalliq Hydro-Fibre Link during the BQCMB's meeting in early May. The proposed project includes construction of a 1,200 km electricity transmission line and a high-speed fibre optic line from Manitoba to five communities and two Agnico Eagle mines in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut. The project would be Nunavut's first infrastructure link to southern Canada and would support future mineral exploration and development in the region.

This project (see map at right) has been discussed for many years. In 2019 the federal government invested \$1.6 million for a technical feasibility study, and in the 2021 budget it committed to invest another \$3 million for data collection and analysis.

The proposed project is in early planning stages, and the KIA is working with consultants to move it forward. Fall 2020 fieldwork in Manitoba included trail cameras along the route and ground sensors to gather information about soil moisture content. Aerial surveys for wildlife were conducted in Manitoba in fall 2020 and spring 2021.

Summer 2021 fieldwork, including wildlife studies along the proposed project corridor, is planned for Nunavut. The federal government's 2021-22 commitment will fund data collection and analysis to support preliminary geomorphological, biophysical, heritage, permafrost and traditional land use studies.

Consultation with Inuit in Kivalliq communities and First Nations in northern Manitoba communities will be federally funded and Indigenous knowledge will be central to the project work. Initial dialogue has begun with the Kivalliq and northern Manitoba regional biologists.

BQCMB members expressed concern about the negative effects on caribou that could result from routing the line across parts of the Qamanirjuaq caribou calving ground and spring migration corridors, as well as the need for meaningful consultation with communities in both Nunavut and Manitoba.

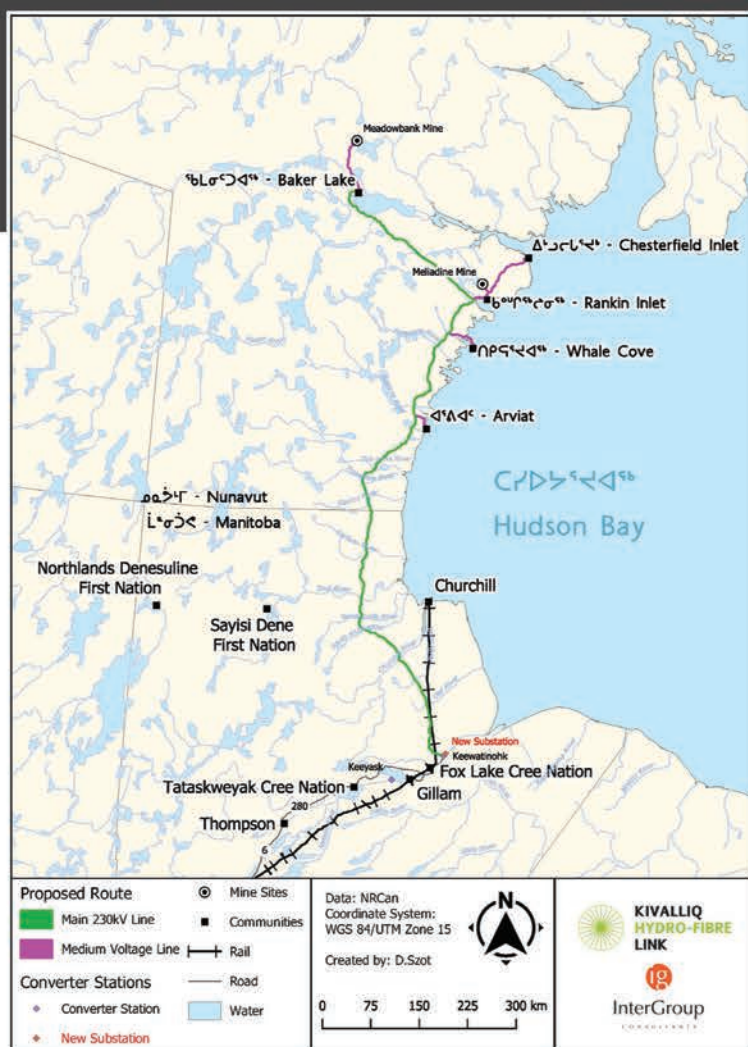
For more information from KIA: <https://www.kivalliqlink.ca/>

## Beverly Herd update

Government of Northwest Territories Environment and Natural Resources (GNWT-ENR) conducted spring composition surveys in March 2021 for the Beverly, Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds. Beverly caribou are often mixed together with the Bathurst herd during winter, and there was evidence of all three herds mixing this year. This mixing makes it difficult to get calf-cow ratios for individual herds.

However, GNWT-ENR believes their results are representative of the Beverly herd and are good news for the herd, with 49 calves per 100 cows.

GNWT-ENR also placed satellite collars on caribou from the three herds in March. In total, 33 collars were placed on Beverly caribou, 19 females and 14 males.



The collaring crew commented that it has been a long time since they've seen the caribou in such good shape—all of the animals collared were fat.

GNWT-ENR also placed 18 collars on wolves this year, for a total of 25 collared wolves.

## Qamanirjuaq Herd update

Government of Nunavut Environment (GN-DOE) collaring programs for Qamanirjuaq and Northeast Mainland caribou herds have been cancelled for the second year in a row. GN hopes to collar a significant number of caribou next spring, however this will depend on consultation with communities and availability of funding.

A population survey of the Qamanirjuaq herd is also planned for 2022. The BQCMB recommended this survey (and a Beverly survey in 2023) to the GN-DOE Minister in April 2021. Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development has already contributed \$125,000 for this survey.

The GN also recently conducted a spring composition survey, in which they assessed 115 groups of caribou for a total of over 12,000 animals. They saw no grizzly bears and not as many wolves as usual.

The preliminary survey results still need to be finalized, but initial results point to lots of variability between groups, with some having very few calves. This is consistent with what hunters are reporting.

However, the caribou were in excellent shape, as is being reported across the range. •



# People and Caribou

## Welcome BQCMB members

August Enzoe has officially returned to the BQCMB as the member representing Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN), NWT. August (pictured above left) is a veteran BQCMB member who has represented LKDFN at many meetings over the years. We are happy to have him back in an official capacity.

The BQCMB also welcomes Jennifer Jonasson (pictured below right) as the official alternate member from LKDFN. We look forward to Jennifer's contributions to the Board.

## Farewell

The BQCMB is sorry to say farewell to Geoff Bussidor, as board member from Sayisi Dene First Nation, Tadoule Lake. Geoff has stepped down from the BQCMB after representing communities of northern Manitoba since 2017. Prior to that, Geoff served as alternate member with former BQCMB member and Chair Albert Thorassie.

Geoff's contributions to the BQCMB will be missed, and we wish him well in his role as Chief Negotiator for Sayisi Dene First Nation. •



**T**he BQCMB has awarded the 2021 Gunther Abrahamson Caribou Research and Management Award to Allison Clark of Brock University's Master of Sustainability program. Allison will receive \$2,000 for her research titled "Tracking Holocene and recent treeline change using sedaDNA and remote sensing techniques, Northwest Territories, Canada."



The project will develop a better understanding for past, present, and future climate and vegetation trends in northwestern Canada, including the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou ranges. If caribou DNA can be recovered from sediments, this study will further aid in understanding past and present plant-caribou dynamics. This information will provide insights on the fate of caribou habitat under a changing climate, which will be vital to caribou conservation.

We look forward to reporting on Allison's findings!

## About the Scholarship

The BQCMB helps post-secondary students learn more about the management and conservation of barren-ground caribou and their habitat through its Gunther Abrahamson Caribou Research and Management Award, sponsored by the Caribou Management Scholarship Fund.

The annual award is administered by the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS) and is open to university or college students studying barren-ground caribou and/or their range in Canada.

Preference is given to applicants from a caribou range community and to those examining the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds. Award amounts vary from year to year.

Fieldwork is not required. Students conducting traditional knowledge studies as well as scientific studies are encouraged to apply.

Deadline for applications is January 31, 2022.

For more information, please visit: <https://arctic-caribou.com/education/>

## BQCMB Supports Listing, cont'd from p. 1

Evans points out a federal listing and recovery planning would likely mean extra funding for awareness and education campaigns around many aspects of caribou conservation, including disrespectful hunting practices, an issue that has arisen often and received much attention from the Board over the years.

Elder Joe Marten, BQCMB member from Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation in northern Saskatchewan, says education is key. "Some young people don't know how to hunt," he explains. "They don't know how to be in the bush. They just go on their own; they kill caribou and they don't even know how to cut caribou."

The BQCMB opposes any development on caribou calving or post-calving grounds. "Development may threaten the places where caribou migrate, calve or raise their young. This is something else we expect a federal SAR listing to address," states Evans.

"Protecting these areas is key to the recovery of these herds, so we have caribou for the future." •



# BQCMB Sounds Alarm on Hunting Practices

*“In my 50 years observingt his type of activity, this is the worst I’ve seen.”*

*BQCMB Chair Earl Evans, BQCMB*

**I**n early March, the BQCMB expressed concern about many recent examples of irresponsible hunting practices along the winter road to the diamond mines in the Northwest Territories.

BQCMB Chair Earl Evans raised the alarm after witnessing the actions firsthand. “I saw every regulation in the book being violated,” he says. “Snowmobiles chasing caribou, people shooting into the herds, hunters using the wrong calibre of rifle required to make a clean kill and/or not retrieving their kills, pollution, and outright dangerous hunting.”

The easy access provided by the winter road, allowing large numbers of hunters to descend on the area, and too few conservation officers in a vast area has created a situation in which enforcement and harvest monitoring efforts are inadequate.

“It happens year after year,” Evans says. “But in my 50 years observing this type of activity, this is the worst I’ve seen.”

Wherever caribou seem plentiful and access is easy, and hunters are inexperienced, respectful hunting practices tend to decrease. This also results in the animals being in poor health due to constantly being harassed, says Evans.

For many years the BQCMB has worked to promote respectful hunting practices. The Board strongly encourages chiefs, elders and community leaders to communicate responsible hunting practices to their members, and to increase efforts to educate inexperienced hunters about sustainable caribou hunting.

The Board understands the GNWT has increased the number of officers enforcing rules supporting conservation of barren-ground caribou herds.

Chair Evans is collaborating with senior officials with GNWT-ENR on building awareness and tackling the ongoing problem.

“When there are many caribou accessible in an area, everybody wants to hunt,” says Evans. “I understand that. But there is a proper way to hunt and traditional harvesting protocols to follow. And the herds are getting smaller and smaller.

People need to understand that the only way for the caribou harvest to be sustainable is to hunt respectfully. We all share in this responsibility to make sure there are caribou for the next generation.”•

*L to R: NWT-ENR Minister Shane Thompson, Environment Officer Lee Mandeville, and BQCMB Chair Earl Evans participated in a press conference on March 9, 2021  
Photo courtesy of NNSL Media*







# From the Archives

*For the Summer edition of Caribou News in Brief, we thought it fitting to describe the journey of the caribou herds to their calving grounds.*

*This excerpt is from an Arctic Wildlife Series on caribou, and it was originally printed in Caribou News Volume 2, No. 1 – published in June, 1982.*

**I**n early spring when long hours of daylight return to the Northwest Territories, barren-ground caribou begin to move in a great northwest migration. Individuals band together, and each small group joins another and another until long lines of caribou are moving steadily to their calving grounds, which may be as far as 700 km away.

By the time the herds pass the last stunted trees of the northern forests and spread out over the still frozen barrenlands, they may number in the thousands. Cows and yearlings lead the way; bulls lag behind. Even in mid-May, when temperatures soar and small lakes are breaking up, groups of bulls still linger not far from the tree line, grazing their leisurely way northward to the barrens.

Meanwhile, the cows have forged ahead. Their urgency to reach the traditional calving ground is so great that nothing can hold them back. Even if calves are born along the way, they may be left behind as the cows continue on with the herd. When the animals reach the calving grounds, they divide into smaller groups, and spread out over an area which may be as much as 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> for the larger herds.

The calving grounds are often located in high, rocky, windy areas which seem to be most unlikely spots for the birth of new calves. It is not known exactly why such inhospitable places are chosen. The area may be far from predators such as wolves, many of which remain near treeline to den. Mosquitoes and blackflies hatch there later than in areas closer to treeline. A high exposed spot may be drier than surrounding lowlands. Finally, all calving grounds seem to have a common factor in that they offer the lichens, sedges, grasses and forbs necessary for caribou to forage on during the spring and early summer.

Most calves are born during the first two weeks of June. When the females are close to calving, they band together in groups. A cow about to give birth lies down on a dry patch of ground and goes into labour. Within minutes the calf is born. Caribou produce only one calf at a time and the female devotes all her attention to it, licking it, sniffing it and learning its characteristics. At the same time, the calf learns to recognize its mother from all the other cows.

Caribou calves can stand and suckle within a few minutes of birth. In an hour a calf can follow its mother, and in a few days it can outrun a man.

As soon as the calf can keep up with its mother, it begins to associate with other cows and calves. It is most important now that a strong cow-calf bond has been established, for the calf must be able to distinguish its mother in a herd of milling animals. Cows usually search diligently for calves lost along the trail, and in most cases are able to find them. Life ends quickly for calves which are not found, for they cannot survive without their mothers and the safety of the herd.

During the summer, the caribou suffer much stress. Hordes of blackflies and mosquitoes torment the animals, preventing them from feeding in peace and taking a great toll on energy reserves. Calves especially suffer at a time when they require energy for growth and development. Insects may also drive the animals to frenzied stampeding in which many become injured, and calves become separated from their mothers.

Other problems arise from predators. On the calving ground, very young calves are susceptible to grizzly bear attack. Wolves are also present on the calving grounds and when the herds begin to move, follow along with them.

Water crossings are another danger for the herds. Rivers and lakes frozen during the spring migration are open in midsummer, becoming swift and treacherous torrents. The herds are wary at water crossings and many caribou amass at the edge waiting until some determined animal takes the plunge and strikes out for the far shore. The entire group then follows behind until the lake or river is a mass of swimming caribou.

By mid-August, summer on the barrenlands is nearly over and the caribou begin to move leisurely back southward. The large herds have become numerous small bands, constantly moving, joining together and splitting apart, drifting about near the treeline, spread out over thousands of square kilometres until mid-October and early November when the rut occurs.

The rut is spectacular in its intensity. The bulls are in their prime with glossy new coats and antlers polished and smooth from being scraped against young trees. Their flowing white manes swing back and forth as they threaten and challenge each other.

The battles rage for two or three weeks until about mid-November. By the time they are over, winter has settled on the north and the migration continues in earnest into the forest. •



# Tracking the Caribou: Why satellite collaring programs are so important

Don Johnston / All Canada Photos



Last issue, Caribou News in Brief reported on the importance of satellite collaring in general, and highlighted the Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) program, which monitors the movements of several herds, including Beverly caribou. This issue, we will look at the Government of Nunavut's program for the Qamanirjuaq herd.

Since 1993, the Government of Nunavut Department of Environment (GN-DOE) has conducted a satellite telemetry program on the Qamanirjuaq herd. The information collected from this program provides an extremely valuable connection between the Qamanirjuaq caribou and their range.

Since the Qamanirjuaq Caribou Herd is the largest herd in Nunavut occupying a massive 300,000 square kilometre range, the logistics involved in determining how these caribou use their range are labor intensive and costly.

This kind of information is also crucial for incorporating habitat requirements into plans for caribou management and responsible land use in an informed, conservation minded direction. As commercial land use activities increase, knowing where the caribou are is the key to reducing conflicts between natural resource industries and caribou.

GN-DOE staff send maps showing locations of collared caribou to Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs), band offices, government departments, and other groups with approved requests.

Unfortunately, the GN-DOE collaring program for the Qamanirjuaq herd has been cancelled for two years due to various factors, including travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, insufficient funding, and competing priorities.

The department hopes to place 35-40 collars on Qamanirjuaq caribou next spring. Prior to this, consultation with communities and HTOs will be essential as they provide valuable input into the collaring program. •

## Caribou – Spirit to the Hunters

*Your fathers called us brothers-  
As we ran the tundra-  
As we swam the lakes.*

*We could feel their oneness with us  
As they looked on us with joy.*

*Your fathers called us brothers-  
And we answered their needs.*

*We gave them meat-  
Our coats kept them warm-  
Wrapped their newborn.*

*We were food, warmth and shelter.  
Indeed they called us brothers-  
For life they took,  
and from life we gave.*

*Each spring as skies grew bright  
and golden  
Our numbers grew again.*

*Where the lost had run before,  
Others took their place.*

*But now you come amongst us in a  
different way.*

*Is it still the hunt when bodies left to rot  
Have had tongue alone removed?  
Does half a quarter justify a kill?*

*Return, return to harvest as of old-  
Or we shall be no more.*

*When only shadows of the clouds run  
across the land,  
Will not your children wonder why?  
And lay the blame?*

*Author Unknown  
Reprinted from Caribou News,  
Vol. 1 No. 5, February, 1982*



# Meet the BQCMB Member:

## Vicki Trim

Vicki Trim has been a BQCMB Vice-Chair for over a year but, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has yet to attend an in-person meeting since taking on her new role. There have been many virtual meetings and conference calls, however, and with six years as an alternate (to former member and Vice-Chair Daryll Hedman) under her belt, Trim was more than ready to become a member of the BQCMB's executive team.

The long-time Government of Manitoba biologist grew up in Winnipeg but has spent most of her career in northern Manitoba. From her first job as a district fire ranger in The Pas to her current position as the wildlife manager of the largest wildlife region in the province, she has come to love the north and embrace everything it has to offer. "No two days are the same," she says. "The region is so big, and there's such a diversity of wildlife species that are really important to people in the north."

Most of her time is spent focusing on species like caribou, polar bears, and moose. The northeast wildlife region is one of five in the province, but it encompasses over half of its land base. Trim loves the busy, ever-changing job, and represents the Manitoba government on several other boards and committees in addition to the BQCMB. "I'm currently a co-chair of the Polar Bear Technical Committee, which is also multi-jurisdictional," she notes. "I'm also on the Wapusk National Park Management Board and a new member to the York Factory Resource Management Board."

Trim admits there has been a bit of a learning curve from serving as an alternate member to an executive member. "Before, I was focused more on things that pertained to my area. Now, as Vice-Chair of Administration, I'm more focused on things like the budget, how things are structured, and how we can make things better. It's more of a sense of responsibility for making sure things are running smoothly overall, and not just focusing on things that relate to me."

With so much on her plate, Trim says prioritizing things that are working well is key—and one of those is the BQCMB. "If the Manitoba government needs information related to barren-ground caribou, it looks to see what the Board is saying," she explains.

**"Knowing you can disagree at the table, but then stand off to the side and talk during coffee breaks—that's hard to come by."**

The Province of Manitoba has a mandate to share management around natural resources, meaning that rather than reinvent the wheel, future planning to develop a management plan for barren ground caribou in the province will include looking at the BQCMB's management plan for input. "There's really strong recommendations that come from this board," Trim says. "So, if you need to identify what to focus your time on, what's high priority, you're going to look at what's working well, and where you can actually have some effect, right?"

"I think the BQ Board is one of the best examples of what works—you've got the commitment of members, the collaboration of everybody working there and making recommendations. It's well-established and well-represented, so governments and other organizations will listen to those recommendations."

Trim acknowledges the BQCMB is not without challenges, one of the most pressing being making sure everyone is at the table when the Board does come together. "Supporting the community representatives to attend meetings is the biggest thing," she says. "The Board doesn't work if just government people show up at those meetings. Community members need to be there, and we need to support them being there. We need their input and recommendations so caribou can benefit from their knowledge."

When her busy schedule allows, the transplanted northerner loves hiking, camping, fishing, and waterskiing, but winter is her favourite season. "I love winter!" she exclaims. "I love ice fishing. Pretty much all my spare time in the winter is spent ice fishing and snowmobiling."



She also loves caribou. "I think it comes from working with them hands on." Her first job involved "going out every two weeks when we had the old, VHF collars on caribou and getting in the Cessna 185 planes and doing power circles trying to pinpoint where an animal was on the ground."

The new GPS collars have eliminated the need to track the animals that way, but even today, retrieving a collar is a good day in the field. "When I get a collar back and can handle it I smell that caribou, and it just takes me to a nice place. I don't know what it is," Trim says. "I think it's just about being close to a caribou because they were the first animals I worked with. They're just so cool."

Trim is pretty cool herself—one of her peers on the board recently called her a "quiet rockstar". She is well-respected thanks to her positivity and strong work-ethic, which will no doubt be important qualities as the Board approaches its 40<sup>th</sup> year in operation in 2022.

"I always feel so excited when I leave those (BQCMB) meetings," she says. "I'm on a bunch of different boards, and they all operate quite differently. I think the success of the BQCMB is how everybody gets along. I just find it very honest, and I like how everybody gets involved and everybody talks at some point. Many of the people have been on the board for a long time, so everybody gets to know each other and trust each other. Everybody has input."

"Knowing you can disagree at the table, but then stand off to the side and talk during coffee breaks—that's hard to come by."



# Heard Around the BQCMB Table



BQCMB meetings are not always serious; even over Zoom, the Board enjoyed plenty of smiles and laughter!

Pictured clockwise from top left: Jan Adamczewski (GNWT-ENR, Yellowknife, NWT), Ernie Bussidor (Sayisi Dene First Nation, Tadoule Lake, MB); Vicki Trim (Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development, Thompson, MB); Chair Earl Evans (Northwest Territory Metis Nation, Fort Smith, NWT); Exec. Director Ross Thompson (Stonewall, MB); Atuat Shouldice (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Rankin Inlet, NU); and Joe Marten (Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation, Fond du Lac, SK).

"If we can't manage caribou, maybe we need to manage people. It's a disgrace. This road hunting has to stop. Just take what you need. Make a plan the night before and tell your buddies. How many are you going to get? 4, 5? Go get them and then you're done."

*Dennis Larocque  
Camsell Portage, SK*

"Some young people don't know how to hunt. They don't know how to be in the bush. They just go on their own; they kill caribou and they don't even know how to cut caribou."

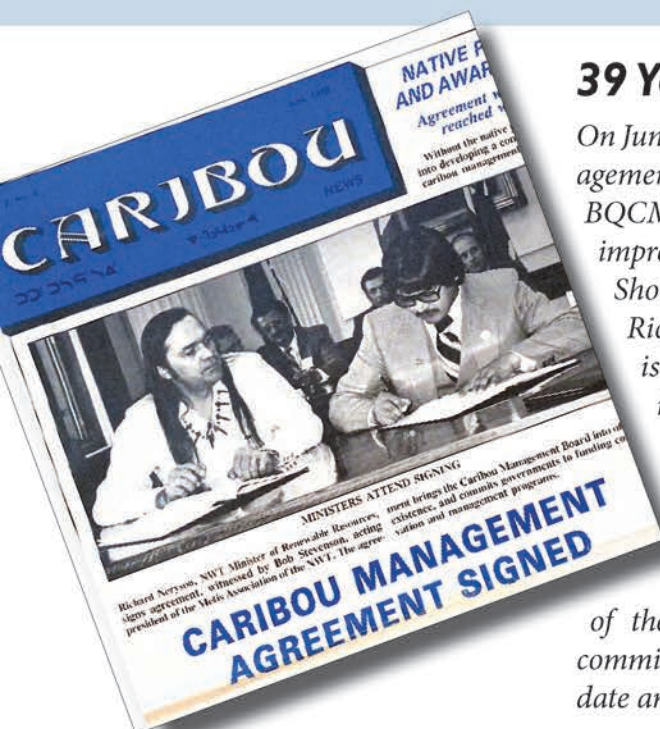
*Joe Marten  
Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation, SK*

"If those ice roads weren't there this wouldn't be happening. They are the biggest caribou-killer out there."

*BQCMB Chair Earl Evans  
Northwest Territory Metis Nation*

"It's difficult to get fall caribou hides. We have to go way up north to do a community harvest. We're down to just a few drums in the community, but we're running out of drums because we're running out of hides. The drum is important for us; we need those hides for those drums."

*Ernie Bussidor, BQCMB alternate  
Sayisi Dene First Nation, MB*



## 39 Years and Counting!

On June 3, 1982, the first Caribou Management Agreement was signed and the BQCMB officially established in an impressive ceremony in Winnipeg. Shown here signing the Agreement is Richard Nerysoo, then-NWT Minister of Renewable Resources. He is witnessed by Bob Stevenson, then-acting president of the Metis Association of the NWT.

2022 will mark the BQCMB's 40th anniversary and signing of the 5th Management Agreement committing parties to continue its mandate and core funding.

## Publisher's Box

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