



# Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op

Community Reports  
from the  
7th Annual Gathering



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## Community-based Monitoring Program

The objective of the Community-based Monitoring Program is to develop and run a monitoring program that is based on local knowledge of the land, plants, animals and community. The program contributes to a regional ecosystem monitoring program that will help us all understand changes that are happening on the land. It was the idea of the communities that we include traditional knowledge in this monitoring.

This is the sixth year that the program has been running in Aklavik, Old Crow and Fort McPherson and the second year for Arctic Village. Each community monitor interviews experts in their community using a questionnaire that asks for observations about weather, berries, caribou, fish, other animals as well as about the communities themselves. Those interviewed receive a gas voucher in payment for their participation.

This year the Community Monitors were Randall Tetlich (Old Crow), Connie Stewart (Fort McPherson), Annie B. Gordon (Aklavik- Inuvialuit), Danny Greenland (Aklavik – Gwich'in) and Joel Tritt (Arctic Village).

This summary has been compiled from presentations made by the community monitors at the Coop's 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering (March 2002) and from their written reports, based on the interviews they conducted in the communities.

More information on the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op's Community-based Monitoring Program can be found at [www.taiga.net/coop](http://www.taiga.net/coop)

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### Report by Annie B. Gordon – Aklavik (Inuvialuit)

In January I attended a workshop in Inuvik. I came from our camp on the land where we took about five boys to learn what life is like to stay out on the land during the wintertime.

We did this because long ago our elders used to tell us that January was the hardest month to get over. I guess what they mean is, it used to be so cold that animals don't even try to run around as much as when it starts to get longer warmer days.

So we took these boys out to really see for themselves that what the elders say is really true and they all had a really good learning experience. By traveling and seeing the changes everyday, even though they traveled by skidoo, now a days, we tell them about long ago traveling that was done by dog team. It wasn't as fast as traveling by skidoo, so at least they have a good idea how much difference our life was then and now.

So when we came back to town I started the interviews, which at the beginning were kind of good. I was able to get a few people, but because some people I wanted to interview went to work, that made it slow



and some times hard to get anyone during the day, so I have to go out in the evening. But I have some good information about traveling out on the land.

Some people went only on day trips, some went occasionally over night. Not too many stay out half of the time. Very few people stay out on the land a long time long ago because of illness or orders to stay in town which is hard on people that are use to being out on the land most of their lives. Still the few that could go out still try to spend some time staying out.

There are very few elders left and young people don't try to go out unless their 'On The Land Program' takes them out.

Now that there are fewer elders on the land, people go out for just a few days. You wouldn't see people all summer. People used to go out August and all of September. No one spends that much time out anymore.

The younger generation doesn't know how to hunt. They don't know how to hunt whale.

## **Weather**

- Everyone reports different weather. Some say it is cold and damp and others say that it is hot and dry. So this all depends on where the people are staying.
- Sometimes it rains a lot on the mainland and it stays damp and cold. Further along the coast, it could be nice and warm.
- This year or in the last few years, there has been a lot of east or southeast

winds which make it hard for traveling or for people hunting whales when there are a lot of winds on the ocean. We had a very good fall, good freeze up, low water, less overflow, got more snow later on. Never really had a big wind yet, lots of snow on the willows through portages.

- People at Shingle Point sighted a tornado or funnel cloud in the sky and they got pictures of it. It's scary because we don't know what's going to be happening out there. There are just a couple families out there, at Shingle Point. There was a bad storm last year at Shingle. People were air-lifted by helicopter to the DEW-line site. The waves got very high and it was quite dangerous to be there.

## **Freezeup**

- I don't know how the ocean freezes up, but a few people say they notice a lot of overflow on the lower small rivers, also high tide from the ocean.
- Some people say they never had too many problems going out on the land until we started getting more snow. Then they noticed the overflow. So they have to be very careful when traveling, even though they say the water was low. When it froze up, more snow made it overflow in some places.

## **Permafrost**

- People noticed more cut banks from ice in the springtime, after the water starts getting low.



- More people notice more mud slides when they were traveling on the Yukon coast and Herschel Island and so there is a lot of change.

### Berries

- Some report some aqpiqs berries but you have to look for them where you think the best places could be. You will find them too dry and sun cooked in open areas. The good ones were found in shady areas.

while when it starts getting too cold. When the ice gets too thick they don't go anymore. Long ago people use to fish a lot because they needed to catch fish for the winter.

### Caribou

- It was very hard to do this part of the interview, as we don't have caribou to hunt. Maybe we could hunt early in the fall when the caribou first start traveling from the Yukon, but sometimes, if they start while people can use their boats, it



- As for cranberries, there were only a very few. Not really that many. Again, you found them only if you went to where you thought there was a good patch.

### Fish

- People say that they really never try to fish that much because they only need to get what they can use.
- Mostly people like to go ice fishing for a

makes it hard because people kill the leading herd so the caribou would scatter all over. This makes it hard to hunt.

- This [not shooting the leaders] was mentioned at the meeting but is not being followed. Sometimes it is not hunters from town but hunters from out of town. Hunters that go down to hunt as soon as they hear the caribou are heading up, make it hard for everyone later on.



- So really, I can't pinpoint it where caribou migrate south or even in the spring when they are migrating north. I did the best that could be done on the caribou report.
- The caribou that had been killed seemed to all be in good shape and healthy.
- There are not very many elders left to hunt the old way, walking to hunt. Young people use skidoos to haul their meat if they get a caribou in early spring or early fall hunt.

### **Birds**

- Some say that there are more ducks, swans and geese being seen, some say there aren't too many. It depends where they migrate. They seem to have changed their spring route more to the east.
- The last couple of springs, some hunters didn't go out to Mackenzie because they didn't trust the ice to travel. It depends on how you travel to spring geese hunt. You have to be careful how you travel.
- Some grouse and ptarmigan are seen when people travel out on the land whenever they can get the chance to travel.
- Some report they see a few birds of prey but not too many. It all depends where people travel.
- There were very few songbirds noticed.
- Even shore birds are hardly seen.

Some say that maybe it gets too cold in spring or late spring but there are very few.

### **Moose**

- A lot more moose have been seen in the Delta in the last few years.

### **Muskox**

- Some people say that they didn't notice too many this year. Maybe they are higher up on the hills.

### **Rabbits**

- There were hardly any rabbits, only a few. You would be lucky to see any. It's just the usual cycle where they are slowly returning now.

### **Lynx**

- People reported few lynx. Some say that slowly there are getting to be more this year. There are a very few trappers so we just go by what they tell us.

### **Bear**

- Some say that there are a few bears around, some reported hardly any. Maybe there is better food for them because they hardly bother the camps.

### **Wolves**

- When there's no caribou, there are no wolves. People only saw a few. It's not like before where at least people say they run into wolves here and there.

### **Furbearers**



- Very few people are trapping. The ones that used to do trapping are under doctor's care and they don't go out and do trapping anymore. So we are getting less and less people trapping. The price of gas is so much, it is hard for everyone to even go out. Some people want to but they don't have the equipment.

### Mosquitoes

- I don't think that there is much change. There is always some or lots. Again, it depends on wet or dry weather. Some say there are less mosquitoes when there is not much rain and some say

winds. As soon as the winds calmed down, they tried to hunt beluga. Sometimes the hunters have to go further out to hunt. It all depends on the traffic on the ocean. Sometimes it is just the way the whales travel. Some years they are easy to get.

- There was hardly any hunting on bowheads this year. A few hunters say that when they travel along the coast they never saw any. Maybe they are way out. One hunter only reported the fume from the blow so maybe they're a long ways out from the land. There's no ice close anyway.



- Nobody hunts seals on the west side. Maybe there's some hunting but only in the springtime if hunters go out.

### Community Observation & Human Activity

- Hardly any people go out to hunt or fish anymore in the summer. People use to make a lot of dry fish and dry meat in the fall. We don't see that done too much. Now we're only making enough for our own

kind of lots. We always have mosquitoes anyway, not like caribou where you don't see them for a few years.

use.

### Language

### Whales and Seals

- There was too much east or southeast

- Very few people are speaking the language. Some speak or just could understand very little. You don't hear them talk much anymore because it is not being spoken in the home where it should be used. Parents don't speak or



we don't have many elders anymore to help to keep the language alive. It's totally getting lost.

### Important Changes in Local Culture

- In the past few years, language is hardly spoken anymore. Also even our way of life on the land is not being done anymore. Our younger generations are not being taught or there are hardly anymore elders alive to teach what and how we use to live on the land. Drum dancing is getting done less too. The people are not showing interest. We have to try to get whatever elders there are together and get something going again soon. We can't lose any more of our culture.
- With more oil and gas companies coming in the Delta or working on the land, there are more jobs for people. Some people are going to upgrading or on the job training. The younger

generations are getting to see that they need their education to have better jobs in the future. So they are trying hard to stay in school. As elders we have to encourage our younger people to stay in school to finish their education so that they could get trained for better jobs.

- As well we all know living on the land is not the same as years ago, back when our elders made a good living out there. They knew how to live there, not like our younger people today. Enough questions are asked. People say that they should just keep it the same. They are satisfied with everything.
- We should have a harvest book for people to mark weather or number animals if they get any.

### Participant comments:

- *Billy Day added that the elders are worried about the jackfish populations. People used to feed them to their dogs, but now that few people have dogs, the fish are getting over-populated.*



**Report by Danny Greenland, presented by Johnny Edwards – Aklavik (Gwich'in)**

**Weather**

- No storms were noted this past year. It was a dry summer, as there was not much rainfall this year.
- There was calm weather for the most part of the summer. No major storms noted. The fall was wet. There were not many differences noted in the change of weather.
- There was an average freeze up this past fall. It was a good early freeze up with little overflow reported. The water levels were normal this fall. Freeze up occurred at normal time of year-early October.
- The weather was similar to last year.

milder than a few years back.

- The fall to the end of December was milder than usual.
- Other than these few noted conditions, the winter is normal and there haven't been any major storms yet. The months of January and February have experienced normal winter temperatures of  $-35$  to  $-39$ . We have not experienced any real cold spells during this time frame.

**Fish**

- There was a good fishing season.
- There were lots of whitefish and all in healthy condition and of average size.
- The coney and crooked-back fish were all healthy and of normal size. All fishing was normal this year.



Warmer conditions between October-December time frame.

- Snowfall seemed to be normal this year.
- It was noted that the winter was much
- Char was plentiful and in good condition around the Husky River area.
- There was overall good fishing for loche.



About 10% had bad livers, which is the same as last year. Overall the fish condition was normal.

- Very few reports of out of the ordinary parasites or mushiness with fish conditions were noted. It's the same as last year.

### **Berries**

- Overall it was not a very good crop this year in the Delta region. Not as many berries as years back.
- Not as many people going out for berry picking as previous years. Some people have their own berry patch and they claim it was okay in comparison to others who say it was not as good. There were differences noted on berry information by the people.

### **Caribou**

- No caribou were shot in the spring. One hunter got a few around the Yukon/ NWT border.
- In the fall time, there were a couple of successful hunters getting some caribou in the hills up by Husky River.
- Winter hunts in the mountains above Aklavik were unsuccessful due to the change in the migration routes and no caribou were around this year.
- Overall it was a bad year for Aklavik hunters.
- It is not uncommon for the caribou migration to change every so many years when they are coming down into

the delta region. A couple of people suggested they will be back as it has happened other times before. It is nature's own way of preserving and maintaining the ecological cycle.

### **Birds**

- Ducks, swans all appear to be the same as last year with fewer geese possibly due to a different migration route.
- Ptarmigan and a few grouse were noted. Not many birds of prey were spotted. A few eagles were noted around Aklavik. A lot of small songbirds and snowbirds were observed this year.

### **Foxes**

- Foxes were in abundance and were present within town boundaries all fall until freeze up. This is unusual but it's the same as last year.

### **Moose**

- A few were noted around the Delta region and they lingered through fall until to Christmas.

### **Rabbits**

- There were hardly any to very few rabbits observed this fall until Christmas.

### **Lynx and Wolves**

- There were few signs of them this year.



## Bears

- There were a few black bears seen near the community this year. One grizzly bear was shot near town.

## Mosquitoes

- These were normal this year as there are always lots and bad every year.

## Future of Local Economy

- The oil companies are involved with oil and gas exploration in Delta region and the coastal area. Prospects look healthy for employment opportunities.
- On the land, activity is not as high as it used to be. The younger generations are not as active with traditional hunting, trapping and fishing activities.

- There was no trapping going on at the time of the interviews (late January to February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2002) however; some hunters stated that they would be doing some towards the later part of the winter or early spring.

- The local school in conjunction with GNWT Renewable Resources and the Renewable Resources Council of the Aklavik Indian Band are focusing on more “On the Land” projects to preserve the cultural components.

### Participant comments:

- *Charlie Snowshoe had noticed that a lot of people are dying of cancer and wanted to know if there were there any studies done. Could it have anything to do with the parasites in the whitefish?*
- *Johnny Edwards replied that he'd been told the parasites are normal and nothing to worry about. But maybe we should ask again.*
- *Billy Day added that the lake whitefish are good, but not the river ones.*



## Report by Connie Stewart- Fort McPherson

### Weather

- A lot of knowledgeable elders said that during the summer of 2001 we had a very hot and dry summer as well as lack of rain.

- The weather affected the growth of plants. This caused the birds to move elsewhere because according to the many interviews that I did, none of the interviewees had any comments on the birds because there is nothing around this year.



- According to the elders, during the months of September through December we had very warm months.
- In January 2002 we started getting cold weather, which is very unusual, and they figure it is because of the environmental change.
- It got really cold fast and the elders mentioned we had a quick freeze up and there was no overflows apparently because the water levels were really low up and down the Peel River.

### Permafrost

- Everyone travels either up or down the Peel River and they have noticed a lot of

changes with the permafrost.

- Some of the changes that they noticed are a lot of landslides and cut banks along the sides of the river.
- There are some places that creeks are forming.
- One elder mentioned that some permafrost has affected the land.

### Plants

- In regards to the plants, shrubs and trees, some people say that they don't notice any changes and some say they do.

- The people that say they have noticed changes in the plants say that the weather got cold too fast and that is

why the willows and trees didn't have enough time to freeze.

### Berries

- Because of the hot and dry summer we had, the berry season was really bad. All the berries cooked and were also very small.
- A lot of the interviewees have their own berry picking spots up and down the Peel River and on the highways. This year there were absolutely no berries around.
- There are some people that I did interview that said that around their camp, they did pick a lot of berries that



were in good condition. But they would not say exactly where the berries are and I don't blame them.

## **Caribou**

- Everyone basically gave the same information on the caribou. The spring and fall caribou all migrated south towards the Yukon. They traveled from the coast towards Rock River, past the Blackstone and Ogilvie Rivers and on towards the south to Old Crow.
- According to the elders they moved fast this year and they also mentioned that lately they seem to be changing routes all the time.
- The caribou were in between fat and poor shape.

## **Birds**

- The observations on different types of animals such as ducks, swans, and geese and as well as different types of birds varied.
- Some people didn't see any this year and some saw a few.
- But according to the elders, they found it very unusual because there were no birds. I sometimes ask the question "why do you think there are no birds?" They responded "environment change or the lack of food so the birds moved elsewhere."

## **Moose**

- Some of the observations of the moose were that there was hardly any, and if there was, they got killed by the wolves.

## **Wolves**

- A lot of the people say that we had a lot of wolves around this year. That is why there were probably no moose.

## **Trapping**

- Majority of the people didn't trap this year because there were no animals to trap.

## **Community Observation & Human Activity**

- Everyone says that there is hardly anyone on the land anymore and there are also the same people hunting and fishing.
- Today we have a lot of training, education and employment in our community. A lot of the young people are turning towards the modern way of living and they figure it is because of the high cost of living. But a lot of them do understand and they don't blame them for changing.
- Our local culture has changed drastically and a lot of people I interviewed believe that it is due to the effects of alcohol and drugs, oil and gas industry and also the cost of traveling.
- Effects on our land and animals due to human activities are increasing due to snowmobile use while hunting. The skidoos make tracks all over and noise. The gas makes exhaust. The semi trucks have a big effect as well because they travel back and forth on the highway and that also scares a lot of the caribou away. That is probably why their migration routes always change.



Connie reported that when she asked the question, "What else is affecting the caribou?", the concern of the majority of the interviewees was the effects of the young hunters. The young hunters are not educated enough about the caribou and how important it is to us. When they go hunting, they shoot everything and don't take what they need. They take more.

A few elders told Connie that they figure that we are going to have a flood this year because of the lack of snow. And apparently, to them, that is going to be good because we are then going to get our plants and animals back.

Connie also said that one elder told her that maybe the reason why we don't see animals anymore is because no one is out on the land anymore. "Today you can't do anything without money. Our young people respect our elders – but at the same time if you want somebody to take the young

people out on the land, you have to pay them."

People also mentioned that fish are sick. You know the children here – nowadays the fish, they wouldn't even eat it. They say the fish are sick. You have to really tell them, it's not sick. Most of the kids are like that, so they don't eat wild food.

Connie concluded by saying that doing the interviews was interesting. She learned a lot and it was good to visit with the elders. It was a really good experience. You don't get to sit around like that with them anymore. It's good to get younger people to do these interviews, because there are so many things we can learn. You get a lot of knowledge from the elders. The old people, some don't even get to go outside anymore. They don't even know where people live. She said, "I don't interview them, I just sit and talk to them. Sometimes I have to tell them what's going on out there."

#### **Participant comments:**

- *There was a lengthy discussion about doing interviews in English vs. Gwich'in. A number of people felt that a lot would be lost in this kind of information if it is gathered from elders in English instead of in Gwich'in.*
- *Barry Greenland: You get a better understanding if it's in Gwich'in. I was lucky to have my mother and aunt there to tell me how it was, how different it was out on the land. Today's lifestyle is easier compared to how it was then. I'm glad I was born in 1970 and I didn't have to go through that. If we do these stories in our language, you're going to see big changes. In the weather, in the plants, what they got out on the land was their doctor. I'm thankful to hear that stuff. It was rough, but as people living out on the land, that was their home.*
- *Charlie Snowshoe: I'm curious, one time people used to go after herring – that guy used to get more than enough herring to feed all the dogs. Now there's no herring for the last few years. That's something funny. We should really look into why there's no herring. The temperature of the water is changing.*



## Berries

- This year the berries are very few because of the weather. This spring was cold. It had no rain until late. So the berries didn't have a chance to grow and whatever had a chance to start growing froze on July 6<sup>th</sup> when we had a snowstorm.
- So the berries either froze or died because of the hot weather we had in July with no rain.
- The ground was very dry and dusty. Some of the berries that did well were the ones that were in the shade.
- Most of the berries that survived were small but tasted good.

## Fish

- In Old Crow the people fish in the spring for whatever they can catch. In the spring we catch whitefish, crooked-backs, coney, suckers, jackfish, and grayling. We catch these fish to eat and feed the dogs.
- This year the fish numbers were down. In July the people fish for Chinook. The run was normal time but not too many fish this year. The fish was in good shape. The people average about ten (10) salmon each.
- The dog salmon was normal this year. It was a good run and the people caught what they needed. These fish are in good shape with no signs of sickness. It was a good fall.

## Caribou

- This year because there was a lot of snow, the spring caribou migration was slow and late.
- As a result, it caused a lot calves to

be born before reaching the calving grounds. A lot of the calves didn't make across the Porcupine River. They drowned or were killed by eagles, bears, wolves, etc. and the cold weather.

- Because of the spring conditions, the caribou were in very poor condition but they still tasted good.
- The caribou this year returned from the calving grounds about August 25<sup>th</sup> of 2001. They crossed up the Porcupine and the Bell Rivers about 90-100 miles. There was a lot of



- caribou at that time, in mixed groups.
- In September more caribou crossed at the Porcupine (about 60 miles up the river). The caribou this year were pretty scattered. No one saw any big bunches like in the past.
- The caribou in August, September and half of October were pretty fat, in good shape and tasted good. There were no unhealthy caribou reported.



## Report by Randall Tetlich - Old Crow

Randall commented that most people are aware of the interviews but still ask, "How come we are doing it?" Some people are not aware of the interviews and they ask questions of "How come?" too.

### Weather

- The weather in Old Crow is changing rapidly each year. It is getting warmer and warmer with all the seasons. Compared to five years ago, the temperature has risen a lot, the cold spells are shorter and the warm weather is longer.
- In terms of cold and warm weather, it is like a teeter-totter. It goes up and down. This year in 2001, we had a snowstorm in July 6 to 9, 2001. This was unusual.
- In May and June we had warm weather, a bit cool and windy. July and August, we had wet, warm, moist and windy weather. In September and October it was very dry, cool and lots of frost on the ground.
- We had our first snow in October. We had little snow in November and December 2001.
- The freeze up this year was late and slow. The weather was warm, with very little snow, which made it hard to travel out on the land.
- The river finally froze in late November. It was unsafe to travel on the river until late December 2001.

- Overflow this year was very limited. There was more on the lakes than the rivers.
- The water levels on the Porcupine River were good. It made travel easy. The water levels on the Bell, Crow and Eagle Rivers were low and it made it hard to travel.
- In the winter of 2001, we had lots and lots of snow. From September to December 2001, we had no snow.

### Permafrost

- The permafrost has been melting at a fast rate in the last five years. We see this when we travel along the rivers- the Crow, Bell, Porcupine, Eagle and Whitestone. There are a lot of landslides and erosion of the riverbanks and new channels in the rivers.
- We also see landslides up the mountains when we travel by skidoos.
- We also see that the lakes are rapidly turning into meadows.
- The banks are falling in fast and the water levels are going down.
- A few people reported seeing caribou killed along the Porcupine River and at Crow Flats mostly by wolves and bears.
- A lot of cow caribou were seen without calves during the fall migration. People suspect that it was because of calving early and that the calves were taken by nature or predators.



- This year some of the caribou wintered at Crow Flats because of unknown reasons. The caribou were pretty fat and tasty. About 60 caribou were taken from this herd.
- This year the caribou rutted in the Old Crow Range from October to the last week in November 2001.

### **Birds**

- Last spring there were less swans, geese and black ducks in the Old Crow area. There were less than most years. The people didn't get enough to meet their needs. This also includes all other ducks.
- There were also no Ptarmigan, but more grouse in the Old Crow region.
- There also seems to be more birds of prey in the Old Crow region. People are seeing more of these than in the past.
- There were also less small birds in the Old Crow area. We couldn't enjoy the sounds of small birds because there were none. This is not normal. It is the worst. There were no ducks, swans, or geese all summer and fall. It is sad.

### **Moose**

- The moose population is also decreasing. About six moose were killed last fall. No one knows where all the moose went.

### **Muskox**

- A few muskox have been spotted down river from Old Crow in December 2001. These animals have started coming into the Old Crow region within the last five years.

### **Rabbits**

- The rabbits have disappeared.

### **Bears and Wolves**

- There also seems to be more bears and wolves in the Old Crow region for reasons unknown.

### **Mosquitoes**

- Of course there were plenty of mosquitoes, insects and flies.

### **Community Observation & Human Activity**

- This year there were only two people that went trapping or did some trapping from Old Crow. This way of life is rapidly disappearing.
- In terms of hunting and fishing in the Old Crow region, these activities are about the same as any other year.
- The economy in Old Crow is nil. There is nothing happening. People are lost without employment. People depend on the natural resources to survive. Not many people are furthering their education and training either, because they are not supported financially.



## Language

- Half of the people speak their native language. The other half doesn't speak or understand. Our language is lost.

## Important Changes in Local Culture

- In the last two years we are seeing less and less people going out on the land for the period of eight weeks or more.
- People are depending more on the modern technology, to survive, wait around for jobs, hanging onto jobs,

satellite phones/dishes, processed foods, sweets, furniture and entertainment. We are losing our creativeness and culture. This is the change.

- The technology that we use today to hunt, the people we bring in to see and work, and the people we bring in to develop, all affect the food chain of all the animals, plant life, water fowl, fish, water, air and the land. These affect the animals and affect subsistence activities. We use man-made power to over power the animals and we forget our own. All in all we are destroying the very purpose that we were created for.





## Report by Joel Tritt - Arctic Village

Joel began with a brief history of Arctic Village: I grew up in the old ways. When I went to school as a beginner that was the first time I heard English. The first time the snowmobile came around was in the '60s. In the '50s we had dog teams, lived the old ways. Planes came around once a month, then once a week, and finally everyday.

Eighty percent of us still speak the language. That's of the people over thirty. When we do interviews with the elders, it is very hard for them to understand English, especially the hard words. They make it hard to understand the whole paragraph.

Even I have a hard time understanding it. I advise that there should be a native-speaking person there when the interviews are done to get the story right. With hard or complicated issues it simply isn't possible to understand each other. I know this because I was born right in the middle.

### Weather

- At the beginning of this summer the weather was kind of warm, calm with a few storms and somewhat wet.
- It continued the same into July and it was quite dry. We had some hail the last of July as it has been in the last three years. In the late summer we had some more rain.

- In the fall it was drier with a little bit of snow. November and December it was cold and dry with a little snow.
- Freeze up this year was later than in most other years with average freeze up and not much overflow.
- It seems like there's more deep snow, and more wet. Overall it remains the same, not much change. Arctic Village is a very cold area. We don't have all the lakes. It's very cold around there. During the spring it melts very slowly, snow goes away around the end of May. The climate is very different up there.



### Water Level

- Water was lower and more permafrost is melting. People said that it was easier to dig graves and the airport runway was wavy. There were more cave-ins along the river. The vegetation was getting thicker. The spruce trees are turning red and drying.

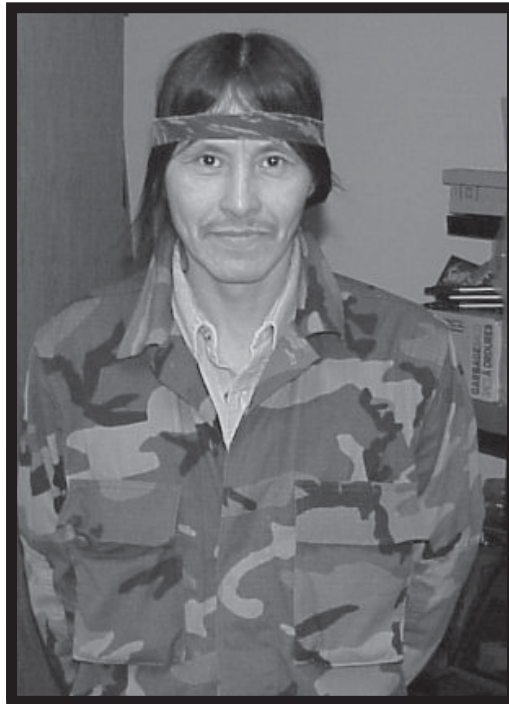


## Berries

- Few people went salmonberry picking. The quality reported was average. Some people went cranberry picking and the reports varied. Some said that there were lots and others said that there were few. Some said that they were juicy and some said they were dry.

## Fish

- The low water makes it hard for fishing in some places. Just a few people put out nets, but when they have got enough, other people go and pick the nets too.
- A couple of people interviewed thought that there were more jackfish, and big ones this year. One person thought that the low water levels were good for jackfish, because it gave them an advantage over other fish when hunting.



## Caribou

- In spring there weren't too many caribou around. In the fall some people reported that they were close by and some said they weren't close.
- Some people reported the caribou were in good shape and there were some that were skinny and some that were fat.

Some reported that there are lumps in the lungs. Caribou rutted on the other side of Old John Lake. At the end of October the caribou appeared abundantly.

- Caribou were affected by there not being much snow, lots of wolves and, as always, by human activities.
- Caribou was similar to last year. Some changes that people noticed are erratic behavior and migration route.

## Birds

- Observations varied from being fewer ducks and geese to two reports that they are about the same.
- Swans are about the same but some people reported seeing more swans this year.
- Ptarmigan observations are about the same also.

- A few people said there were more hawks than eagles.
- Some people felt that there were fewer small birds and other people saw birds they have never seen before.



## **Moose**

- A couple people reported that there were less moose and a couple others reported that there were more moose.

## **Muskox**

- One person reported seeing muskox.

## **Rabbits**

- Some people reported that there were lots of rabbits around and then there were a few reports that there were few and none at all.

## **Bear**

- Some people mentioned that there were some bears around and a few people reported a lot of bears are around.

## **Wolves**

- Half of the people reported that there were lots of wolves. There were reports of wolves in the side of the valley and also a couple of dogs disappeared.

## **Trapping**

- Hardly anyone traps but a couple that do said that the fur is in good fair shape and the prices were okay.

## **Mosquitoes**

- Naturally they are abundant when it is rainy and wet. There are few when it is dry. There are also more mosquitoes in the thicket and few in the barren area.

## **Community Observations and Human Activities**

- Many people reported that the activities remain the same. A couple mentioned that young people know less.
- A couple of people felt that education should be improved.
- The young people don't speak the language and are more into the western culture than the traditional culture.
- Traditional subsistence culture remains the same.
- Tourism is increasing.
- There is no change in oil and gas exploration at this time.
- Research on the lands is about the same.
- There is more trash and garbage being found in the landing strip and the local camping area.

## **Airport and Helicopter Traffic**

- Many people reported an increase in planes chasing caribou and sports hunters are increasing. There is also an increase in snow machines and four wheelers.
- About airstrips in the bush: The small planes, often with sports hunters, land everywhere. It's hard to detect them sometimes, and we only see them when we accidentally run into them.



### Participant comments:

- *Joanne Gustafson said that US Fish and Wildlife Service is monitoring these airstrips closely. They are a big concern in many parts of village Alaska.*
- *Joel expressed concern that even though they reported planes sometimes, nothing ever came of it.*
- *Bev Reitz said that actually, anyone can land where they want to. We're trying to address that. We're trying to monitor the commercial guides. We're trying to come up with stipulations for the commercial hunting operators.*





## Participants' comments on the presentations:

- Billy Day: Barry Greenland made comments about the harsh lives that elders used to live. But myself, John Carmichael, and others, don't talk about how harsh it was, but about the good old times. When you get to our age, you call them good times. My mother, looking back to her elders about 100 years ago, said that if you had three dogs, you were rich. She had just one dog, and they had to help them through deep snow. But she never talked about it being hard or harsh.
- Mike Gill asked if last spring was different for birds. Randall replied that, "It was the worst ever. How come, I don't know."

A number of people had questions and concerns about muskox and how they get along with caribou.

- Gary Kofinas: Part of the history is that they existed in Alaska in the 1800s, they had musk ox but were killed off. That's why they were bringing them in. They used to live together with caribou, but when people got guns, they were hunted out.
- Ian McDonald: the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) is developing a harvest plan and is moving towards making recommendation for a harvest quota. There are a lot of concerns about caribou and muskox. There are some collars on animals now. It's an ongoing issue. (Ian)
- Charlie Snowshoe: Scientists say that muskox and caribou do get along. So

there's a difference of looking at it. Back in the '60s elders said that muskox would scare caribou away. We don't want to see them get away. We know muskox have already caused problems. Get them in a net and send them back!

- Annie B. Gordon: I cooked muskox meat for a meeting in Aklavik, and they enjoyed it.
- Joel Tritt: Arctic Village gets a few, but we're not allowed to shoot them.

## Ground squirrels:

- Billy Day: Years ago along the coast there used to be squirrels running all around when you set up camp. The last couple of years at our whaling camp there are hardly any.
- People from Aklavik, Old Crow and Arctic Village all said that there are fewer now than in the past, since the 1970s.
- Herbert Felix said they always have an abundance.

William Teya asked, "We used to see red roses. Where did *they* go?"

## Moose:

- Billy Day: People talked this morning about moose. On the delta side of Inuvik, there are lots of moose coming up to the delta. Back in the 1940s there were lots but up in the hills. Now people are hunting all summer in the delta. The last ten years they come into the delta. People would rather have caribou than



moose. For about 60 years we didn't have any caribou, so that could be one reason the moose population was down.

- William Teya: This time of year, cow moose are fat.
- Danny A. Gordon: After a fire 10 years ago, there are a lot more moose.
- Joel: In our area, the Yukon flats, the population is mostly down.



said they found wormy whitefish.

- Maureen Clark: There's an increase in herring in Tsiigehtchic. People don't care for it much, but they give it to dogs. Other people can't feed herring to their skidoos so they don't like it.
- Billy Day: There are a lot of herring but a lot of times people are not there at the right times, they might be off whaling. They come back in late July or early August and say they're not there. Then a week later they show up.

• Melanie Toyne: Fisheries found out that this year people were catching lots of herring, second to whitefish.

#### **Weather:**

• Maureen Clark: There were funnel clouds that took off treetops. The town got pitch black when that was happening. We had lightening showers where the two rivers meet all the way up north until the Yukon. Tsiigehtchic should have been burning, there was lightening all over the place!

It was just lit up.

#### **Caribou:**

- Billy Day: Some people went out from Inuvik and got caribou in really poor shape. But my sons got nine and they were all really in good shape.
- Joel Tritt: It depends what type of caribou they are. The young men are skinny at this time of year.

- Joel Tritt: In '97 we had hail. In the last for 4 years we've had hail, some of it golf ball size.
- Maureen Clark: We usually take back channels when going upriver, but this year they were closed off, we thought because of landslides. This year seemed there were more than normal.

#### **Fish:**

- Joel: Some people talked about whitefish being in good shape. Someone