

# Porcupine Caribou Management Board Meeting Minutes

February 27 and 28, 2006  
Whitehorse, Yukon

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## **IN ATTENDANCE**

### **Members**

Joe Tetlich, Chair  
Georgie Moses, Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation  
James Andre, Gwich'in Tribal Council  
Gerald Buyck, Nacho Ny'ak Dun  
Roberta Joseph, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in  
Ian McDonald, Government of Canada  
Ron Morrison, Government of Northwest Territories  
Doug Larsen, Government of Yukon  
Donald Aviugana, Inuvialuit Game Council  
Dorothy Cooley, Government of Yukon (Alternate)  
Steve Taylor, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (Alternate)

Deana Lemke, Secretariat

## **Monday, February 27, 2006**

### **Opening and Welcome**

Joe Tetlich, Chair, welcomed attendees to the meeting and the meeting was opened with a prayer.

CYFN Grand Chief Andy Carvill acknowledged Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Ta'an Kwach'an First Nation, whose traditional land the meeting is being held on. He noted that good work has been undertaken by the Board with regard to the preservation of the caribou herd. He welcomed the Board to Whitehorse and noted the importance of all groups working together to preserve the caribou. Elders are the keepers of traditional knowledge, and the Board should always be mindful of what the elders have to say.

Joe welcomed members and opened the discussion to community updates and concerns from the members.

## Community Updates

Roberta Joseph related that there is not a lot of harvesting in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional areas. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens take about 30 caribou, and everyone seems to be hunting respectfully. The First Hunt was held in October this year, which was an excellent time because the caribou were in this area. It was well attended and well organized. The youth harvested 16 caribou. Elders accompanied every group that went out.

Chief Darren Taylor added that the Board has to explore how decisions are made in relation to management of the herd. Because there are so many entities that deal with fish and wildlife management, it is essential to communicate with each other to ensure consistency in the flow of information. The final agreements provide First Nations with the ability to have a more direct role in management of fish and wildlife. The *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* (PCMA) needs to be amended to reflect the current situation. The herd needs to be protected for future generations. All groups should communicate better so they can all be on side and so everyone understands their aboriginal rights in relation to the herd. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has addressed safety issues, and this should happen in all user communities, with the elders working with the youth.

James Andre said that since the last PCMB meeting, the RRCs had a regional meeting and developed several motions regarding the Porcupine Caribou herd and the Dempster Highway. Many entities deal with fish and wildlife management, and communication between these groups is essential to ensure consistency in flow of information as well as keeping each other abreast of changes. There is great concern about the Bluenose and the Bathurst herds declining. More monitoring should be done on the highway. The timing of the hunting closure along the highway is important, and support from the Yukon Government is essential. Transport trucks are traveling too fast on the Dempster Highway, and putting up signs encouraging drivers to reduce speed would be a good idea. Last year there was construction going on while the caribou were migrating near the highway. The RRCs would like to see construction work halt by September 30.

Doug Larsen related that Government of Yukon is still concerned about the inadvertent harvest of the Hart River herd while it is intermingling with the Porcupine Caribou Herd. This will be discussed later in the agenda.

Fredrick (Sonny) Blake, Jr., related that harvesting practices must be considered. Education is important, and First Nation traditions should be taught to others more often.

Gerald Buyck related that Nacho Ny'ak Dun reviewed its harvesting numbers – 10 to 15 caribou are harvested by Nacho Ny'ak Dun citizens.

## **Review and Approve Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed and approved, with the following deletion:

- Christine Cleghorn from Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board will be unable to attend and present the Board with an update.

### **Motion:**

*It was moved that the agenda be accepted as amended.*

**Moved by Ron Morrison**

**Seconded by Ian McDonald**

**Carried**

## **Approve Minutes**

The Minutes of the November 5 and 6, 2005, Board meeting held in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, were reviewed and approved.

### **Motion:**

*It was moved that the Minutes of the Board meeting held on November 5 and 6, 2005, be approved.*

**Moved by James Andre**

**Seconded by Doug Larsen**

**Carried**

## **Actions List**

Action items were reviewed and progress and status of each was discussed.

## **Dempster Hunting — Torrie Hunter, Conservation Officer**

Torrie Hunter has been a Conservation Officer in Dawson for 12 years and has recently been promoted to regional manager. He reviewed his observations on the Dempster.

A one-week hunting closure to let the leaders pass was implemented from October 7 to 14 after 5,000 to 8,000 caribou were located 40 km west of the Ogilvie camp. Caribou appeared back on the highway on October 10, which indicates the closure was effective. This year, caribou went farther south than ever before.

There were 22 hunting occurrences in total on the Dempster Highway this year. Most of these were wildlife violation investigations. Five charges were laid for hunting in the corridor, one for hunting during the closure, two for dangerous hunting (shooting from the road), two for exceeding bag limits, and five warnings for failing to affix seals.

The first reported caribou harvest in Yukon occurred on Peel Ridge on October 2, when 30-40 animals were taken by NWT hunters. Caribou then moved away from the Peel Ridge to the west and were seen from flight on October 5.

Caribou hunting started on October 14. Many caribou were harvested near km 74. Overall compliance levels were better than last year. The Delta hunters' fall access to the caribou was limited, as the Peel River ferry service ended earlier this year for mechanical reasons.

Good early snow allowed for snowmobile use after the one-week closure. Approximately 200 caribou were harvested between December and January by NWT hunters. Several of these hunts were sponsored by various First Nation governments and HTC's.

There is new hunting pressure on the Porcupine Caribou Herd due to problems with herds in NWT.

Wounding loss continues to be a concern. Some contributing factors to wounding loss include poor marksmanship, using wrong rifle for the job, shooting too many animals at once to retrieve, and failing to make an effort to track and kill wounded animals.

Dangerous hunting on the road and in the corridor is also a concern. Some hunting is done from the highway. When hunters find it very hard to not shoot caribou that they see near the highway, they tend to stop in the middle of the road to shoot caribou, which can cause a vehicle accident.

Wastage still happens. Causes for wastage include poorly field-dressed caribou. If caribou are left by the road to be picked up later, they are often scavenged. Some hunters shoot too many caribou to take, so portions of the animals get left behind.

Habitat damage by vehicles still occurs due to use of vehicles on sensitive habitats. There is greater access to a variety of off-highway vehicles. Efforts at reducing habitat damage are aimed at hunters as well as other users of the land.

Gut piles are still left in the ditch, leaving a poor image of hunting. Gut piles also attract other animals that can be hit by vehicles.

Roberta Joseph added that more respect should be shown by members of other First Nations when they're hunting in the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory – leaving gut piles is inappropriate. More enforcement should be done on the north end of the highway. James Andre suggested that perhaps the RRCs could assist with this.

## **Herd Update — Dorothy Cooley**

Dorothy stated that there hasn't been a census in years, but the census is not the only way we keep track of this herd.

The census is considered a check on the other methods used for determining population. Calving surveys (documenting birth rate) and survival estimates are done every year. A composition count is done in March. The short yearling study determines survival estimates for the breeding population. The adult cow mortality study is indicating a decline. The census can't be replaced; all methods are necessary for measuring the population and herd health. Don Russell cautioned that there is always a danger in managing by ratios, because those numbers can be misleading if they're used in isolation. One large gap is the absence of harvest data.

Pregnancy and birth rates this year were at an extremely low level – 64 percent, as opposed to about 86 normally. This is a cause for great concern. Ron Morrison added that this was a concern in the NWT as well in assessing their declining herds.

The only factor we have control over is harvest. Harvest management planning is critical. Any harvest could be accelerating the decline. Focusing more on harvesting bulls than cows is another option to helping the herd to recover.

## **Circum Arctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment (CARMA) Network Update — Don Russell**

Don Russell described CARMA and some of CARMA's recent activities. CARMA is a collective of circum Arctic caribou researchers. This organization shares information among researchers and offers protocols to help standardize and synthesize research. Community-based monitoring is an important part of CARMA's work.

Don Russell, on behalf of CARMA, will be submitting a proposal for International Polar Year funding by the end of March entitled "Starting the clock for the CARMA Network: Global Change, Resilience and Human-*Rangifer* Systems of the CircumArctic." The project examines resilience and vulnerability of caribou populations to climate change, and noting the impact on the people who rely on the caribou for subsistence.

***Action 06-01: Chair to write a letter of support for CARMA'S International Polar Year proposal.***

## **Update on Bluenose Herds — Ron Morrison**

Ron Morrison related that the report *Caribou Forever – our Heritage, our Responsibility: A Barren-ground Caribou Management Strategy for the Northwest Territories* has been completed, and it is now available.

Because the Bluenose herds are declining, there will be increased hunting pressure on the Porcupine Caribou Herd. Strategies should be developed to deal with that. This makes obtaining up-to-date census data and harvest data on the Porcupine Caribou Herd even more important.

The Northwest Territories is planning to install a check station on the north Dempster Highway to facilitate conservation officers' spending more time on the Dempster Highway. Conservation officers could provide educational opportunities at the check station, similar to what is being done in the Yukon.

Ron Morrison noted that the definition of "Native User" in the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement refers to traditional users of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and their descendents. People from Sachs Harbour are considered descendents.

## **Hart River Herd — Doug Larsen**

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Dawson RRC and Government of Yukon have a concern regarding the Hart River herd, which is harvested inadvertently as Porcupine Caribou in the wintering grounds. They are continuing to discuss how to deal with this.

## **North American Caribou Workshop — Wendy Nixon**

The North American Caribou Workshop will be held April 23-26 in Jasper, Alberta. Don Russell will attend to present information about CARMA.

Joe Tetlichy indicated that he is planning to attend to represent PCMB.

## **North Yukon Regional Planning Commission — Shawn Francis**

There are very few land-based interests in the North Yukon planning area. The Commission is considering what types of activities are anticipated and what benefits will those activities bring. The big issue is future potential energy sector activity in Eagle Plains, in the heart of the winter range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

The planning approach is to first understand and quantify the planning region (historical and current land use), understand future anticipated land uses, use landscape models to investigate landscape change and interaction of different land uses (plan scenarios), and make land use decisions.

Understanding the region includes obtaining information about the biophysical setting, wildlife, vegetation dynamics, wildlife ecology, fisheries and aquatics, human land use patterns, current economic activities, and resource potentials.

Understanding future land uses will include work with government, industry and stakeholders to develop plausible future land use scenarios and potential timelines; future land use scenarios have been developed for oil and gas exploration and development, tourism potential, et cetera.

Major scenarios will be analyzed, taking into consideration the current situation and increasing land use, with a focus on oil and gas exploration and development, tourism and mineral and climate change.

Next steps include reviewing the resources assessment data and report, which will be done very soon. There will be an open house in Old Crow on March 28 and an open house in Whitehorse on April 24. A plan scenarios documentation and workshop will be done in June 2005. A draft plan should be completed by July 2006. There will be final draft plan by December 2006.

### **Peel Watershed Planning Commission — Brian Johnston**

The Peel Watershed Planning Commission is following the footsteps as the North Yukon Planning Commission. Fort McPherson, Old Crow, Mayo, and Dawson are the communities involved. A number of stakeholders are in Whitehorse, so meetings will also be held in Whitehorse.

There has been initial consultation done in the communities and in Whitehorse and an Issues Report has been developed. The PCMB hasn't provided much input to the Peel Watershed Planning Commission, but the invitation is there. There is joint representation with Steve Taylor on PCMB and Peel Watershed Planning Commission. Deana Lemke also attended the recent PWPC meeting to start dialogue between the two bodies.

Traditional use, tourism, commercial outfitting and some mineral exploration are current land uses in the area. There is also oil and gas potential and further mineral development potential.

Issues highlights include current land uses, potential land uses and common themes. The approach for planning is similar to NYPC.

John Ryder added information specifically regarding Porcupine Caribou Herd data in the North Yukon and Peel area. Most analyses have come from Canadian Wildlife Service. Porcupine Caribou Herd is the main focal species of interest, and it is at the forefront of planning concerns.

There is extensive satellite telemetry data for the Porcupine Caribou Herd, going back to 1983, which is some of the best data in the world.

The North Yukon (including Old Crow Flats) is about 33% protected already. There is nothing currently protected in Peel Watershed area.

The PCMB can contribute to the planning commissions regarding the health and integrity of the herd. If the Board is comfortable with the value of the work that has been done, becoming advocates in the communities would be of assistance. Harvest numbers would be useful in planning.

Doug Larsen mentioned that the PCMB should continue to be part of the planning process.

The Peel Watershed Planning Commission is a year behind the North Yukon Planning Commission regarding planning. There is plenty of time to get input from PCMB. It is going to be critical to get traditional knowledge to do the habitat mapping for the Peel Watershed area. A workshop is being planned for Fort McPherson.

### **Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board — Robert Charlie**

The GRRB was established as a result of the 1992 the Gwich'in Land Claim Agreement. The Board's responsibilities are with fish and wildlife, and the Board is accountable to the communities in the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

Last week the GRRB held a meeting and decided that they support the Harvest Management Strategy that the PCMB is undertaking, especially because of the concern about what is happening with the herds in the NWT. GRRB approved the Harvest Management Strategy proposal and will be allocating the funding requested. The PCMB and the GRRB need to work together for the betterment of the herd and to ensure future generations will be able to enjoy the continued ability to harvest caribou.

The GRRB and PCMB need to share information with the communities so they are part of the process and informed of all the initiatives being carried out. It's a multi-jurisdictional issue we face with the Porcupine Caribou Herd – many user communities need to come together to achieve a common goal. There is a need for quality information to make informed decisions.

The GRRB discussed the Dempster Highway regulations and will defer to any decisions the PCMB makes. It is understood that the PCMB is responsible for the management of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

The declining population of other herds in the NWT is leading to increasing levels of hunting stress on the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and this concern needs to be

considered and addressed. At the regional RRC meeting, similar concerns were raised. A motion was passed that the PCMB will be asked to consider.

Body condition work and composition count proposals were approved for funding by the GRRB.

Ron Morrison suggested that the Inuvialuit, GRRB and the PCMB come together to discuss how to address the issues dealing with the NWT herds.

## **PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE**

The public open house was held at 6:30 p.m.

### **Tuesday, February 28, 2006**

#### **Opening**

The Chair reviewed highlights from the previous day of meeting.

#### **Species at Risk – Boyd Piper**

Boyd Piper presented information on Species at Risk Amendments to the Yukon *Wildlife Act*. The consultation was originally intended to be completed by February 28; however, that is no longer the case. Government needs about a month to work internally on drafting documents, et cetera. The Premier wants the process to go slow and steady and to be done properly. Any package will likely come forward in the fall of 2007. In the meantime, a department priority is to work with stakeholders on finalizing a package to go forward to the Legislature.

Council of Yukon First Nations is establishing a working group to work with Government of Yukon on the species at risk amendments and bringing the *Wildlife Act* into line with First Nation final agreements. Since the federal act is paramount, the Yukon legislation needs to meet the standards set out in the federal legislation.

Conservation is the only thing that can trump aboriginal harvesting rights, but this would need to be done in consultation with the affected parties. A total ban would need to be discussed and decided on by everyone. As First Nations develop and implement their own management regimes, these will also have to be integrated.

Federal species at risk legislation does not apply to the Porcupine Caribou herd because of the specific legal definitions it places on “species” and “populations.” This herd is only a population within the species, so the legislation would not pertain unless the entire species is found to be at risk.

The Board discussed what the PCMB’s role is in conjunction with this process.

## **Harvest Management Strategy Update – Doug Larsen**

Doug Larsen reported that the PCMB Working Group met on Friday evening, and a new draft of the protocol will be distributed to Board members this afternoon. The group discussed in detail whom should be the signatories of the protocol and developed a table outlining roles and authorities related to the protocol.

**Action 06-02:**        ***Members are asked to review these two HMS documents and respond with comments and suggestions.***

A draft budget is currently being developed. Before that can be finalized and submitted to any funders, the Board needs decide how we are proceeding and the scope of the work.

Governments have been asked to provide an indication of whether they provide support for the Harvest Management Strategy, as well as whether they can commit to funding or other support for the development and implementation of the Harvest Management Strategy. We have received responses. Most need more detailed budget estimates before they can commit to specific funding amounts.

## **Harvest Data – Dorothy Cooley**

Dorothy Cooley stated that she has been trying to get some updated information together in preparation for the Harvest Management Strategy planning. There is an action item in the International Plan that asks for a description of harvest reporting throughout the range. A review of harvest data reporting systems was done years ago and presented to the International Board in 1994. It is time to update that report for the Board. The first draft has been done and will be reviewed by the Technical Committee, which expects to meet in April.

Most of the user groups are included in the reporting information that the Board has; however, there is still no data received from the communities of Mayo and Dawson City, as well as some communities in NWT such as Tukoyaktuk and Inuvik. With the establishment of the check station on the NWT side, it is expected that harvest numbers will be more complete.

The Board requested harvest data to be submitted to Dorothy Cooley. The Board will send out another request to the three Yukon user communities. Roberta Joseph said that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in will provide a written submission substantiating that approximately 30 caribou were harvested by their citizens last year.

**Action 06-03:**        ***To request harvest data from Mayo, Dawson City, Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik.***

It is important that user communities inform Board members about harvest issues and to communicate with the Board regarding any community hunts that are being planned. According to the PCMA, the Board is to maintain eligibility lists for First Nation and Inuvialuit hunters. Eligibility lists will be discussed as an agenda item at the next meeting.

**Action 06-04:**        ***Eligibility lists to be placed on agenda for the next meeting.***

## **Caribou Sale, Barter and Trade**

A letter was sent to First Nations in March requesting input on setting criteria for bartering and trade.

There will be no commercial quota within the NWT, so the commercial outlet that purchases caribou cannot purchase it any longer. There are individuals taking advantage of the situation, resulting in people selling caribou. Robert Alexie raised the concern about selling caribou; selling caribou has to stop.

The Board agreed to continue to develop the criteria, by striking a sub-committee to work on drafting the guidelines and/or criteria. Unless there are conservation reasons, the governments will not be able to enforce these guidelines.

Businesses should be reminded that there is no commercial sale of Porcupine Caribou meat – it is illegal. Doug Larsen will pursue this with local conservation officers.

There needs to be more education work like the one-page fact sheets.

The Board needs to develop and recommend guidelines for identifying conditions for sale and barter; i.e., circumstances that qualify a native user as being disadvantaged, categories of costs that are reasonable expenses that can be paid for, and what is the definition of an “emergency situation”. The Board also has to establish procedures for expeditious consideration of these matters.

A Working Group was struck including James Andre, Ron Morrison, Ian McDonald and Deana Lemke. The focus of the Working Group will be to draft guidelines re Sale, Barter and Trade of Porcupine Caribou meat, according to the PCMA, for review by the Board.

**Action 06-05:**        ***Sale, Barter and Trade Guidelines Working Group to draft guidelines for review by the Board.***

**Action 06-06:**        ***Deana to draft a resolution re conservation of the herd to present to the Board at the next meeting.***

## **Member Responsibilities – Communication between Board and Communities**

Member responsibilities were discussed, and it was agreed that a resolution would be reworked and discussed during the afternoon session.

### **Chair's report**

The Chair described his attendance at the CARMA meeting. He and Deana Lemke also met with the Grand Chief to discuss potential amendments to the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*. CYFN has agreed to take this up with the Chiefs.

Joe plans to attend the North American Caribou Workshop in Jasper, Alberta, and to set up a booth at the Gwich'in Gathering in Inuvik.

### **Administrative and Financial Reports – Deana Lemke**

Deana provided an update on Administrative Activities and reviewed the financial reports and budget (report attached).

**Action 06-07:**        ***Deana Lemke to check honoraria rates for other boards and compare to the members' rates for the PCMB.***

### **Appointment of Chair**

Joe Tetlichy was excused from the meeting. The process of appointing a Chair was discussed.

It was decided that the last day to receive nominations would be extended to April 14. A decision will be made at a teleconference on May 1, at 3:00 Yukon time with all Board members. Letters of support for Joe Tetlichy that have already been received should be disregarded. To ensure there is no conflict of interest, nominees who are employed by First Nations should have a letter of support from the First Nations. Proxy voting will be allowed during the upcoming teleconference.

Deana Lemke has prepared draft guidelines re the Chair appointment process and will incorporate feedback from members. She will circulate the document, and the Board members will review it and then it can formally adopt the guidelines once they have been finalized.

**Action 06-08:**        ***Deana Lemke to circulate draft process guidelines for appointment of the Chair.***

## **Northwest Territories Regulation Consultation – Ron Morrison**

Ron Morrison provided an update and related that consultation is still underway pertaining to the recommendations for regulation changes put forward by the PCMB to the Northwest Territories Minister.

### **Discussion/Members' Concerns**

Ian McDonald raised housekeeping concerns. More formal Board procedures need to be put in place.

**Action 06-09:**        ***James Andre, Ron Morrison and Doug Larsen to obtain legal interpretations on 12.6.4 of the Gwich'in Final Agreement in relation to PCMA and share insight with PCMB.***

Steve Taylor expressed ongoing concern with Peel Watershed land-use planning. They are marking out existing land use dispositions. There has been no discussion about a pipeline route on the Dempster Highway, and suggested that this should be mentioned to the Commission.

### **Set Next Meeting Date and Location**

Deana Lemke will canvas members regarding possible meeting dates in August to potentially schedule the PCMB meeting in conjunction with the Gwich'in Gathering.

### **Resolutions**

#### **Resolution 06-01 — Board Member Communication**

**WHEREAS** the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* identifies communications as part of the mandate of the PCMB;

**AND WHEREAS** effective communication is critical to the effective operations of the PCMB;

**AND WHEREAS** effective representation of each community's concerns requires that board members meet with community representatives to hear their perspectives and bring those perspectives to the PCMB;

**AND WHEREAS** the role of the PCMB members is to communicate information discussed at the PCMB meetings back to their communities;

**AND WHEREAS** board members are given one day's honorarium for each meeting to compensate for time spent communicating with their communities;

**AND WHEREAS** communications by board members to the PCMB, and back to the communities have not been effective;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the PCMB provide written summaries of decisions made at each meeting to the appropriate government officials;

**AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that PCMB members commit to meeting with appropriate members of their sponsoring organizations and communities before and after each meeting and report on these meetings to the Board through the Secretariat;

**AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that honorarium be paid upon receipt of the Board member's report to ensure effective communication occurs.

***Moved by James Andre  
Seconded by Ron Morrison  
Passed Unanimously***

A resolution regarding meetings and politics was reviewed and discussed. This resolution will be redrafted to be considered at another meeting.

***Action 06-10: Ian McDonald and Deana Lemke will collaborate to draft a resolution regarding meetings and politics for the Board members to review at the subsequent meeting***

## **Closing Comments and Adjournment**

Observers made closing comments. Joe Tetlichi thanked members and observers for attending the meeting. The meeting ended with a closing prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.