

# Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

February 12, 2018

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Natural Resources Boardroom  
Dawson City, Yukon

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## In attendance

### Members/Staff

Joe Tetlich, Chair  
Alice McCulley, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in  
Steven Buyck, Na-Cho Ny'ak Dun  
Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council  
Karen Clyde, Government of Yukon  
Ian McDonald, Government of Canada  
Marsha Branigan, Government of the Northwest Territories  
Hal Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin  
Kirby Meister, Government of Yukon (Alternate)  
Michael Svoboda, Government of Canada (Alternate)  
Deana Lemke, Executive Director  
Matthias Lemke, Assistant

### Presenters/Guests

Mary Jane Moses, Vuntut Gwitchin  
Mike Sutor, Environment Yukon  
Shannon Stotyn, Canada Wildlife Service  
Saleem Dar, Canada Wildlife Service  
Roberta Joseph, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in  
Natasha Ayoub, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in  
Darren Taylor, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

### Regrets

Phillip Kay, Gwich'in Tribal Council

## Welcome and Opening Prayer

Joe Tetlich opened the meeting with prayer at 11:00 a.m.

Chief Roberta Joseph welcomed the Board to Dawson City on behalf of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. She stated that the Porcupine Caribou herd has always been close to her heart and that she appreciates the work and efforts of the Board.

Chief Joseph expressed that ensuring that the herd and its habitat continues to thrive, finding new and innovative ways to conduct studies, and working together with First Nation governments are some of the most important aspects of the Board's work.

## **Review Agenda and Minutes**

The agenda for the meeting was reviewed and approved.

***Motion to accept agenda  
Moved by Kirby Meister  
Seconded by Ian McDonald  
Carried***

The minutes of the September 26 and 27, 2017 meeting were reviewed and approved as distributed.

***Motion to accept minutes of meeting as distributed  
Moved by Marsha Branigan  
Seconded by Ian McDonald  
Carried***

## **Chair's Update**

Joe Tetlichy informed members that he recently took part in several media interviews regarding the positive results of the latest herd census.

He related that some members of the public expressed concerns to him about fires that took place on the Ogilvie side of the Dempster Highway this summer. Individuals were wondering how much was burned and whether or not the herd was staying in Alaska because of the loss of habitat.

Joe also shared some of the issues raised at the Regional RRC meeting in Fort McPherson that he attended on January 16 and 17, 2018. The lack of access to the herd is being felt by communities. Concerns about the hunting practices of some harvesters along the Dempster Highway were also raised. GTC is considering alternatives to the "let the leaders pass" approach, with education being a priority.

Billy Storr noted that letting the leaders pass used to make more sense when most of the herd moved together. Now the caribou seem to come in smaller groups and it is not clear where the leaders are. This makes it difficult to manage since we don't know where the leaders are.

Joe explained that PCMB was given observer status at the Parties' Caribou Summit hosted by Government of Yukon. Joe attended the meeting. He related

that Minister Frost initiated the caribou summit to provide a forum for discussions about a coordinated response to potential development in ANWR and about efforts to protect the PCH calving grounds.

Billy Storr was also at the summit, representing IGC. He stated that Government of Yukon does not want to take the lead role in creating a strategy. The minister simply wanted to get the Parties together to begin discussions. A technical working group will be considering short and long-term strategies for the PCH. Since the Board is responsible for representing PCMA Parties and is familiar with creating PCH-related strategies, Billy recommended that PCMB definitely be involved in this process.

Mike Suitor added that engaging with the appropriate regulatory regime needs to be considered, and that the focus will be shifting from Washington, D.C. to Alaska.

Shannon Stotyn added that the summit was held to get high-level decision-makers involved in considering what tools are available and what each agency could contribute to the process.

Darren Taylor felt that since PCMB is tasked with managing the herd, the Board could support other groups regarding concerns around ANWR, while following the Board's key objectives and mandate, as long as the support provided is non-political.

Chief Joseph stated that it would be good to understand the background of the lobbying efforts. In the past, VGG took a lead role in lobbying efforts and received funding for that. Now, there seems to be a shift in how lobbying efforts are supported. It is not Government of Yukon's role to lead the lobbying, but there should be a mechanism in place to coordinate the efforts. Not all the Parties are equipped to do this, but it should be a shared responsibility. Since PCMB is good at coordinating functions and moving agendas forward, the Board's potential role in this process should be considered.

Ian McDonald stated that it would be nice for PCMB to be at the table. Since the international board is not currently functioning due to lack of US appointees to the board, being part of this process would keep the Board informed.

Karen Clyde recommended that for the time being, the Board simply observe the process and decide at a later date whether or not to get involved.

## **Administrative and Financial Report**

The Board's list of action items was reviewed.

- The summary of the previous letting the leader's pass management approach pros and cons is still being worked on by Kirby Meister.
- A letter asking for feedback and support from the Parties regarding a PCH traditional knowledge (TK) project has been sent out.
- A letter with information about the new PCH core range map has been sent to Parties with replies requested by March 31, 2018.

Deana informed members that Sarah Jerome was appointed as the new GTC alternate member, and that there still has been no notification regarding a new alternate member for GNWT. Marsha Branigan was asked to follow up on this.

Natasha Ayoub stated that Ryan Peterson was recommended by Chief and Council as the new Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in alternate. The appointment is pending confirmation from Government of Yukon.

Deana informed the Board that Catherine Gagnon is interested in presenting results of her work with Arctic Borderlands Ecological Coop to the Board.

The Board's financial variance report was distributed and reviewed. Deana pointed out that the Native User Agreement project costs will be over the initially proposed amount.

## **Herd Update**

### **Government of the NWT Update**

Marsha Branigan provided the following updates:

- Caribou have not been anywhere close enough to harvest
- The GNWT minister was not able to go to the caribou summit, but Norman Snowshoe and Brett Elkin attended on behalf of GNWT
- Snow-depth measurements are now being conducted annually and farther north

### **Government of Yukon Update**

Mike Sutor provided the following updates:

- A biological update for the PCH will be provided at the Annual Harvest Meeting
- Caribou have not been accessible; therefore, field work in Yukon has been very limited
- A rut survey was attempted, but icing conditions and low fog prevented it
- Annual collar maintenance will be done by Alaska
- Work on revising the Sensitive Habitats document is still ongoing

## **Harvest Management Strategy**

Deana Lemke reviewed the milestones chart from the Implementation Plan with the Board. She noted that there is still a challenge of many Parties in the meeting of deadlines as specified in the Harvest Management Plan and Implementation Plan.

Deana pointed out that an update about progress on the Native User Agreement process is being added to the AHM agenda this year, when the Parties meet in camera.

## **PCH range-wide management plan**

Shannon Stotyn explained that, in order to identify gaps, it was determined what specifically would be required in a recovery strategy, and this list was compared to the tools and processes that already exist.

Mike Suitor related that the PCTC is working on preparing the habitat information required for a recovery strategy, and that the updated Sensitive Habitats document will feed into the process as well.

Shannon said that the PCTC had a meeting with representatives of the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the environmental impact assessment related to oil and gas drilling in ANWR. The PCTC is interested in the results of the studies.

Regarding the inclusion of TK in a recovery strategy, it was noted that TK will be incorporated twice, first in the COSEWIC process, and again within a national recovery strategy document.

Shannon explained that during the creation of the boreal caribou recovery strategy, TK was gathered by contractors, communities and organizations. Environment and Climate Change Canada developed a set of sample questions which were used to guide the interview process. Summary reports of the collected information were created to assist incorporating TK into the recovery strategy. This information was also made available online for others to use. A TK study for Peary Caribou was also recently completed.

Regarding national versus regional scopes of planning, Shannon noted that the creation of a regional plan is thought to be a good approach, and that it would become a component of a national plan.

## VGFN Traditional Knowledge Projects

Mary Jane Moses introduced herself and explained that she has lived in Old Crow for 38 years. She works as a coordinator in the Natural Resources and Heritage department of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Mary Jane has worked on transcribing interviews from Gwich'in language recordings into English. Before printing, all her work is reviewed and edited by a Gwich'in language specialist.

Mary Jane explained that much of the oral history of Vuntut Gwitchin has now been documented in books by a group of individuals with extensive TK experience. The same individuals are still involved today and continue to provide guidance to the heritage manager.

TK interviews are conducted out on the land, where memories of the interviewees come alive. Mary Jane stated that this makes a great positive difference in the outcome of the projects.

Several projects have been completed. One of these is the compilation of four years of archived interviews, supplemented with more recent interviews of current elders. Some of the source material was found at Yukon Archives. The final result is the book *People of the Lakes*. Part 1 and 2 of the video *Imprints of our Ancestors* also stem from this work. A four-year cultural technology project was also undertaken, documenting the social and environmental technologies developed by Vuntut Gwitchin to survive on the land. These include fishing technology, snowshoes, and the like. A study of navigation systems and ancient trade routes also took place. It included the documenting of routes from Old Crow to Herschel Island, Lapierre House and Rampart House. Portage trails and main trails were also documented.

Mary explained that the recorded audio is backed up and a copy is provided to Yukon Archives. The original interview is transcribed and is sent to a Gwich'in language specialist. The information is then indexed for key words, catalogued and entered into a database. Places and locations are entered into a GIS, which can then be used by other interested parties after receiving permission from the heritage committee. Mary related that the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*, Vuntut National Park management practices, the *Vadzaih* cookbook, development of best management practices for caribou, and other initiatives all used content from this database.

In conclusion, Mary shared a Powerpoint presentation and short film depicting a boat trip up the Crow River, sponsored by the heritage department. The photos were presented in honour of her late husband, Georgie Moses, who was a previous PCMB member representing Vuntut Gwitchin.

## Species at Risk Act

Saleem Dar reviewed the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) cycle, from assessment to listing to recovery planning and implementation. He explained that it would be appropriate to send comments regarding pre-listing consultations, including comments on whether or not the Porcupine Caribou herd (PCH) should be included as part of the designatable unit (DU).

Shannon Stotyn explained why PCH are currently considered part of the barren-ground caribou DU.

Saleem stated that climate change, forage availability, industrial development, and harvest are some of the main threats identified for the PCH. He noted that any prohibitions associated with a listing would apply in national parks and national wildlife areas but not elsewhere, unless a Cabinet order specified additional restrictions. Harvest limits could still be imposed but would be subject to land claim agreements.

A recovery strategy is required within two years of a listing with a “threatened” designation. Consultation with wildlife management boards, regional resource councils, PCMB, First Nations and Inuvialuit, Government of Yukon and the public will take place until fall 2018.

Critical habitat, to the extent possible, would be identified during the recovery strategy stage.

Shannon Stotyn explained that when boreal caribou were listed as threatened, it was subsequently determined that 65% of their range needed to be undisturbed. Therefore, range plans and action plans had to be designed to monitor disturbance and thresholds.

It was noted that the PCTC is concerned with the entire range of the PCH, while the focus of the SARA process stops at the Alaskan border.

**Action 18-1: Deana Lemke to compile PCMB’s previous submissions regarding the SARA listing of PCH for consideration at the Board’s next meeting, and follow up with Parties who have not responded to PCMB’s related correspondence regarding the SARA process.**

## Traditional knowledge gathering and usage

Deana Lemke reviewed the Board’s November 15, 2017, letter to Parties requesting feedback about a potential PCH-focused TK project. Some Parties have not replied yet, while others indicated their support for the concept. The governments have also indicated a willingness to support funding.

What TK the Board is specifically looking for, what the data will be used for, who will be interviewed, and other criteria still need to be discussed.

## **Next Meeting and Closing Prayer**

The next meeting will focus on defining aspects of the TK study, the Board's position regarding SARA, and development of a herd management plan. The next meeting is scheduled for May 30 and 31, 2018, in Whitehorse, Yukon.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.