

# GWICH'IN RENEWABLE RESOURCE BOARD



Spring 2006

## Introduction

### "Spring Season and Gwich'in Traditional Knowledge"

#### Contents

Introduction	1
Wildlife	2-4
Fisheries	5
Special Projects Biologist	6
Polar/Grizzly Bear	6
New Staff Member	7
Congrats to Jozef C.	7
Board of Directors	8
Contact Information	8

*"Just take  
enough for  
yourself and if  
you get too  
many, you have  
to share it with  
others that have  
none..."  
Noel Andre  
(GEKP 1996  
Duck, Geese  
Interview)*

#### Bulletin Board



The next GRRB Meeting will be in Tsiigehtchic, NT

The dates are yet to be confirmed, but are expected to be in Mid September, 2006

Contact your local RRC or the GRRB Office for more information.

It's Spring Season once again and a time for hunting in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. The weather is warm again and we can spend more time outdoors. I hope everyone is having a good spring and was able to get their harvest of Kheh (Goose), Dats'an (Duck), Dzan (Muskrat) and other birds and animals of the Season. Over the years, way of life may have changed a lot for the Gwich'in, but our traditional teachings are still the same. The big difference is that some of us are forgetting the traditional teachings and so it is not always being passed on to the younger people. Some people do carry on the traditional ways and are making an effort to pass their knowledge on. We need more of our people doing this in our communities if we are to keep our culture and traditions alive. According to Gwich'in Elders of the past and present, here are just some of the things they would like us to remember:

- Sharing is important. Families would take care of each other and share what they kill so everyone has food. Elders and widows were well taken care of, family and friends provided for them.
- Animals, Fish and Birds are to be respected and people should only take what they need and not over kill.
- People should try and make use of the entire animal. In the old days, people used everything, so that animals and birds not only provided good food, but also materials for making clothes and tools.
- If we take care of the land and

animals, they will take care of us.

- Keep the land clean. Make sure you keep a clean campsite. Traditional Hunters are very clean and do not leave behind a mess for others to see. Traditional Hunters were even careful not to get blood on their hunting clothes.
- Be careful when travelling on ice and open water. Use caution and always have a partner when hunting.
- Alcohol and Drugs is not a part of Gwich'in Traditional Ways. Do not travel and hunt when under the influence of either!

Spending time on the land and with elders who have a lot of knowledge is the best way to learn about the traditional teachings and how to do things in the Gwich'in way. There is also a lot of documented knowledge and stories from the elders. We should all make the effort to learn what we can, practice our traditional ways and continue to share this knowledge with the young people of today.

Such knowledge is important and we must also use it in the everyday management of our wildlife and other resources. On behalf of the GRRB Executive Director Jari Heikkila, Chairman Robert Charlie and entire Staff, we wish you a Great Spring Season. Thank you for reading our newsletter and we hope you enjoy it.

Mahsi Cho  
Bobbie-Jo Greenland

## News from Catherine Lambert, Wildlife Biologist

Hello everybody!

The sun is shining, the birds are back from their long migratory journey, and the bears are finally pointing their snouts out of the den... The spring is here! At the GRRB wildlife office, we are also getting our noses out of the office and preparing for upcoming fieldwork. Since late March, we have completed a moose aerial survey covering slightly less than one third of the Gwich'in Settlement Area, and started the Dall's Sheep, Grizzly Bear and Wolf Project in the Richardson Mountains. Here is a brief summary of the work conducted, along with some recommendations regarding Dall's Sheep hunting and management.

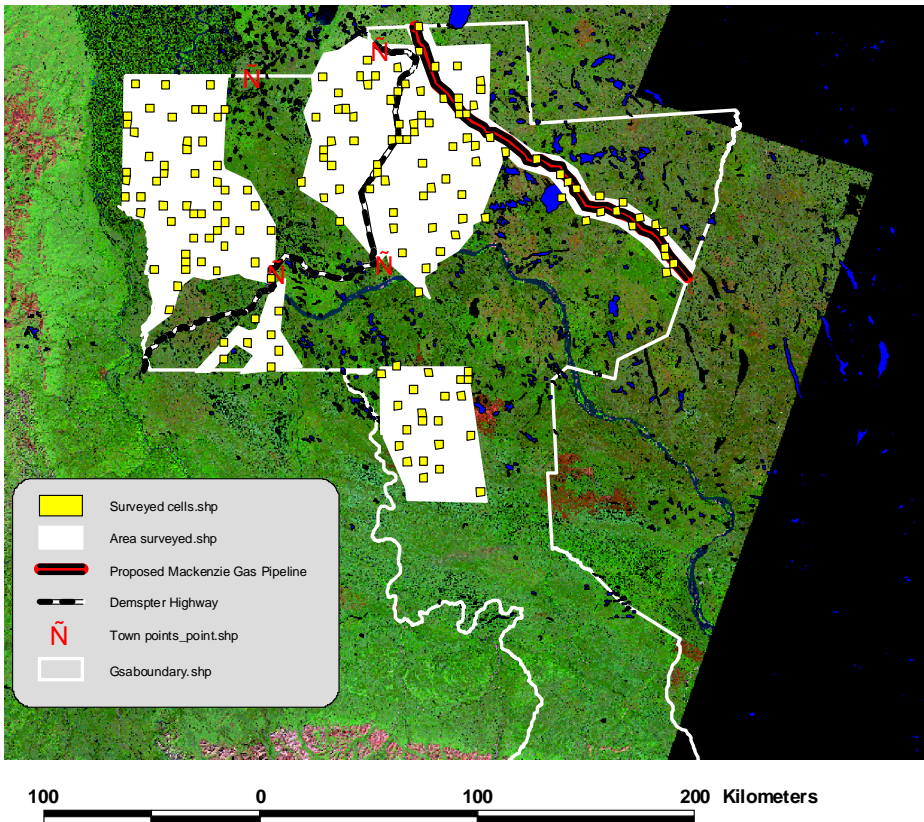


Moose Survey

Moose (*Alces alces*; *Dinjik* in Gwich'in) is a year-round resident of the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA) and an important food species for the Gwich'in people and other northerners. Because past surveys were conducted well over five years ago, current moose density, population trends and sex / age composition in the GSA were unknown. With the recent decline of the Cape Bathurst and Bluenose Caribou herds, it is expected that hunting pressure might be transferred to alternate ungulate species, which may result in higher moose mortality. However, without updated moose population estimates, there was no mechanism in place to keep track of potential moose changes. It hence became necessary and timely to reassess the status of the moose population in the GSA.

To do so, we have conducted an aerial moose survey from March 20 to March 27, 2006, in the northern section of the GSA. In collaboration with ENR biologists, we prioritized areas surveyed in the past, namely the Inuvik-Tsiigehtchic region (8,884 km<sup>2</sup>), the Peel River drainage (691 km<sup>2</sup>), the Richardson Mountains (5,189 km<sup>2</sup>), and the Arctic Red River area (2,506 km<sup>2</sup>). We have also extended our coverage to the proposed pipeline corridor of the Mackenzie Gas Project, including a 5 km buffer zone on each side of the route. The total area covered by the survey represents approximately 17,260 km<sup>2</sup> (map below). Adopting survey methods used throughout the Territories, we divided the survey area into 4x4 km grid cells and ranked the cells into high or low moose density, based on available knowledge and observations made during the February Moose Workshops held in Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Inuvik, and Tsiigehtchic. After the maps were completed, we randomly selected 170 cells, about 15% of the area, for conducting the survey.





Guided by the expertise of Ernest Vittrekwa, from Fort McPherson, and Dale Semple, from Aklavik, Jozef Carnogursky, Tracy Davidson and I flew the area, counted the moose present in the selected cells, and categorized them in bulls, cows, and calves, whenever possible. In total, we counted 141 moose, and found a ratio of 1 bull for 1.3 cows; and 1 calf for 1.9 cows. Seventy-four of those moose were found within the grid cells limits, which yielded a density of 2.9 moose/100km<sup>2</sup> for the surveyed portion of the GSA. We found that moose distribution was largely influenced by the habitat type we surveyed. For example, moose density was higher in the Mackenzie Delta and in the mountain valleys, and much lower in the Arctic Red River Area or Peel River Drainage. At this time, moose densities and distribution are still being analyzed to see if they are statistically different. Updated results and population trends will be soon available in a published report at your nearest RRC office, or on our website.

Dall’s Sheep, Grizzly Bear & Wolf Project in the Richardson Mountains



In April, we have initialized the first steps of the Richardson Project! We have deployed 6 GPS satellite collars on healthy Dall’s Sheep ewes, 8 collars on wolves, distributed in two packs, and so far 1 collar on a grizzly bear female. The remaining grizzly bear collars will be deployed in the coming weeks. At present, we are still awaiting a confirmation from a potential project partner, but we are hopeful we can soon go in the mountains and observe Dall’s sheep post-lambing behaviour and predation.



These observations will provide us tools to understand the current status of this Dall's sheep population and assess the impact of predation by wolves, grizzly bears, and golden eagles, on the herd. Moreover, it will provide unique opportunity for community members to go out on the land, participate in the project, and contribute to Dall's sheep conservation. If you are interested in participating, you can inquire about current fieldwork plans by contacting me at 777-6610, or [wildlife@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:wildlife@grrb.nt.ca). If you are a youth, make sure you fill an application for Youth Summer Experience at the GRRB office!

Dall's Sheep Conservation and Management

We are still working on the Dall's Sheep Management Plan for the Richardson Mountains, and an aerial survey will be performed in August to update the previous abundance and recruitment estimates for this herd. This spring, concerns expressed from elders and other community members suggested there might be an over harvest of this population. In the absence of a management plan, we urge you to be conservative, to nurture your land, and think about the future! Harvest only what you need, sight your riffle, use all you can from the animal, and be considerate during lambing season. Please use similar guidelines while caribou or moose hunting.



Now... 'enough said! It's time to go out, soak the sun and enjoy the flowing waters!

I wish you a good summer!

Catherine Lambert  
Wildlife Biologist



Gwich'in Names for:

- |              |         |
|--------------|---------|
| Wolf         | Zhoh    |
| Grizzly Bear | Shih    |
| Sheep        | Divii   |
| Moose        | Dinjik  |
| Charr        | Dhik'ii |

## News from Nathan Millar, Fisheries Biologist

### Upcoming research projects

As usual, the summer will be a busy time for field work. The studies of fish in Travaillant Lake will continue this summer. A crew will spend two weeks on the lake in July collecting information about all species of fish in the lake.

The Arctic Red River Index Netting study will be re-started this year. A monitor from Tsiigehtchic will be hired to fish and record information about the fish species in the Arctic Red River. The netting will complement the traditional knowledge study (based on interviews with fishermen) that was carried out this winter.

A big thanks to all those who took part in the study! We will be around to the RRC meetings to present a summary of the study as soon as the results are available.

In late August, a crew will be traveling to the Vittrekwa River to learn more about the river's char population. Finally, sample collection will continue for the study on population structure of fish in the Mackenzie River and its tributaries. Using genetics, we are determining the number of populations of Coney, crookedback, and loche that are in the Mackenzie delta.

### Rat River Char

A much-reduced population estimate of Rat River Char has prompted the Rat River Char Working Group to re-examine the current fishing plan. The group, made up of the Aklavik RRC, the Aklavik HTC, and the Fort McPherson RRC and supported by DFO, the FJMC, and the GRRB, met in March to discuss possible change.

Public meetings are being held in May to get community input. In 2002, the number of char in the Rat River was estimated to be 12,000, while in 2005, the estimate dropped to 3,000 char. We are all hoping for a speedy recovery of this stock.



As always, please contact the fisheries biologist, Nathan Millar, if you have any concerns or questions about fish, fisheries, or aquatic habitats in the GSA. Nathan can be reached by phone at 777-6615, or by email at [fisheries@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:fisheries@grrb.nt.ca)



## Special Projects Biologist, Amy Thompson

I started with the GRRB this past January. Since then, I have conducted traditional knowledge interviews with our Fisheries Biologist in Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson regarding fish species from the Arctic Red River and Lower Mackenzie River. I have electronically entered all this data and I am currently gathering information from previous studies to write the report. I have taken on the responsibility of reviewing and responding to research applications and land use permits on behalf of the GRRB.

Additionally, I visited each junior and senior high school within the GSA back in March. I presented about the GRRB, renewable resources, my background and I promoted post-secondary education. After each presentation, I got the students to fill out a ballot form to win a GRRB book bag (there was 1 winner from Tsiigehtchic and 1

winner from Inuvik). This ballot had a few voluntary questions such as 1) Did you enjoy this presentation, 2) would you like a future career in renewable resources and 3) do you know which post-secondary school you'd like to attend? The feedback was amazing! Apparently, almost every student found my presentation interesting, about half the students were thinking about a career in renewable resources and lastly there was an overwhelming amount of students that have decided which College/University they want to attend (the most popular schools were Aurora College, Nait College, University of Alberta and Grant MacEwan College).

For this summer, I look forward to completing the Arctic Red River TK report and working with some of the other GRRB staff on field projects.



Amy Thompson

"...Apparently, almost every student found my presentation interesting, about half the students were thinking about a career in renewable resources..."

## DFO Fisheries Information

### Salmon collection

For the past few years, DFO has been tracking the appearance of salmon in the Mackenzie to learn more about these species. They are offering cash rewards (\$\$) for each salmon (or salmon head, should you wish to keep the fish) handed in. In Fort McPherson and

Tsiigehtchic, a community member will be co-ordinating the collection of salmon. In Inuvik, salmon can be turned in directly to DFO, and in Aklavik to Ian McLeod (ENR). Please contact Erin Hiebert (DFO) at 777-7503 for more information.

## Polar Bear/Grizzly Hybrid

We continue to experience more changes each year on the land. Our elders talk about the changes to the weather and our landscape. We will continue to see such changes for ourselves and it is like nothing surprises us too much anymore. And then, we hear the news about a Bear that turned out to be a mix of Polar and Grizzly Bear! This rare type of bear was shot and killed near the South tip of Banks Island on April 16, 2006 by Jim Martell, a 65-year-old hunter from Idaho, USA. Wildlife officials seized the bear after noticing its white fur also had some brown patches. The bear

also had long claws, a humped back, and some facial characteristic of a grizzly. The genetic tests have confirmed that the bear's father was a grizzly and its mother was a polar bear. "I don't think anyone expected it to actually happen in the wild," said Ian Stirling, a polar bear expert with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Edmonton. The hybrid bear has no official name, though some people have been calling it a "pizzly" or a "grolar bear."



Grizzly/Polar Bear Hybrid  
(National geographic.com)



## New Staff, Bobbie-Jo Greenland

Drin Gwiinzii . I joined the GRRB Staff on April 3, 2006 when I accepted the position of Traditional Knowledge Communications Manager. A few weeks before my start date, I had just returned from a 6 month internship overseas in Denmark at the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat Office in Copenhagen. This was a great experience for me, made possible through the Circumpolar Young Leaders Program. Now that I completed the program, I am happy to be back home and working with my own people once again.

In April there was a North American Caribou Conference in Jasper Alberta. Both Jari (Executive Director) and I were able to attend on behalf of the GRRB. There were a few people there from the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) and also the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB).

There were about 250 people at this conference and most of them were biologists and people in the science field working for the Government. There were not very many Aboriginal people there, and hopefully we will see more Aboriginal participants at the next Caribou Conference in 2007 in either Labrador or Newfoundland.

As the Traditional Knowledge Communications Manager, I will be working with Jari and the biologists to provide support that will ensure Gwich'in traditional knowledge is not only recognized, but also included in the studies and reports that are produced at GRRB.

I will be working to ensure that Traditional Knowledge of the Gwich'in is included in the ongoing management of wildlife and other resources in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. I will also work on newsletters and updates to increase awareness of GRRB projects and to promote education on the environmental issues impacting our region and other regions across the North.

I will work at strengthening and improving the communications between the GRRB, Gwich'in Communities, Aboriginal Leadership and Government Organizations. I have worked for GRRB in the past as assistant and later Coordinator for the Environmental Knowledge Project.

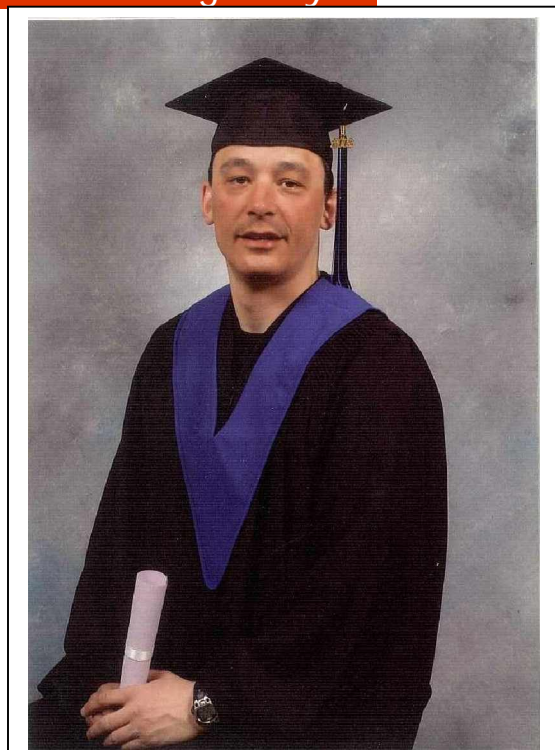
It is good to be back at work with the GRRB, where I have an opportunity to work for the people and land that I have known and respected my entire life. I wish you all a good Spring and Summer Season. See you around!



Bobbie-Jo Greenland

## Congratulations to GRRB Technician Jozef Carnogursky!

Board Members and Staff of the GRRB would like to Congratulate Jozef on his recent graduation from the Aurora College. Jozef received his Diploma in the Natural Resources and Technology Program (NRTP). The Board is proud of Jozef's accomplishment, and are pleased that Jozef will continue to work at the GRRB. Congratulations to all other Graduates of 2006. Best wishes to all!



Board of Directors & Alternate Members

Nominating Organization	Member	Alternate
Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC)	Mr. Robert Alexie Sr.	Mr. Barry Greenland
Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC)	Mr. James Firth	Vacant
Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC)	Mr. Eugene Pascal	Vacant
Depart. of Environment & Natural Resources (ENR)	Ms. Elizabeth (Liz) Hansen	Mr. Johnnie Charlie
Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)	Mr. Winston Fillatre	Mr. Daniel (Dan) Topolniski
Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS)	Mr. Paul Latour	Ms. Victoria Johnston



GRRB Contact Information

**GRRB**  
Box 2240, 105 Distributor Street  
2<sup>nd</sup> Fl Alex Moses Greenland Building  
Inuvik NT X0E 0T0

**Phone:** (867) 777-6600  
**Fax:** (867) 777-6601  
**E-mail:** [office@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:office@grrb.nt.ca)

We are also on the Web!  
Check us out at:  
[www.grrb.nt.ca](http://www.grrb.nt.ca)

Direct Lines

Barb 777-6600  
Jari 777-6602  
Amy 777-6607  
Catherine 777-6610  
Jozef 777-6613  
Bobbie Jo 777-6616  
Nathan 777-6615