

March 2007



# What's new at the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board?

A Monthly update from the GRRB

## Introduction

Welcome to our Newsletter for March 2007. The Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board (GRRB) was established under the guidance of the 1992 *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (GCLCA)* to be the main instrument of wildlife, fish and forest management in the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA). The powers and responsibilities of the Board are detailed in Chapters 12 & 13, Vol.1 of the Agreement.

This month's newsletter will provide some updates from the GRRB Staff as well as some common concerns from our partners in Co-management; Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Environment & Natural Resources, Gwich'in Tribal Council, Renewable Resource Council's & Canadian Wild-

life Service.

Please contact us at the GRRB office in Inuvik, if there are any issues that you would like to see more information on, or if you have additional concerns or information that you wish to share.

We are always happy to hear from the people living in the communities and those who know the land and resources very well.

Working together we can ensure that the wildlife and resources are managed in a sustainable manner so that future generations will be able to enjoy them.

Mahsi Cho

Bobbie Jo Greenland

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## General Concerns about Vadzaih (Caribou) By: Bobbie Jo Greenland

There is no doubt that the caribou are important to the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people of the Mackenzie Delta. Both groups have been active participants in the numerous meetings and workshops that addressed Caribou Concerns and strategies.

In the last few years, there has been more concern and attention to the Caribou. One of the concerns often discussed is the population decline in the various herds.

People have been meeting at community, regional and territorial workshops to discuss the concerns and all the reasons that may be causing the declines. As a result there was much discussions about traditional knowledge and hunting skills as well.

Some elders and experienced hunters have voiced their concerns about climate change and how this is affecting the animals. Elders also talked about the lack of traditional skills and respect for animals among the young hunters. Even some of the older hunters are forgetting the old ways. Many people feel that the lack of respect for the caribou is what is causing a lot of the problems today. There are a lot of hunters today who do not know the traditional ways and therefore they do not practice safety and respect the way their grandfathers before them have done. When there are changes such as these, then we can expect to see changes to the animals also.

This is exactly why our traditional knowledge and teachings are so very important. Understanding and practicing this knowledge is what helps us to manage our wildlife and resources wisely. Some of the teachings and words of wisdom that we hear from elders is:

- 1) Take only what you need. (Don't go killing more than you really need).
- 2) Respect the animal and make use of every part of it. (Don't throw away parts, use it or give it to someone who will use it).
- 3) Respect the animals and their migration. (Let the leaders pass and allow the herd to travel back to old feeding areas, don't scare them off).
- 4) Don't chase caribou all over the place and cause unnecessary stress to them. (traditional hunters were fast and quiet, sneaking up on the animal)
- 5) Don't leave wounded caribou (If you think you wounded a caribou, do your best to track it down and finish it off, don't leave wounded animals)
- 6) Take care of your kill right away (Skin and cut up the meat after the kill. This shows respect and skill)
- 7) Older hunters are to teach the younger people. (Lots of

young people start hunting without anyone teaching them properly, so they make a lot of mistakes)

8) Young people and older people need to work together and learn from each other.

9) Take care of the land and remember that when the land suffers, the animals and people will suffer.

These are just some of the things shared with us from our elders. For more information on Caribou and other wildlife management issues, please contact your local RRC or the GRRB and ENR offices in Inuvik. Remember to also visit & talk to your elders.



*Porcupine Caribou. Photo Credit: VGFN Old Crow webpage [www.oldercrow.ca/caribou](http://www.oldercrow.ca/caribou)*

"Many people feel that the lack of respect for the caribou is what is causing a lot of the problems today"



*Robert Alexie Sr at a GRRB Meeting. He cares a lot about his people and always speaks out on Caribou & other wildlife issues. Photo credit: GRRB*

## Some words from the past. (Taken from Cope files, interview in 1970's with the late George Vittrekwa)

A long time ago when supplies were hard to get, people those days always get short of everything. We used to get very little because the Hudson Bay Company had a hard time to get supplies. They only bring enough for the people to get by. Later on, they bring more and more supplies in that our young people do not know what starvation means.

May I say, us who are getting old remember the rough and hard days. I remember my Dad when he was young, he was a very good hunter and when hard times come, people always relied on him.

This one winter when people moved with their families to the mountains there was no meat in camp. It was very hard, especially for the children, but lucky my Dad went out hunting and killed some caribou and this is where he saved a lot of people those days.

Whoever gets meat, he can't just give the meat away to whoever he wants. It is up to his parents, especially if the person is single and not married. Also, the people well respected one another and when the old people talked to the young people they never refuse them. Today it's different. Our young people of today do not respect, not only the old people but also their parents. In the old days people were very smart.

Also them days, there was very few dog teams. Some people might have one or two dogs when they move from place to place.

They would pull this toboggan and their belongings. That is the way the people lived them days. Also, only some people have canvas tents and stove and some people who can't afford it still live in caribou skin tents.

Today, we are well off even though some people think they have a hard time. I think we shouldn't think that because our old people get pensions and our children get family allowance. The government sends a lot of money to our children who go to school and some of our children are getting good education. All this do not cost us anything and we hope someday our younger people will run our country.

Today, only white people do what they want in our country. I think this is not fair for us. I know it will take a while but if we encourage our people, I think in time they will get some place. I have told you what I have seen in my young days and the times I have seen and I do hope you all listen to me. I want to thank the people who help us to talk to you over the radio.

Thank you all. So long.



*Rebecca Francis teaching youth how to cut fish. (GRRB Photo)*

“the people well respected one another and when the old people talked to the young people they never refuse them.”



*Fresh Caribou Meat  
Photo Credit: VGFN Old Crow  
[www.oldercrow.ca/caribou](http://www.oldercrow.ca/caribou)*

## Canadian Aboriginal Science & Technology Society (CASTS)

CASTS is a national, non-profit corporation that was created in 1992 by Aboriginal professionals in the Calgary-area that were concerned about the under-representation of Aboriginal people in science and technology (S&T) field. The goal of CASTS is to increase the number of Aboriginal people in S&T occupation by encouraging Aboriginal people to strive for successful careers in S&T and to assist by providing information, inspiration, and support on their path.

Student memberships are free and include networking possibilities, job advertisement emails, newsletters, eligibility to apply for scholarships and much more. There are also corporate, institutional and professional memberships available for purchase. I encourage anyone interested in science and/or technology to check out CASTS.

I recently became a mentor for CASTS. You can find a link to me on the CASTS website under mentor information. I registered as a mentor because I am interested in helping students with science and continuing their education.

Anyone interested can contact me at the office anytime (contact information is on the back page of this newsletter). For more information please visit the CASTS website at [www.casts.ca](http://www.casts.ca).

### ***Providing resources for the Gwich'in language classes***

The Gwich'in language class visited the GRRB on Friday February 23<sup>rd</sup>. GRRB staff explained their work and how we



*Liz Hansen is fluent in Gwich'in and devotes much of her time in teaching the language*

try to incorporate traditional knowledge and the language into our work. A comment arose that the Gwich'in language teachers would be interested in photographs of animals and fish found in the GSA to use as teaching tools. As a result, Brian Dokum and I (Amy Thompson) printed

full page animal and fish pictures from the GRRB server and database and put them into a duatang for each Gwich'in language class in the GSA.

*"The goal of CASTS is to increase the number of Aboriginal people in science & technology field"*

## International Polar Year (IPY) By: Amy Thompson

International polar year is a large scientific program focused on the Arctic and the Antarctic. There will be Canadian and international researchers coming into the arctic to perform research. These researchers will still have to follow the NWT scientific licence act which states they must receive a Aurora Research Institute (ARI) scientific licence before conducting their research. An IPY workshop was held at the

Mackenzie Hotel on March 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in Inuvik. Day one of this workshop concentrated on the "northern node". The northern node is the title of the position held at the Aurora Research Institute for the person that coordinates IPY workshops and acts as the liaison person between IPY researchers and communities. Day two concentrated on NWT IPY issues such as regulatory bodies that issue permits, communica-

tion plans, and the plans for the IPY website. The minutes for this workshop will be available shortly to the public.



*Flying around the GSA (GRRB Photo)*

For more information please contact Kristi Bensen at 777-3298 ext 30 or check out the IPY website [www.ipy.org](http://www.ipy.org)

## Language & Identity By: Bobbie Jo Greenland

There are between 53-70 Aboriginal Languages in Canada that fall under 11 distinct language families. Of these 53-70 languages, there are 3 that stand the most chance of surviving as they have the most fluent speakers than all other Aboriginal Languages. These are Cree (overall has approximate 76,475 fluent speakers), Inuktitut (overall has approximate 26, 840 fluent speakers) and Ojibway (overall has 22,625 fluent speakers).

The Northwest Territories enacted an Official Languages Act in June 1984. This Act recognizes Cree, Chipewyan, Dogrib, Gwich'in, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, Inuinnaqtun, North Slavey, South Slavey, English and French as the Official Languages of the Territories.

Although these languages are recognized, this doesn't mean they are doing okay. Not all languages can be spoken by all and if they can't be spoken by all, then how will they survive for the future?

Language is a big piece of our identity as Gwich'in. Language is a big part of all First Nations Groups in Canada. Colonization resulted in loss of languages and greatly weakened other cultural aspects. Yet there is still hope for strengthening what does still exist today. It is not dead yet.

I would like to encourage all Gwich'in to speak their language. It is not easy, but I think it will be

worth all the hard work if it will strengthen our language and save it for the future. As language is so much about who we are and where we come from, it is obviously important to our identity.

So as we continue to work together as co-management boards and agencies in the sustainable management of wildlife and resources, let us also remember the importance of the Language.

The Traditional Knowledge of our Elders help us to understand our history and also to determine our future. Our language teaches us who we are and what makes us unique as Gwich'in.

I am not a fluent speaker today, but I do try and I hope that I will succeed and become a fluent speaker in the future. I feel good when I can speak or understand a little and I can imagine how great it will be to speak it fluently. When First Nations People have their language, they become more complete and they feel more in touch and proud of who they are. I believe our language makes us strong and I really hope we can save it so that 50 years down the road our people, young and old will still be speaking Gwich'in and that it will be much stronger than it is today. I am sure this may



*The late Hyacinthe Andre of Tsiigehthchic. He was fluent in a few languages including Gwich'in Photo credit: GRRB*

seem unrealistic too many of you reading this, but it can be done. It is still possible to do, but we all have to be involved.

If you would like to get involved, talk with your commu-

nity leaders and cultural language centers. Ask them for some direction on what can be done. Write letters to the Language Commissioner of the NWT and get involved with language classes and other efforts in the community. Spend lots of time with elders and other fluent speakers and try to use the language everyday.

"As language is so much about who we are and where we come from, it is obviously important to our identity."



*Rylan Wainman. His great grandparents are Freddie & Bella Greenland who are both fluent in Gwich'in. Hopefully his generation will speak Gwich'in too. (Photo Credit: Kim & Ray Wainman, Rylans parents,)*

## Upcoming School Visits in the GSA By: Amy Thompson & Bobbie Jo Greenland

Some of the staff at the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board will be visiting all the schools in the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA) during the months of March and April 2007.

The purpose of these visits will be to give presentations to the students. Our aim will be to give information about the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board and the career opportunities in renewable resource management. We will also stress the importance of academic education and traditional knowledge skills as well.

We will start the visits off on March 19th with Moose Kerr School in Aklavik. All schools in the GSA were contacted and we are waiting to hear back from these schools with confirmation on the dates and times most convenient for them.



*Nature Day activities in Aklavik. June 2006. (Photo Credit: Bobbie Greenland)*



*Nature Day activities in Tsiigehtchic. Sept 2006. (Photo Credit: Bobbie Greenland)*

"We will also stress the importance of academic education and traditional knowledge skills as well"

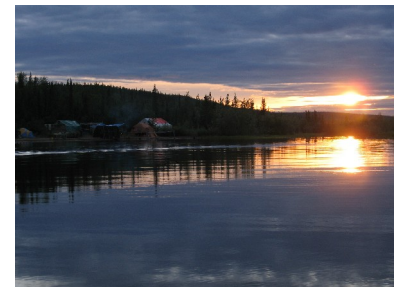
## Upcoming Conferences By: Amy Thompson

There will be a Traditional Knowledge conference at the Hay River Reserve from March 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Conference is hosted by the Dene Cultural Institute and is about Integrating Traditional Knowledge into Environmental Assessments and Regulatory processes in the NWT.

Bobbie Jo Greenland and Amy Thompson will be attending this conference from the GRRB. All of

their travel expenses will be covered by Dene Cultural Institute and the First Nations Forestry Program. Bobbie Jo will be making a presentation to the conference about traditional knowledge and how it is integrated into the work of the GRRB.

More information about this conference will be included in the next newsletter.



*Traviallant Lake. July 2006. (GRRB Photo)*

## Gwich'in Council International (GCI)

Gwich'in Council International is pleased to announce that Ms. Bridgitte Larocque joined the team as the new Executive Director. Bridgitte started her position in February and has already made a positive impact to the Board.

For more information about GCI, please contact Bridgitte at (867) 777-5960 or fax (867) 777-5994. You may also contact the office by emailing the following; [blarocque\\_gci@northwestel.net](mailto:blarocque_gci@northwestel.net) GCI is also on the web and the address is [www.gwichin.org](http://www.gwichin.org)

GCI Board Members include Joe Linklater and Steven Mills from Yukon, Mary Ann Ross and Bobbie Jo Greenland from NWT as well as Tonya Garnett and Charlene Stern from Alaska.

# Snow Depth Monitoring Project By: Amy Thompson

Snow monitoring is a component of the GRRB wildlife project called “Dall sheep, Grizzly bear, and wolves in the Richardson Mountains”. The objective of this survey is to monitor snow levels to understand the effect of snow on habitat use and interactions of these three animals.

The GRRB hired local snow monitors from McPherson and Aklavik for the month of March..

Each will travel to the Richardson Mountains on a weekly basis to conduct the snow survey. Norm Vittrekwa was hired as a monitor for McPherson and Ryan Mcleod and Larry Koe were hired as monitors for Aklavik.



Ryan Mcleod & Larry Koe at the Richardson Mountains. (Photo Credit: Brian Dokum GRRB)

For more information contact your local RRC or the GRRB office.

# Loche Liver Project By: Amy Thompson

I have received funding from the GRRB to conduct a loche liver study in the GSA. I have recently applied for a scientific licence through the ARI and it is being circulated for comments and concerns. I plan to investigate the occurrence of abnormal looking loche livers. I will start with a detailed literature search summary which I

will distribute to the communities. Then, I will hire a local fisher from each GSA community during spring and fall. Livers, aging structures, and other organs will be sent to a specialist for pathology analysis (thorough tissue analyses that should identify any tissue abnormalities or diseases). I will write the results into a plain language summary and distribute

“Livers, aging structures, and other organs will be sent to UPEI for pathology analysis”

it to the communities as well as present the information.

# Furbearers Project By: Amy Thompson

To follow-up from the last newsletter, GPS devices were handed out to 3 harvesters from each GSA community except Aklavik where 2 were handed out to harvesters and 1 was given to the RRC coordinator. If any harvester in Aklavik is interested in recording GPS loca-

tions for furbearers, please contact Jerome Gordon at 978-2336 or Brian Dokum at 777-6609. Once the project is over, the harvester will keep the GPS. If there is more interest from other communities, it may be possible to purchase more GPS’s, so please contact your local Renewable Re-

source Council office or Brian Dokum at the GRRB office in Inuvik, NT.



Tsuk (Marten) (Photo Credit: GRRB database)

## Gwich'in Foods & Healthy Living By: Bobbie Jo Greenland

The Traditional Gwich'in diet consisted entirely of foods from the land and waters. Long ago the people hunted and fished to survive. If they did not hunt or fish, they did not eat. There were no stores to go grocery shopping at in the old days. The land was the only grocery store the people knew. The traditional Gwich'in diet is mostly Caribou, Fish, Moose, Ducks, Geese, Beaver, Muskrat, Porcupine, Rabbits and Berries. There are other traditional foods, but these are the main ones harvested. In addition to a healthy diet, the Gwich'in were active people. They always travelled where harvest was good & they worked hard. Because of hard work and good eating the Gwich'in were a strong and

healthy people. To-day our diets have changed. We still eat our traditional foods, but we also add to it many other foods & drinks that are high in fat and sugar. We are seeing more health problems among our people today such as diabetes. Some of the risk factors of diabetes is obesity (being overweight) and having little or no exercise. Eating a poor diet high in sugar and fat is also a risk factor for diabetes. The Gwich'in Tribal Council hired Shandel Furlong of Aklavik as the Regional Diabetes Coordinator. Contact Shandel at (867) 978-2332 if you would like



*Dry Fish is a healthy food that Gwich'in love to eat*

to learn more about diabetes and/or the projects she is working on. Remember that the Gwich'in traditional lifestyle was alcohol and drug free. It included a healthy diet & lots of physical activity and therefore, resulted in **HEALTHY LIVING**.

"Because of hard work and good eating the Gwich'in were a strong and healthy people."

### Vadzaih (caribou) Stew By: Florence Furlong of Aklavik (Taken from CBC Radio's Northwind)

#### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds of Caribou Meat
- 1 tablespoon of cooking oil
- Large onion
- 3 large carrots
- 3 large single stalks of celery
- 2 medium potatoes
- 1/2 cup turnips
- 1/2 cup frozen peas

#### Directions:

Dice up caribou meat and put in a pot over medium heat. Then add

the oil and onion. Cook until meat is brown.

Now add all the veggies and some water. Cover the pot and increase heat to high. Once the stew begins to boil, reduce heat and simmer. Now you take 1/2 cup cold water and mix with some seasonings salt and bit of flour. Mix well and add to the stew. Stir and simmer.

Serve with your favorite bannock recipe and enjoy!



*"Cooking with Florence"*  
Photo Credit: Lawrence Norbert/  
GTC

## A Monthly update from the GRRB

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Check us out on the  
web [www.grrb.nt.ca](http://www.grrb.nt.ca)



*Alex Moses Greenland Building  
105 Distributor Street  
GRRB on 2nd floor*

### GRRB Mission

To conserve and manage  
renewable resources within the  
Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA)  
in a sustainable manner to meet  
the needs of the public today and  
in the future.

### GRRB Vision

We believe that people in the GSA  
are responsible for using,  
protecting and conserving their  
resources, as well as, active  
partners with the GRRB in  
managing their resources.

## GRRB Staff Contact Information

### Executive Director

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