



GWICH'IN RENEWABLE RESOURCES BOARD

# news

SEPTEMBER 2013



GRRB staff, standing, left to right: Cheryl Greenland, Office Manager; Alicia McRae, Summer Student; Kris Maier, Fisheries Biologist; Amy Amos, Executive Director; Natalka Melnycky, Special Projects Biologist; Ryan Brooks, Technician; seated: Kristen Callaghan, Wildlife Biologist; Janet Boxwell, Renewable Resources Manager.

The Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB) was established under the guidance of the 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 GRRB works with its co-management partners to communicate with the public and encourage conservation of renewable resources in the GSA.

The GRRB works in collaboration with the four Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs) in the 4 communities (Inuvik, Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson, and Aklavik) to educate and promote sustainability of resources within the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

For more information visit us at [www.grrb.nt.ca](http://www.grrb.nt.ca)

## Amy Amos

### Executive Director



#### IN THIS ISSUE

- Executive Director's message
- Wildlife Biologist update
- Special Projects Biologist
- Species At Risk update
- Fisheries Biologist update
- Renewable Resources Manager update
- Office Manager update
- Technician update

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

19 September 2013  
GRRB Board meeting  
Tsiigehtchic

8-9 October 2013  
CMA meeting, Inuvik

29-31 October 2013  
Beaufort Sea Partnership meeting  
Inuvik

Please call your RRC for monthly meeting times:

Ehdiitat RRC 867-978-2336  
Tetlit RRC 867-952-2330  
Gwichya RRC 867-953-3608  
Nihtat RRC 867-777-6652

I've been the Executive Director of the GRRB since March of 2009 and am happy to say that in its 20th year of operation the GRRB continues to be an

effective voice for conservation and sustainable use in the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

The GRRB currently has 5 of 13 board appointments filled (1 Chairperson, 6 full members and 6 alternate members). Among vacant seats, we are awaiting the appointment of a Board Chairperson while Eugene Pascal continues as our Interim Chair. On the staffing side, the GRRB has recently welcomed Nataalka Melnycky and Ryan Brooks on term positions, joining our five permanent staff and bid farewell to Alicia McRae who was our friendly summer student for the past 2 months.

Ryan is our technician and among other things has been helping out our biologists on fish and mammal studies while Nataalka has her work cut out for her as our Special Projects Biologist with a focus on Species at Risk. Nataalka has conducted several community consultations and will now be reviewing this work and conducting further interviews. As the federal and territorial SAR Acts have ramped up, our responsibilities under this file won't diminish and I hope to secure funding to make this a permanent position.

Recent accomplishments and current work of the Board include an updated Strategic Plan for 2013 – 2018, ongoing involvement in the Rat River Working Group and the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP), review of NWT Wildlife Act, work done to meet our responsibilities under NWT Species at Risk Act, implementation of the Gwich'in Forest Management Plan, grizzly bear and Dall's sheep management planning, and continued work to complete the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose West and Bluenose East caribou herds management plan, among other accomplishments.

Summer is always a busy time around our office and this year was no different: we have run and been involved in multiple fish and mammal field surveys with Board staff either out in the field, just returning or preparing to head out all summer long. Highlights this season have been the Rat River Habitat project and the Dempster highway Grizzly Bear project. It has been a successful season and we are all looking forward to taking a break from the field work to process the data we've gained that will help us determine the appropriate course of action on multiple files.

It is a pleasure to work with our communities, staff, Board members and co-management partners to ensure the sustainable use of our renewable resources in the GSA. Please read on to find out what we have been recently involved in and where we are heading in the future.

Haii Cho,  
Amy

For more information visit us at [www.grrb.nt.ca](http://www.grrb.nt.ca)



## Kristen Callaghan Wildlife Biologist



Grizzly bear on the Dempster Highway, August 2013

Photo: Kristen Callaghan, GRRB



As the GRRB's Wildlife Biologist I have been kept very busy this past spring and summer.

I have continued to help revise the draft management plan for Cape Bathurst, Bluenose West and Bluenose East caribou herds as a working group member. We have also been compiling the community input given during the many drafting phases of this management plan. As part of this work I have also reviewed the GRRB's caribou harvest data for these herds for inclusion in the scientific report accompanying the plan

This summer, with the help of Ryan and Alicia I have been leading a research project looking to reduce grizzly bear and human interaction on the Dempster Highway in a 104km region overlapping the NWT/Yukon border. This has been an involved project with many trips into the field for surveys as well as training a community member to monitor the highway for caribou

gut piles and to talk with highway travellers and record observations. We have had a great response to our bear observation forms that were placed around the communities. Forms are still being turned in and I will soon be going through that data. I look forward to shedding more light on how bears and people interact on the highway in order to help the Board make good management decisions in relation to this bear population.

To describe population trends of small mammals, Alicia, Ryan and I spent several days in June completing field work for this year's hare pellet counts. Alicia and I spent another week in August sampling small mammals along fixed trap lines. The data for that project will be released later this year as part of a territory wide project run by ENR and helps us understand not only the population cycles of small mammals but also of the predators that rely on them for food.

There is new discussion between parties on the draft Dall's Sheep Management Plan, however work on this has slowed due to capacity of all parties being focused elsewhere. Discussion at the fall 2013 Board meeting and re-engagement by all partners to the plan will help us move forward on this file.

I also provides technical advice where needed, including commenting on COSEWIC and Federal SARA listings, advice to the Board on wildlife management plans, developing and assisting with wildlife related communication material and to assist with public hearings and consultations when needed. I have created a timeline of GRRB actions to help the GRRB move forward on an Outfitting request in the Akla-vik region among other work done on that file. I am also continuing my role on behalf of the GRRB as a member of the Porcupine Caribou Technical Committee.

Visit us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/grrb.nt.ca](http://www.facebook.com/grrb.nt.ca)



## Natalka Melnycky

### Special Projects Biologist



Originally from Edmonton, I moved to Inuvik this summer to work with the GRRB as the species at risk biologist. During community consultations I will be collecting feedback on whether or not recently assessed species should be listed as federal or territorial species at risk (SAR): boreal caribou, grizzly bears, collared pikas and rusty blackbirds to name a few.

As part of the SAR listing process the GRRB needs to hear from the community before deciding to support the listing of a species or not. It is important that communities come to the consultations and give their opinions, so I can include these opinions in my recommendations.

Once a species is listed the next step is to make management plans or recovery strategies with the goal of preventing that species from going extinct. At every step in the SAR processes there are consultations with community members. In August I held two community consul

tations, one in Tsiigehtchic and one in Inuvik, to get final comments concerning the listing of Boreal Caribou as threatened on the NWT Species at Risk List as well as thoughts on the federal listing of grizzly bears and collared pikas as special concern.

Our recent round of community consultations are now finished: GRRB staff members held public meetings in interested communities and sat in on RRC meetings as well. (The public meetings were attended by a mix of RRCs and the public, however attending RRC meetings seems to be the best way to get feedback.) Both Ehdiitat and Gwichya RRCs provided written support and Tetlit RRC provided verbal support of the threatened listing of Boreal Caribou and special concern listing of grizzly bears. Nihtat RRC did not support these listings. These comments and concerns will be considered as the GRRB makes a decision on these potential listings in the coming months.

With these consultations done I will now be concentrating on report reviews and conducting further Traditional Knowledge interviews. I look forward to speaking more with community members. If anyone has questions about the territorial or federal SAR process please do not hesitate to contact me.

## Species At Risk (SAR) Update

The GRRB has two key roles under the land claim for species at risk; (1) approve proposed species listings and (2) approve any management plans or recovery strategies for species that are already listed. In addition to this role the Board reviews and provides comments on species status reports. The Board is involved in both the federal and territorial Species at Risk processes. The GRRB seeks community feedback, particularly from the RRCs, into these processes to help it make its decision.

With the federal SAR process the government leads the consultations and requests approval from the boards. We at the GRRB look to the RRCs for input while the government collects this information and provides us with a summary. The government will ask the GRRB on the best ways to engage with the communities. Recent files include the proposed listing of grizzly bear, collared pika and the buff-breasted sandpiper and the draft management plan for rusty blackbird.

In the case of the territorial Species at Risk Act, this is a newer Act and the GRRB leads the consultations in our region. Having come into force on February 1, 2010 there are two groups established:

The Conference of Management Authorities (CMA) and the Species at Risk Committee (SARC). The CMA includes up to three representatives from each management authority responsible for the species being discussed. For the Gwich'in Settlement Area the GRRB is a man-

For more information visit us at [www.grrb.nt.ca](http://www.grrb.nt.ca)



## Species At Risk (cont'd)

agement authority. The CMA generally meets as a whole at least twice per year, then will have additional species-specific meetings as more species are considered. In 2012 the GRRB, through the CMA, provided comments on the draft management plan guidelines. The first consensus decision of the CMA on whether to list 4 species will be in December 2013. In this round the only species that falls in the GSA is Boreal Caribou and it is proposed to be listed as threatened.

The GRRB appoints one member (James Firth) and one alternate (Eugene Pascal) to the Species at Risk Committee (SARC). The role of the SARC is to (1) Prioritize which species should be assessed first, (2) Produce a species status report, (3) Assess the species and (4) Reassess the species when needed. In July 2012 SARC released the species at risk assessment schedule for 2012-2017. Of note to residents of the GSA are upcoming studies of Boreal Woodland Caribou (by Dec 2012), Wolverine (by Dec 2014), Grizzly Bear (by Dec 2015), Peregrine Falcon (by Dec 2015), Rusty Blackbird (by Dec 2016) and the Collared Pika (by Dec 2017).

Until this past July our ED, Amy Amos was taking the leading staff role ensuring the Board's responsibilities under the CMA were met. These duties have now been taken over by our Special Projects Biologist, Natalka Melnycky, who is on term with us until January 2014. The GRRB's intent is to secure funding for a full-time biologist to handle these duties permanently.

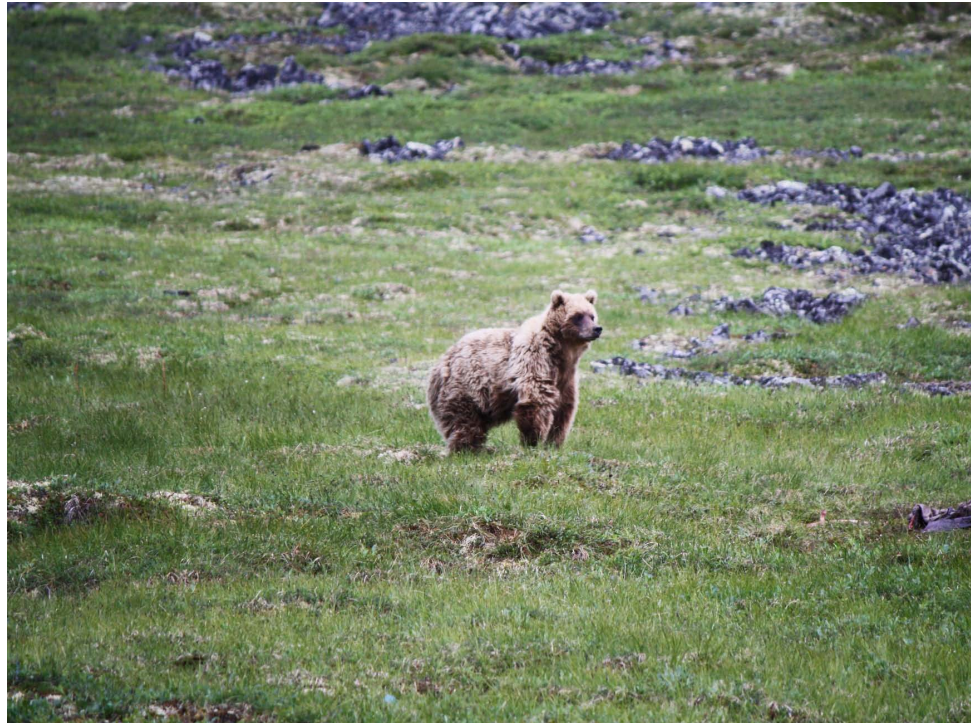


Photo: Greta Ronde

### Boreal Caribou Recommendation

Due to their small population and increasingly fragmented or disappearing habitat the GRRB will need to decide by December 2013 whether it is prepared to sign a consensus agreement through the CMA to list Boreal Caribou as threatened in the NWT as per our consultations with the communities. Once listed, a Recovery Strategy must be developed and conservation actions to manage or recover the species will be decided upon by the affected wildlife management boards and the GNWT. Under the territorial SAR Act there are no automatic restrictions on harvesting or development activities.

### SAR Stewardship Programs

Amy Amos, GRRB Executive Director, sits on the NWT Species at Risk Stewardship Committee which provides up to \$5000 per year to each region for stewardship projects that support the long-term protection and recovery of species that are at risk or of concern in the NWT. Schools, community groups, individuals, Hunters & Trappers Committees and others can apply. The deadline each year is March 1st. Please keep this date in mind for next year. Check the "What Can I Do" page at [www.nwt-species-at-risk.ca](http://www.nwt-species-at-risk.ca) to read about past projects or contact Amy if you have any questions.

Visit us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/grrb.nt.ca](http://www.facebook.com/grrb.nt.ca)



## Kris Maier

### Fisheries Biologist



The first half of 2013 I spent action planning in order to implement the FMP (Forest Management Plan), attending CIMP (Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program) and NWT Water Strategy meetings, taking part in an FJMC (Fisheries Joint Management Committee) Char Indicators workshop and attending to my duties with the Rat River Working Group, the co-management body that makes recommendations regarding Rat River Dolly Varden char stocks. I have also been reviewing research proposals and coordinating with the RRCs on fisheries issues and research.

Additionally, the Fisheries Act was recently amended so I wrote a letter on behalf of the GRRB providing advice to the federal government on this legislation.

Fieldwork this past spring and summer included leading the Rat River study for the GRRB along with the participation of the RRCs & DFO as well as the installation of water

Installing water temperature data loggers in the Rat River, March 2013

Photo: Karen Dunmall, DFO



temperature data loggers in the Rat River. On September 13th we also installed 2 micro weather stations along the Rat River with the aim of furthering our understanding of the area's climate and its affect on char.

### Rat River Working Group

The RRWG includes members from each Gwich'in Renewable Resources Council, the Aklavik Hunters & Trappers Committee, DFO, GRRB and FJMC. An annual meeting is held every March where we review the previous year's data and make recommendations for the upcoming season.

Currently the population is stable & the harvest is sustainable, with a total recommended harvest of 420 char this season, up from 375 in 2012. This recommended catch will be shared between the three user groups in Aklavik and Ft. McPherson and the char monitors. Because the most recent population esti-

mates are from 2010 and indicators such as catch rate, average size and male to female ratio have been used in the intervening years for monitoring, there will be another population estimate done this September 24th and 25th.

### Do you fish for char?

Char fishermen are asked to make a weekly report totalling the number of char caught to one harvest monitor, who are stationed at Shingle Point, Aklavik and Ft. McPherson and who will report these numbers to their RRC or HTC. This information is used to estimate the health of the fish population to ensure the survival of Rat River char for future generations.

For more information visit us at [www.grrb.nt.ca](http://www.grrb.nt.ca)



## Janet Boxwell Renewable Resource Manager



So far this year I have attended a variety of workshops, led our elementary school Nature Day education program, overseen the Harvest Study and welcomed my second grandchild, among other events.

In January, 2013 I attended a Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (CIMP) workshop along with other staff members. CIMP is a program that is studying how human activity and other impacts affect our natural habitat over time. A large amount of CIMP research has the direct involvement of our communities in the form of training, monitoring and field assistance.

In February RRC members and I attended an NWT Water Stewardship Strategy workshop in Inuvik for Gwich'in participants. The key focus of this program is to establish community water monitoring projects - they will provide training and will help set up a water quality monitoring station that is staffed by community members.

Nature Day in Aklavik, June 2013

Photo: Amy Amos, GRRB



The results from this year's Gwich'in Harvest Study are now in and, unfortunately, rates of response were very low which greatly affects the accuracy of the study. There are various reasons why harvesters might not have participated in the study, including not knowing about it, not wanting to participate in more interviews and less harvesting due to fewer Porcupine caribou in the area this year. It's also possible that unsuccessful hunters didn't think it was necessary to report failed attempts to hunt.

It is very important for harvesters to report their harvest even if they go hunting and are unsuccessful. This is the only way that an accurate harvest estimate can be obtained. This estimate is important because it is used to protect harvest rights and ensure the sustainability of the harvest. In 2010 the Porcupine caribou population was estimated to be about 169,000 animals which places the herd in the Green Harvest Zone with no harvest restrictions

for aboriginal hunters. Should the population decline below 115,000 harvest restrictions may be implemented. In order to protect Gwich'in harvest rights we need an accurate understanding of harvest rates and the Gwich'in use of this valuable resource in the event that future harvest restrictions must be placed on the herd.

If you are a harvester you are our eyes and ears on the land - we need your feedback and observations so that we can understand any changes on the land and with the animals. Harvester information is kept confidential and is never used for enforcement purposes.

If you have any questions about the harvest study or other GRRB activities, please call me at 777-6615. I enjoy meeting people from the communities and hearing your stories about your life on the land and what makes your community special. If you see me around stop and say 'Hi'!

Visit us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/grrb.nt.ca](http://www.facebook.com/grrb.nt.ca)



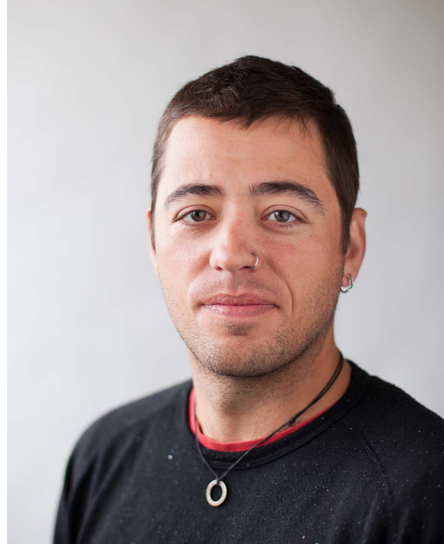
**Cheryl Greenland**  
Office Manager



So far this year I have attended the First Nations Leadership Training Course in Whitehorse, participated in the GRRB Strategic Planning and Research Priority workshop in Ft. McPherson and set up GRRB staff with RRSP contributions through our payroll system. I've organized our books for our fiscal year-end Auditor's visit in June and have been assigned the role of GRRB Safety Officer which includes training.

I have also attended meetings alongside our Executive Director with the Worker's Compensation Commission and an employment standards officer to better understand and review our workplace policies. Additionally, I have recently taken on the financial accounting for our office neighbours, the Gwich'in Land and Water Board.

**Ryan Brooks**  
Technician



I have now been with the GRRB for 2 months and it has been a fascinating and enjoyable time. Highlights so far have been assisting wildlife Biologist Kristen Callaghan on hare pellet counts as well with bear distribution surveys along the Dempster Highway. On each of the bear surveys we made systematic stops to scan for bears every kilometre for a distance of 104km up to the Yukon border.

I also spent time with Krista Chin of Aboriginal Affairs and Brianna Levenstien from the Canadian Rivers Institute assisting on CIMP and CABIN sampling and research in the Fort McPherson area.

In August I assisted DFO's Ben Kissinger and GRRB's Kris Maier to prepare equipment, set trap nets and angle on Deep Water Lake in order to learn about genetic variation in our region's lake trout.

It has been an excellent opportunity working with GRRB as well as everyone we encounter in the community.

**Get in touch with us!**

## **Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board**

**PO Box 2240**  
**Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0**  
**Tel: 867.777.6600**  
**Fax: 867.777.6601**  
**[www.grrb.nt.ca](http://www.grrb.nt.ca)**

### **Executive Director**

Amy Amos 867.777.6602  
[aamos@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:aamos@grrb.nt.ca)

### **Office Manager**

Cheryl Greenland 867.777.6600  
[office@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:office@grrb.nt.ca)

### **Fisheries Biologist**

Kris Maier 867.777.6607  
[kmaier@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:kmaier@grrb.nt.ca)

### **Wildlife Biologist**

Kristen Callaghan 867.777.6610  
[kcallaghan@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:kcallaghan@grrb.nt.ca)

### **Special Projects Biologist**

Natalka Melnycky 867.777.6612  
[nmelnycky@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:nmelnycky@grrb.nt.ca)

### **Renewable Resources Manager**

Janet Boxwell 867.777.6615  
[jboxwell@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:jboxwell@grrb.nt.ca)

### **Technician**

Ryan Brooks 867.777.6616  
[technician@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:technician@grrb.nt.ca)

**For more information visit us at [www.grrb.nt.ca](http://www.grrb.nt.ca)**