



GWICH'IN RENEWABLE RESOURCES BOARD

# news

Spring 2021



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### who we are

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).

### who we work with

The GRRB works with its co-management partners - Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC), Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) - to communicate with the public and encourage conservation of renewable resources in the GSA. The GRRB works in collaboration with the four Renewable Resources Councils (RRCs) in the four communities (Inuvik, Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson, and Aklavik) to educate and promote sustainability of resources within the GSA.

### our mission

The GRRB works in cooperation with the Gwich'in people, governments and stakeholders and in accordance with the GCLCA to effectively protect, conserve and manage renewable resources in the GSA. It does this in a respectful, transparent, communicative and inclusive manner, using the best available traditional and scientific knowledge.

### our vision

The GRRB is a model of renewable resources co-management. Working with its partners, the Board plays a leadership role in ensuring that the fish, forests and wildlife of the GSA remain healthy and sustainable.

### our mandate

The GRRB is the main instrument of wildlife, fish and forest management in the GSA. The Board acts in the public interest, representing all the parties to the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Settlement – the Gwich'in, the people of the Northwest Territories and all Canadians.



## Amy Amos

executive director

*Personal Mission Statement: I lead a team of dedicated experts to implement the Board's decisions and responsibilities in accordance with the land claim agreement. I am committed to building strong relationships with respect, compassion and integrity.*

I am a Nihtat Gwich'in Participant who was born in Inuvik and grew up in Halifax with my father, Wallace Thompson. My mother is Susie Thompson (Linklater/Kaye) from Aklavik. My Jijii (grandfather) is the late Jim Kay from Tetlit Zheh (Fort McPherson) and my Jijuu (grandmother) is the late Betty Kay (Stewart) from Aklavik. I am related to the Kaye and Stewart families.

I am entering my 16th year with the GRRB! I moved back to Inuvik in January 2006 to work at the GRRB

*Receiving my first COVID-19 vaccination*



and to reconnect with my roots. I was hired as a biologist and then promoted to Executive Director in 2009.

My main job is to ensure that the Board's direction is implemented at the staff level. My job description can be broadly categorized into personnel management, financial management, Board administration and liaison activities. This newsletter is a progress report for work activities from September through February.

**COVID-19 update** In alignment with the Northwest Territories (GNWT) **Emerging Wisely Plan (EWP)**, GRRB staff are fully equipped to work from home, as needed. We have purchased disinfectant, sanitizers and personal protective equipment, including face masks and shields. All staff received their first vaccination in January and their second doses in February/March. We continue to discuss COVID-19 and other safety considerations at monthly staff meetings.

### **Personnel management**

I strongly believe that a positive work

environment goes a long way. I am proud of our staff and of how well we work together. We are a dedicated and hard-working team. I encourage you to read all of our staff reports.

**Permanent staff** Cheryl Greenland (Office Manager) has been with us since 2009. Kaytlin Cooper (Species at Risk Biologist) has been with us since 2015. Sarah Lord (Fisheries & Forestry Biologist) and Édouard Bélanger (Wildlife Biologist) have both been with us since 2017. Steve Andersen (Stakeholder Liaison) started in April 2020. Édouard left our team in late April. Prior to leaving, he helped with the recruitment and orientation plan for his replacement. His departure is a big loss to our team. We will miss his hard work and humor. We wish Édouard all the best in his future endeavors! His replacement is our Stakeholder Liaison, Steve Andersen. Steve and Édouard worked together before Édouard's departure. Steve officially started as our new Wildlife Biologist on April 26, 2021. We welcome Steve to his new role and wish him all the best as well.

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**Term staff** Laurence Carter started in August 2020 as our Management Plan Coordinator (MPC). She was hired on a one-year term to update the grizzly bear management plan and agreement. Laurence delivered virtual community engagements testing some new approaches (mail drops and online surveys) to gather information to update the plan, which will now combine the two documents. She organized a virtual workshop with all the GSA communities in early March to present and seek input on the draft plan at the workshop. Laurence left our team on March 22 for a permanent position with Parks Canada. **Comments on the draft plan are due May 18, 2021.** Please submit them to [office@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:office@grrb.nt.ca) with the subject line "Grizzly bear management comments."

**Casual staff** Melanie Bonnetplume started working for us in October 2020 as an Office Assistant to digitalize our paper library (a big job!). There are enough funds secured to keep her until the end of March 2022. Ian Matari helps us with our computer needs after hours and as needed. Chelsea Hermus continues to manage our website remotely and assist with other communication items, as needed. We received federal wage subsidy funding to hire two summer students.

**Recruitment** We advertised for a new Wildlife Biologist and the competition ended on February 10. The result of this recruitment process

was the hiring of our internal staff member, Steve Andersen. We are now recruiting for Steve's former position, but it has been retitled to "Environmental Coordinator".

### **Recognition and compensation**

The Board recently adopted a compensation package that updated the salary ranges, recognition guidelines and leave policies provided to employees. This emphasizes the importance of employee satisfaction. This is one way to recognize our valued employees and to strive to be an employer of choice.

**Financial management** Financial management and administration is important to ensure that we operate efficiently.

**Finance Committee** We held two Finance Committee meetings between Board meetings (November 16, 2020 and February 3, 2021). The November meeting focused on reviewing the mid-year finances (up to September 30, 2020). The February meeting reviewed up to December 2020 and the draft budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year. Recommendations from this committee go to the following GRRB meeting. Current membership is Sam Bullock, Burt Hunt and Doug Doan, with support from GRRB staff. Roger Fraser is an alternate committee member.

**Project management** Staff serve as project leads with my oversight. They help confirm project accounting and

we work together to ensure they are presented properly. We managed 20 external funding agreements this year, including wages for the Summer Student and attendance in remote meetings.

**Wildlife Studies Fund (WSF)** The WSF is managed by Royal Bank of Canada. We have financial advisors that provide reports to us (monthly, quarterly and annually), which the Finance Committee reviews. The investment fund is currently doing well considering uncertainties in the past year(s) in the national and global markets.

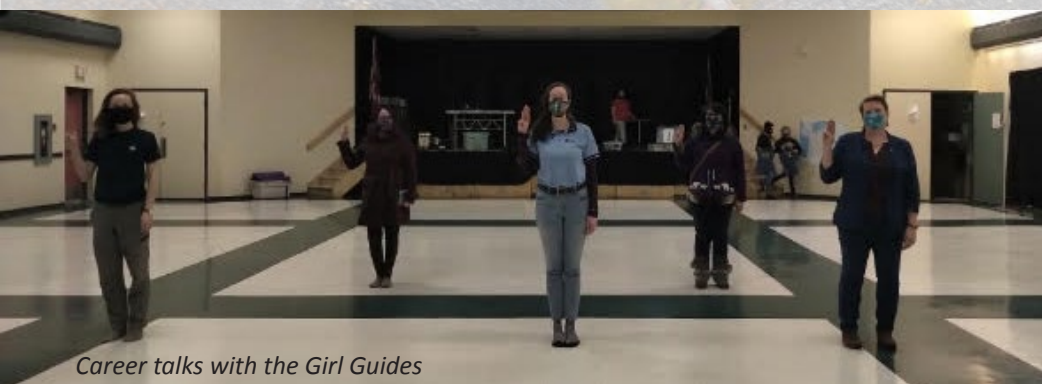
**Board administration** Current vacancies are the GNWT-nominated seat for a full member and Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC)-nominated alternate member. Tracey Davison (the GNWT-nominated alternate member)'s term expires this October. Reach out to the GNWT or GTC if you are interested in being a GRRB Board member!

**Liaison General Liaison** Liaison efforts continue to be challenging due to COVID-19. The communities went many months without meeting. Now, there has been a switch from in-person to virtual meetings. We try our best to keep in contact with all of our partners, including the communities, by email and phone.

**Communication** We were able to secure external project funds to purchase laptops for each Renewable Resource Council (RRC) to help them better engage in virtual meetings.

To help with youth communication, I met with GTC Education to discuss options for encouraging our Gwich'in students into the science field. I received permission from three

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*Career talks with the Girl Guides*





post-secondary students to share their email addresses. I shared our scholarship application and will continue to engage them on any other opportunities that arise. One student applied for the scholarship.

On January 21, I presented virtually to the Grade 12 biology class, summarizing the work of the GRRB, discussing my career path and what jobs the GRRB offers. On February 1, I did career talks with the Girl Guides (see photo on previous page).

Our annual Conservation Calendar was printed and distributed in January. This calendar is a method to share conservation messages with the public. The calendar seems to be popular as we continue to get calls to send out more copies.

Our website is currently being updated to be more modern. We are migrating the existing website to a new design and platform. It will be more responsive, have improved search functionality and will display well on all platforms (desktop, tablet, mobile phone). During the redesign and migration, staff are reviewing and refreshing the content and



Staff Christmas party

photos that will be presented to the public online. It is a great opportunity to update the GRRB's public image and modernize our website.

Our Facebook page is mostly used to share information and meeting details.

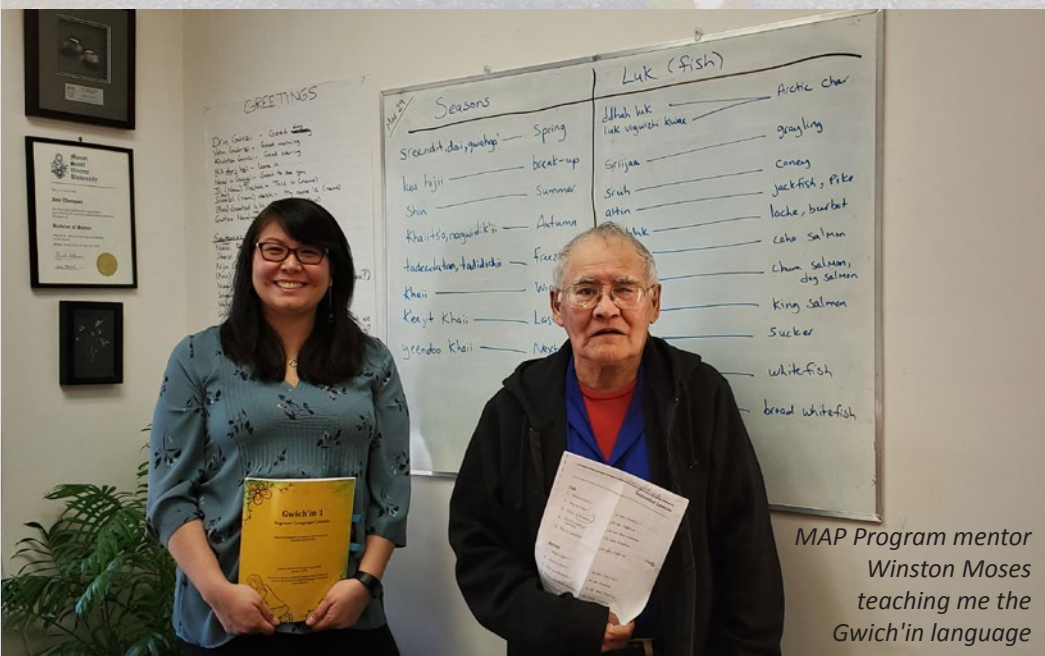
**Professional Development** Due to COVID-19, I did not do any travel outside of the GSA during the current reporting period. I am focusing on personal development and training.

**Emotional intelligence one-on-one assessment** (October - November 2020) This provided me quality time with a coach to discuss my

scores (strengths and weaknesses) for each emotional intelligence category (self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal, decision making, stress management). For my weaknesses, we developed a personal development plan. It was helpful to simply discuss various situations and how to apply emotional intelligence to them.

**Gwich'in language** I am working on learning my language. From December 2020 - March 2021, I completed the Mentor-Apprentice Program (MAP) offered by the GNWT. This pairs an apprentice (me) with a mentor (Winston Moses). We achieved our goal of 100 hours of language sessions in late March 2021. I started with almost no language knowledge and can now do basic greetings and basic conversation and understand many basic words. We used my office at the GRRB and met during the mornings for 1-2 hours. I took time off work for this. I really appreciate the opportunity to do this training as learning my language has helped me connect closer to my culture and identity.

In December, I opened two of our sessions up for the staff to learn basic greetings and animal names. They seemed to appreciate that opportunity.



MAP Program mentor Winston Moses teaching me the Gwich'in language



# GRRB Board

**Jozef Carnogursky**  
Chairperson (GRRB)



Order in Council  
appointments

Nominating  
Agency

Federal  
government

Territorial  
government

**Margaret Begg**  
Member (GTC)



**Sam Bullock**  
Member (GTC)



**William Koe**  
Member (GTC)



**Burt Hunt**  
Member (Canada)



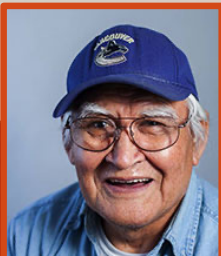
**Doug Doan**  
Member (Canada)



**TBA**  
Member (GNWT)



**Charlie Snowshoe**  
Alternate (GTC)



**Roger Fraser**  
Alternate (GTC)



**TBA**  
Alternate (GTC)



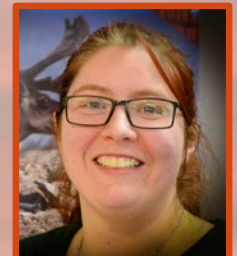
**Ron Allen**  
Alternate (Canada)



**Myra Robertson**  
Alternate (Canada)



**Tracy Davison**  
Alternate (GNWT)



Photos: Black Fly Studios, Nick Westover Photography & Unknown

## board member updates

To form the thirteen-member Board, three members and three alternate members are appointed from nominees put forward by each of the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) and the Government (federal and territorial). Nominees are jointly appointed by the federal and territorial governments. The Chairperson is nominated by the Board members and jointly appointed by the federal and territorial governments.

Once appointed, our Board members act in the public interest. They are independent, not beholden to the agency that nominated them.

There were fewer meetings for Board members to attend this period due to COVID-19. All meetings listed below were attended virtually via video- or teleconferencing.

Our Board members are busy working in many different areas, including the following:

### Committees/Working Groups:

- Conference of Management Authorities (CMA)
- Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) Steering Committee
- Finance Committee
- Hiring Committee

### Human Resources:

- Assisting with recruitment processes for new staff positions
- Providing HR support/advice

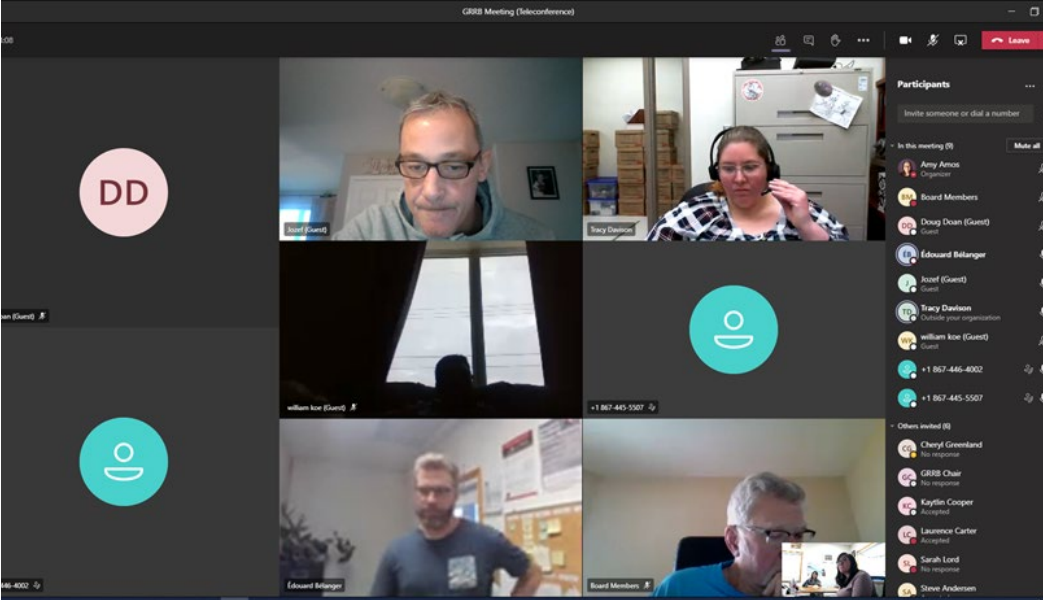
### Meetings:

- GRRB regular and special teleconferences
- GRRB Finance Committee teleconferences and calls
- *Wildlife Act* (Section 15) teleconference
- Advisory Committee for the Cooperation of Wildlife Management (ACCWM) annual status meeting
- Commercial use discussion with Environment and Natural Resources (ENR)



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





## GRRB Teleconferences

The Board held two teleconferences between our face-to-face meetings:

### November 17 Teleconference (pictured above)

- Approved past minutes
- Approved the mid-year financial report
- Reviewed harvester comments in preparation for the annual status meeting for the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM)
- Discussed policy and decision guidelines for use of discretion (i.e. if no conservation concern)

### December 15 Special Teleconference

**Special Topic:** Recommendations from the annual status meeting for the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM)

- Approved the proposed herd status for Bluenose-East caribou
- Approved the proposed herd status for Bluenose-West caribou
- Approved the proposed herd status for Cape Bathurst caribou
- Update on Colville Lake public listening and community conservation planning

## February 2021 Board Meeting Recap

The GRRB held its winter Board meeting by teleconference from February 15-17. Due to the pandemic, this was the first fully virtual Board meeting. Board members and staff presented updates on their activities since the last face-to-face meeting in September.

Kaytlin Cooper, Species at Risk Biologist, sought Board support to list Northern mountain caribou as a Species of Special Concern under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*. The Board moved to support this listing.

Under the Federal Species at Risk Act, the Board moved to support the Hudsonian godwit listing as Threatened and to support management plans for the Yellow-banded bumble bee and Red-necked phalarope.

Norman Snowshoe, Ernie Francis, Roland Malegana and Marsha Branigan provided agency updates on behalf of the Government of NWT Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR).

Herb Nakimayak, Kevin Bill and Ellen Lea presented updates on behalf of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

Suzanne Carriere, ENR Wildlife Biologist (Biodiversity), introduced the NWT Species Reports: General Status Ranks of Wild Species in the NWT. This report has been released every five years since 2000. The 2021-2025 species edition is in production - GRRB will be asked to review. Suzanne sought the Board's approval for the section on mosses and bees.

The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment has invited the GRRB to provide comments on their review of the *Wildlife Act* and *Species at Risk Act*. Amy Amos presented and led a discussion on the Board's involvement in this process.

Amy also provided a briefing note to update the Board on the process of defining commercial use. This file is pending, but we expect to go back to the communities in the new fiscal year (2021-22).

The second day of the meeting began with Wildlife Studies Fund (WSF) proposal presentations, each requesting WSF monies. Each application was reviewed by the Board and just under \$84,000 in project and scholarship allocations were approved. **See page 17** for summaries of the approved projects.

During the Renewable Resource Council (RRC) and Public session, the Chair opened the floor to questions from the RRCs and members of the public.

Following this session, GRRB Wildlife Biologist Édouard Bélanger gave an update on caribou conservation in the Sahtu region. The Sahtu Renewable Resources Board is going through a public hearing in their region regarding caribou. GRRB staff will stay involved.

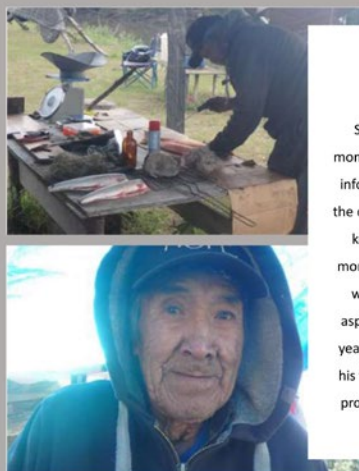
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Sarah Lord, GRRB Fisheries and Forestry Biologist, provided historical background for the Rat River Char Harvest Monitoring Program's 25-year data set and delivered a preliminary report addressing indications of char population decline in multiple Beaufort Sea char stocks (Dolly Varden and Arctic Char). The Rat River Working Group advises caution when setting harvest levels for 2021.

Sarah closed by acknowledging Selwyn Kay's dedication to over 25 years of char monitoring. His dedication and diligent record-keeping serves as a wonderful example for Gwich'in youth who aspire to pursue opportunities in fisheries. Mahsi Cho, Selwyn. You will be missed.

The third and final day of the meeting began with a presentation on the Forest Management Framework by Mike Gravel (ENR). ENR is working with GRRB and GTC staff on updating the Gwich'in Forest Management Plan. Mike also provided a progress update on the *Forest Act*, which will be re-introduced during the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. ENR expects to renew engagement with Indigenous Governments and Renewable



TRIBUTE  
**SELWYN KAY**  
Selwyn Kay's 25+ years of service as a char monitor has provided a wealth of knowledge and information that has immensely contributed to the co-management of char. His love for the land, knowledge of fish, dedication to the role of monitor, and diligent record-keeping serves as a wonderful example for Gwich'in youth who aspire to pursue opportunities in fisheries. The years of information he collected annually from his family's camp at Destruction City will always provide an important contribution towards the assessment of Rat River char.



**Mahsi cho, Selwyn. You will be missed.**

Resources Boards through the technical working group this spring.

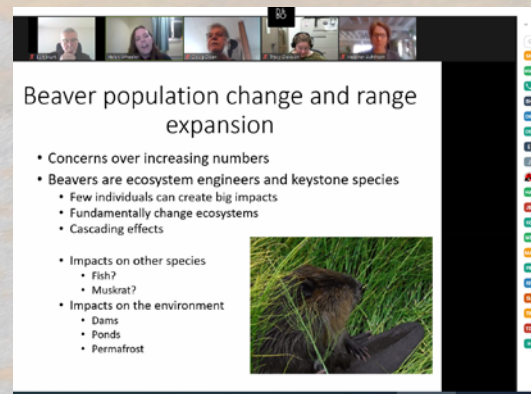
Amy Amos followed this session with a verbal report on meeting outcomes of the Finance Committee. The Board approved the re-appointment of Paul Teoh & Company as auditors for the 2020-21 financial statements.

A recent review of the GRRB's Maternity and Parental Leave Policy showed that it was not comparable to other organizations and governments. The Board accepted the adoption of an updated policy that is in line with the federal government.

The open portion of the meeting closed with the Chair thanking

the RRCs, Board members and the communities for their understanding as we go through this pandemic. We wish for everyone to stay safe.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 21-22, 2021 in Inuvik.



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**Édouard Bélanger**  
wildlife biologist  
since June 2017

**Management Planning**

**Taking Care of Caribou: the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose West and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou herds management plan**

As a working group member of the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM), my work is mainly to continue developing the Communication and Education materials and completing the annual monitoring table. During the fall and winter, I participated in several ACCWM education and communication meetings and Working Group meetings. Most of the work consisted of updating the Taking Care of Caribou management plan with our partners. I consulted with hunters that had requested Bluenose-West tags in the past two years and provided this collected information at the Annual Status Meeting in November. This year, the three-day meeting was held online. Jozef Carnogursky, Doug Doan, William Koe and I participated via Zoom. With the help of my colleagues, I ordered ACCWM swag for community members, hunters and trappers.



*Photo credit: Black Fly Studios*

**Shih (Grizzly Bears)** Following concerns over grizzly bears and over 14 defence of life and property kills between Aklavik and Inuvik, the GRRB hired Laurence Carter as the Management Plan Coordinator – Grizzly Bear. She started last August under my supervision. I helped Laurence during the first consultation and we have also completed a second round using an online workshop approach. Laurence was able to consult with the public, Renewable Resource Councils, Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee, Environment and Natural

Resources and other stakeholders, while adapting to rapidly changing environments and needs due to COVID-19. Both Laurence and I are leaving the GRRB, but we are working hard to make sure that the management plan is at a stage that requires minimal effort and capacity to finish.

**Research Divii (Dall's Sheep)**

**Research Project** In 2018, the Divii Research Project officially started with a total of 15 cameras installed around Black Mountain. Last fall, my work revolved around funding applications and hiring a master's student. Trevor Lantz, Jason T. Fisher (University of Victoria) and I selected Sydney Goward, a self-declared Métis woman. She will start her Master's degree this May. She is very excited about this opportunity.

**Tsee (Beaver)** Helen Wheeler from Anglia University is leading a Tsee research project around Jackfish Creek. Helen led funding applications with the help of Jeremy Brammer and I. A new working group called the Arctic Beaver Network is being

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*Servicing the remote cameras as part of the Divii (Dall's sheep) community-based project in the Northern Richardson Mountains around Chigwaazraii (Black Mountain)*



formed, with the aim of creating a hub for exchange of knowledge on beaver and increasing research collaboration opportunities.

**Technical Advice General** I reviewed several proposed projects in the GSA as part of my usual duties. I provided GRRB advice concerning caribou for the ACCWM.

**Liaison General Liaison** I have not participated in any RRC meetings since last winter due to COVID-19. However, I exchanged several emails and phone calls to stay updated or to update the RRCs on field work and upcoming files.

**Other Funding** Fall and winter are always busy times for funding applications. I applied to several pots of money for our various projects. Later in the winter, I applied for even more funding to make sure that the next Wildlife Biologist would have the necessary funds to keep running research and management programs already in place.

**Professional Development** In early November, I participated in the 2020 Northern Wild Sheep



*Divii field work - changing batteries and SD cards*

and Goat Symposium. This was an online conference about scientific research and management of thinhorn (which includes divii), bighorn sheep and mountain goats across North America. It was very interesting and provided me with up-to-date information on western science.

**Personal** In January 2021, I gave my formal resignation from the GRRB. I will be leaving the GRRB on April 23 and Inuvik on April 28. Before my departure, I have planned to close some of my files and to leave other in good enough shape that they will be easy to be taken over by the next Wildlife Biologist.

I profoundly loved working as a Wildlife Biologist for the GRRB and in close collaboration with the Gwich'in communities. There are several files and projects that I would have loved to see finished that I will not personally be able to bring to this state. There are other files and projects that I was collaborating on that I am very saddened to leave behind, though in good hands.

As for the Board, it has provided me with numerous possibilities to grow as an individual, a biologist and a person passionate about wildlife and the land. I have learned so much while working thanks to the training I was given, the conferences I went to, and most importantly, the people I have met and work with, whether it was the GRRB team, members, other partners, or the Gwich'in people and community members.

I consider myself extremely lucky to have dipped my toes in the Gwich'in culture and to have witnessed the Gwich'in love of their land. I have learned a great deal from this culture, this place, and this work. For that, I thank the Board and the communities from the bottom of my heart.

Mahsi,

*Ed*



*Gift to Édouard from the GRRB  
Made by Diane Kay*





## Kaytlin Cooper

### species at risk biologist since January 2015

As Species at Risk Biologist, I work with local communities, Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs) and governments (both Federal and Territorial), assisting with species assessments and listings, developing management plans and recovery strategies and administering species at risk programs and research projects (science and Traditional Knowledge) in the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA).

### **Management Planning Boreal Caribou Range Planning Working Group**

Under the NWT recovery strategy for boreal caribou, the range plan framework broadly outlines how each NWT region can manage disturbances such as development and fire to ensure that boreal caribou continue to be self-sustaining. Work on a GSA-specific range plan began in September with an online (Zoom) meeting with Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) and representatives from the communities and Gwich'in organizations. There was another online meeting in January, followed up with an in-person meeting in Inuvik in February, with the option to join online. Further meetings will be held over the next few years. Current discussions in meetings include background information on the species at risk process to date, the range planning framework, building a shared understanding of how the working group will work collaboratively to develop the range plan, developing terms of reference, Gwich'in ways of knowing and paths forward.

**Grizzly bear (Western population)**  
The Canada-wide management plan



Photo credit: Black Fly Studios

for grizzly bear is being written, as it was listed as Special Concern in 2018. While this is being led by federal species at risk biologists, a northern working group has been developed consisting of organizations from Yukon, NWT and Nunavut. So far, three meetings have taken place: an overview of the *Species at Risk Act* process and how it relates to grizzly bear in February, information on the different regions' individual management plans in March (including the GRRB's) and a threat assessment in April. I will continue to attend these meetings on behalf of the GRRB.

**Research Bank swallows** I applied for funding through the NWT Species Conservation and Recovery Fund (SCARF) to conduct bank swallow surveys. Surveys were done in 2014 on the Mackenzie and Arctic Red Rivers near Tsiigetichic. These were repeated in 2015 and surveys of the gravel pits from the NWT/Yukon border to Inuvik were added. This year, the surveys will extend to the Peel river near Fort McPherson. The results from these surveys will be instrumental in determining

population trends (by comparing to the data from 2014 and 2015) and in identifying Critical Habitat (the habitat the species requires for survival). This Critical Habitat is protected under the federal *Species At Risk Act*, as bank swallows are listed as Threatened. There is a Recovery Strategy in development right now and I will be attending RRC meetings soon to consult on this. The species is due for re-assessment in 2023.

**Bees** Several bumble bee species that occur in the NWT have been assessed as At Risk. However, these assessment reports and management plans have identified knowledge gaps in the northern part of their ranges. Therefore, a new insect research partnership has been created between the GRRB, Wildlife Management Advisory Committee (Inuvialuit Settlement Region) and ENR (GNWT). Recent consultations with the RRCs have shown great interest and support for this project. It was too late in the season to do surveys last year, but I am excited to be working with WMAC wildlife biologist Rosemin

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Nathoo this summer. Blue vane traps will be set in and around Inuvik, all insect specimens will be collected and sent south to a bug specialist for identification. The hope is to transition this to a community-based monitoring program in all four GSA communities in the future.

**Bats** There have been reports of bats in the GSA from community members for many years. Bat detectors were purchased with funding from the NWT Stewardship Program (now called SCARF) in 2016 and placed in all four GSA communities. While no bats were detected, occasional sightings are still reported to the GRRB. Therefore we will continue the surveys. If you see a bat, please let us know where and when!

**Technical Advice** I am a member of the Conference of Management Authorities (CMA), the group of wildlife co-management boards and governments that share management responsibility for the conservation and recovery of species at risk in the NWT. I am also a member of the Species at

Risk Committee, a group of science and traditional knowledge experts who assess the biological status of species that may be at risk in the NWT, identifies threats and positive influences to species and their habitats, and may recommend conservation actions. I am also involved in the development and review of documents for the federal (Canada-wide) *Species at Risk Act*. These NWT and federal documents include species assessment reports, management plans and recovery strategies for several species at risk. Since our last newsletter, this has included; northern mountain caribou (NWT) listing, Hudsonian godwit listing, Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee proposed listing, Red-necked phalarope management plan, Yellow-banded bumble bee management plan, Gypsy cuckoo bumble bee management plan, Dolly Varden/Integrated Fisheries Management Plan, Bank swallow recovery strategy and reassessment status report, Peary caribou (NWT) reassessment status report, Boreal caribou (NWT) range planning and reassessment status report and Polar bear (NWT) reassessment status report.

As a member of the NWT Wildlife Care Committee (WCC), I provide technical advice on wildlife handling applications and review wildlife handling reports and other documents. These applications outline the planned animal handling activities of proposed research, while wildlife handling reports provide a summary of the handling of wildlife once the research has been conducted. At the application stage, the NWT WCC provides recommendations on how to be respectful of the animals involved, ensuring that animal welfare is considered in the procedures and that humane handling (and euthanasia, if required) occurs. Proposed animal handling procedures must comply with WCC Standard Operating Procedures,

as well as the Guidelines on the Care and Use of Wildlife and the Guide to the Care and Use of Experimental Animals developed by the Canadian Council on Animal Care. The NWT WCC approves research projects throughout the NWT, not just in the GSA. Recent applications include: Boreal caribou collar deployments in North Slave, Decho and Sahtu, collaring of ~90 barren-ground caribou in the North Slave region, deployment of GPS collars on boreal caribou in the Northwest Territories (South Slave, North Slave, Decho South, Decho North, Sahtu), COVID-19 protocols for working with wild mammals and deployment of GPS collars on bison in the Mackenzie population.

I also review research and development applications on behalf of the GRRB from the perspective of impacts on species at risk.

**Liaison** Until recently, all face-to-face meetings have been held by Zoom due to COVID-19. This means that I have not been able to attend meetings in the communities, however I regularly send emails and documents for RRC review. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, consultations had a different format this past year. Consultation packages including a fact sheet, printed PowerPoint presentation and a questionnaire for each species were sent to each community for RRC councillors and community members. I hope that I will be able to get to the communities and attend face-to-face meetings again soon.

I am working with Chelsea (website designer) to create a Species at Risk section for the newly-designed website and have drafted Species at Risk consultation policies for both NWT and federal listing and management plan/recovery strategy processes.



Missing my work-from-home days





## Sarah Lord

fisheries & forestry biologist

January 2017

**Management Planning Forestry Management** The Gwich'in Forest Management Plan Steering Committee has revised its Terms of Reference and is working on updating the management plan. We met several times over the winter. If feasible with COVID-19 considerations, the working group is hoping to do a round of in-person meetings in the communities with stakeholder groups and virtual conversations with stakeholders over the next fiscal year, to provide direction and input.

I reviewed the revised GNWT Forest Management Framework document in January.

**Fisheries Management** The Species at Risk (SAR) group at Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) is developing a Species at Risk Management Plan for Dolly Varden in the Western Arctic. DFO is taking a regional approach to cover the entire range of the species, so they intend to consult with GRRB



Photo credit: Black Fly Studios

on the draft Plan alongside many other groups in Yukon and NWT. There was a virtual workshop on March 9. Amy and I have met with the team organizing these consultations to discuss the best approaches for consultation.

We sent out the revised Rat River Working Group Terms of Reference to user groups. We are aiming for formal approvals by the end of this fiscal year.

I participated in the annual Rat River Working Group and West Side Working Group annual harvest meetings, which were held virtually this year on March 2 and 3.

I provided information about Peel River whitefish to a Yukon Parks contractor, who is drafting a report on existing baseline information for the Peel River Land Use Plan implementation work.



Frankie Dillon (AHTC) and Paden Lennie (Parks Canada) measure Rat River char in 2020 fall seine program

**Research** I offer my support to researchers at many different organizations for projects that address GRRB research priorities. With partners from universities and government, I won four external funding sources for fisheries research projects for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

**Fall Seine Program** In September, I co-lead the DFO fall seine program at the Rat River fish hole.

**Moss Sampling for Mackenzie Hydrology** In September, we completed field work for this project. Charlie Snowshoe Jr. was my youth field assistant. Peat moss samples that we collected will be used to

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reconstruct past (1,000+ years) water levels in the Mackenzie Delta region. Jennifer Galloway and I drafted a plain-language summary of our summer field work, which was translated into Gwich'in and distributed to the RRCs in February.

**Community-Based Whitefish Monitoring** I continue to provide logistical and administrative support, partnered with Dr. Rachel Hovel from the University of Maine. This project is helping GRRB learn more about where whitefish go during their lives, so we can make sure that we are protecting the areas that are important for them.

**Arctic Salmon Project** I work with Dr. Karen Dunmall and Darcy McNicholl from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Winnipeg to deliver this project. For more information, check out the project's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/arcticsalmon/>

**eDNA Sampling** I submitted a funding application to DFO SAR to finish processing the remaining eDNA samples from my 2018 field work with Rob Bajno (DFO Winnipeg).

**Permafrost Degradation on Iuk dagaii (Broad Whitefish) Habitat in the Peel River Watershed** I hired a research assistant (Bella Charlie, supervised by Sharon Snowshoe, at the Gwich'in Tribal Council) and a post-doctoral fellow (Jackie Ziegler, supervised by Trevor Lantz at the University of Victoria) to do traditional knowledge interviews and combine that information with scientific permafrost mapping to describe the impacts of permafrost degradation on Iuk dagaii habitat in the Peel River Watershed. Both were hired for minimum one-year terms, with the hope of three-year extensions (depending on



Rat River fish hole  
fall seine program

what additional funding we can win in 2021-22). This project's implementation has been delayed by COVID-19, but we are hoping to begin doing the interviews and data collection before end of this fiscal year.

**Technical Advice** I responded to the DFO Ecosystems survey about how the GRRB wants to be engaged on upcoming proposals about Regulations related to the *Fisheries Act*.

In December, I reviewed the updated draft NWT Sportfishing Regulations for 2021-22.

In January, I reviewed proposed amendments to Fishery (General) Regulations that prescribe the first "batch" of major fish stocks subject to the new Fish Stocks provisions (s. 6.1-6.3 of the *Fisheries Act*) and set out the required contents and timelines to develop rebuilding plans for prescribed fish stocks at or below their Limit Reference Point. I also reviewed, requested input from RRCs and drafted a response letter to DFO on their proposed *Aquaculture Act*.

I review and provide comments as needed on permit and research license applications and review

research proposals to provide feedback, sometimes drafting Letters of Support for funding applications. I inform researchers about research and management needs in our region and connect them with resources in the GSA.

**Liaison** I have not attended any RRC meetings in person since the pandemic began in March 2020. I have been in touch with all four RRC coordinators by phone and email.

In January, I responded to an information request from MakeWay (formerly TIDES Canada) about the status of community commercial fishery opportunities and challenges in our region.

**Other Health & Safety** I remain active on the Occupational Health & Safety Committee. I participate in meetings, type up minutes and complete safety-related action items.

**Operational** I provided advice on maternal/parental leave policy revisions in February.

**Professional Development** I am still waiting for pandemic travel and gathering restrictions to relax so I can safely do my Wilderness First Responder course.







## Steve Andersen stakeholder liaison April 2020

I have been working for the GRRB for the past year as Stakeholder Liaison. I take care of things like overseeing the Gwich'in Harvest Survey, reviewing research and regulatory applications and keeping track of research interests that community members bring forward. As of April 26, I will be taking on the new Wildlife Biologist position.

**Management Planning** The Gwich'in Harvest Survey has now been running for over a decade. Thanks to all the community members who have contributed their information, it is now possible to see how harvest rates have changed over time. I recently put together data on moose harvests over the past eight years (or sixteen surveys) which the GRRB's Wildlife Biologist presented to the *Wildlife Act* Working Group. That information helped them to better understand how moose are doing in the GSA.

The GRRB keeps track of all the

research ideas that community members suggest to us. We take them into account when we choose our research priorities and we also provide them to outside scientists who want to do work in the GSA. I recently updated the form that we use to record research interests to make it easier to use. If there is something that you feel we should be studying, please let me know ([sandersen@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:sandersen@grrb.nt.ca)).

**Research Gwich'in Harvest Survey** We are working on some updates to the harvest survey, hoping to make it a bit quicker and easier to fill out. We also want to make sure that we are collecting all of the information that the RRCs and other decisionmakers need. I have reached out to the RRCs for their initial ideas and I will also be talking to the GRRB's biologists to get their suggestions. Once we complete a draft of the updated survey, I will present it to the RRCs for their approval.

I presented the results of the past year's harvest surveys to the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) at their annual harvest

meeting in February. It was one of the pieces of information that they considered when deciding which colour zone the herd is currently in.

**Data Requests** Since September, we have received five requests for GRRB research data. Three are complete and two are underway. The most substantial request was for historical vegetation data from the Richardson and Mackenzie Mountains. It required locating and making sense of hundreds of digital and paper files. I reached out to several past staff members for assistance. We were able to provide the researchers with a substantial amount of information and cleaned up our own records in the process.

**Technical Advice** I have completed 10 research permit reviews and 19 regulatory reviews since September. Four more reviews are underway.

In January, we reviewed the GNWT Department of Infrastructure's plans for a new road maintenance camp at kilometre 28 of the Dempster Highway.

I also reviewed the applications for the Wildlife Studies Fund, including matching them to current Research and Management Interests.

I provided Parks Canada with suggestions of emerging issues facing parks and protected areas.

**Liaison** Since September, I have written six Letters of Support for researchers: SWOT Altimetry and Physics Based Modelling of Arctic-Boreal Lakes; Tracking the Effects of Climate Change on Northern Aquatic Resources; Arctic Salmon Project's Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program Proposal; Building Capacity for Community-Based Water Quality

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Monitoring in the GSA; Arctic Beaver Observation Network - Tracking a New Disturbance Regime and Watershed-scale geomorphic response to climate change in the Aklavik Range.

I provided the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Society (ABEKS) with feedback on their past applications for the Wildlife Studies Fund to assist them with this year's request.

I worked with the RRCs to provide the Conference of Management Authorities (CMA) with a list of community members who could be interviewed for their Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Wildlife Management.

I discussed harvest surveys with Jeremy Brammer, who is currently working for the Vuntut Gwitch'in. He described how they run their surveys in Old Crow and we shared lessons learned and ideas for future surveys.

I updated the Research section of the website and expanded it to include logistical information that will be useful to researchers who are new to the GSA. I am completing final revisions now. I also revised the RRC section of the site.

I am working with Chelsea (website designer) and all of the GRRB staff on a major update to the website.

**Other Training** Winston Moses very kindly offered two mornings of Gwich'in lessons to the GRRB staff in

December (see photo above). He is a great teacher and I learned a lot from him. Mahsi Cho, Winston!

When time permits, I take part in the twice-monthly Caribou Ecology and Recovery Webinar, presented by the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute and the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium.

**Conferences and Meetings** I took part in the virtual ArcticNet 2020 Conference in December. Goa Haven has developed an online system for collecting real-time data from harvesters and presenting it to the community; this includes information like animal sightings, harvests, dangers, current location of the harvester and the financial cost each hunting trip. I learned about Indigenous data governance principles. I also saw some very creative and effective ways of communicating research findings.

I attended the ITH Corridor Working Group Meeting in November, as well as the following virtual meetings:

- Peel Plan Implementation Workshop
- Northern Connections Workshop
- Caribou Range Planning (PCMB)
- Multiple ABEKS Board meetings

**Operational** I worked with Ian (IT Support) to set up the audio/visual system for the fall GRRB Board meeting and provided technical support throughout the meeting.

I helped with the tribute gathering for long-time char monitor John Carmichael, including putting together a slideshow.

I assisted with the hiring process for the Office Assistant position, screening, interviewing and evaluating the responses from potential candidates.

**Personal** I have been cross-country skiing and snowshoeing and have enjoyed exploring areas around Inuvik that are difficult to reach during the summer. Some friends and I also shovelled off a rink on a small lake near the airport and have been having fun skating out there.





**Cheryl Greenland**  
**office administration**  
**and finances**  
**since February 2009**

This February marks 12 years that I have been with the Board and I am enjoying every bit of it. I am looking forward to this first and second quarter. My job consists of Office and Finance Management. I keep the staff's energy and morale levels up by making sure there is a steady supply of candy, chocolate, tea and coffee.

I work closely with the staff to ensure that their projects are ready for the auditors, with reviews throughout the year. I work closely with Amy to prepare for the year-end audit. File management is done to prepare for the new fiscal year, along with Contribution Agreement files.

I will continue working with the GRRB Office Assistant, Melanie Bonnetplume, training her in the office and in some of the tasks that I normally do. I look forward to



supervising her with some office skills, including some financial training.

This summer, we will be reaching out to the schools to see if it is possible to hold Nature Day, a yearly educational program that the GRRB brings to the schools. Due to COVID-19, we were not able to deliver Nature

Day last summer. Other staff and I hope to travel to the four Gwich'in communities to teach the kids about Predators versus Prey, how caribou need to migrate and a putting on a scavenger hunt for what type of food is on the land. This gives the kids a chance to get out of the classroom and learn about what the GRRB does. We hope that we are encouraging them to go into the science field.

**Melanie Bonnetplume**  
**office assistant**  
**since October 2020**

I am a Gwich'in Participant who was born and raised in Inuvik. Before starting here, I worked at the Inuvik Emergency Warming Centre for three years.

This is my first office job and I love it! It is a nice environment with friendly staff. Right now, I am digitalizing the entire library.

When I am not at work, I am usually spending my free time with my daughter, Alice.



*Sunny Lake. Image shared with the GRRB by B. Firth*





## Laurence Carter management plan coordinator

August 2020 - March 2021

My general contract objective is to update the Grizzly Bear Management Plan and Agreement for the GSA through consultations with the Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs), the public and other stakeholder organizations.

**RRC Consultations** During November and December, the GRRB held consultations with the four RRCs. The goal of these consultations was to hear what councillors had to say regarding the current tag systems and management objectives.

We held in-person meetings in Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson and Aklavik that followed government COVID-19 conduct recommendations (distancing, mask-wearing and sanitizing), ensuring that the Councils were okay with our presence and the COVID-19 measures in place. Phone interviews were held with the Nihtat Council members and with Council members from other communities who could not make it to the meetings. The information collected during these meetings was summarized in a 'What Was Said' document.

**Other Consultations** While the consultations with the RRCs were underway, I began consulting with the public and other stakeholder organizations.

Under normal circumstances, the meetings with the RRCs would have been open to the public. Instead, we chose to consult with residents of the GSA through an online survey and a mail-in pamphlet that was distributed to every post office box



in the GSA. The online survey was shared through the GRRB's Facebook page and personal accounts. Prizes were offered to 1 in 5 participants. The online survey was a success, with 91 respondents from the four communities. It included Gwich'in, Inuvialuit and NWT residents. We had 9 respondents to the mail-in pamphlet.

I met with Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Renewable Resources Officers and their carnivore biologist to listen to their take on the grizzly bear situation. I also reached out to the Renewable Resource Offices in the communities. We spoke with Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee (HTC) members (Inuvialuit) and Arctic Red River Outfitters. All comments were summarized in the 'What Was Said' document.

**Upcoming Plans** I updated the Grizzly Bear Management Plan and organized a workshop held during the first week of March. This online workshop was an opportunity for

the RRCs to discuss and come to an agreement on updates to the tag system. We heard different opinions on directions the tag system should take and thought it was important to have all of the RRCs speak to each other. After the meeting, I drafted the new Agreement.

**Comments on the draft Grizzly Bear Management Plan are due May 18, 2021. Email [office@grrb.nt.ca](mailto:office@grrb.nt.ca).**

I have accepted a permanent position as Ecologist Team Leader with Parks Canada in Inuvik. Though I am very happy to be able to stay in Inuvik, it also means I have to cut my contract short with the GRRB. Fortunately, the start date with Parks (March 22) was pushed back far enough to allow me to lead the second round of consultations (workshop) and hopefully complete the management plan and agreement.

I am very thankful to the GRRB for giving me the opportunity to work for them. I hope to continue working with the GRRB in my new role with Parks.





## Wildlife Studies Fund Applications 2021/22

Researchers requesting support for the 2021-2022 fiscal year submitted written Wildlife Studies Fund applications to the Board. They gave presentations on their proposals at the February Board meeting. The Board supported the following project proposals:

**Tsee (Beaver) Project: Dynamics and drivers of beaver population change, Jackfish Creek, Mackenzie Delta** **Dr. Helen Wheeler (Anglia Ruskin University)** To address how and why beaver populations are changing, we will assess the current distribution of beavers in the Jackfish Creek area in comparison to recent surveys and those conducted in the 1960s. We will also assess changes in beaver populations using a novel combination of shrub ring analysis and modelling. By examining the rings on shrubs which beavers have cut, we aim to identify in which year they were cut to estimate when beavers were present at sites in the past. We can identify long-term beaver colonies from temporary ones to better understand the dynamics of beaver population change.

**Muskox Ecology West of the Mackenzie Delta – Population Survey** **Mike Sutor (Government of Yukon)** The purpose of this study is to provide an updated biological and ecological assessment of North Slope muskox, which includes those found in the Richardson Mountains of NWT and along the Yukon North Slope. The overarching project will investigate muskox population numbers, herd composition and habitat use and will examine potential interactions between caribou and muskox. This project will help to address some research

gaps, interests and concerns about muskox in this region, including those expressed by the GRRB and RRCs.

**Arctic Borderlands Community Ecological Monitoring: Data Sharing for Co-management** **Heather Ashthorn (ABEKS)** Each year, Arctic Borderlands communities document ecological change by hiring community monitors to conduct lengthy interviews with local experts; people who are spending a lot of time on the land. The answers are recorded in a database which may be used to help communities contribute local knowledge to decision-making. In 2020 we provided updated tables and mammal indices to GRRB for all ABEKS communities within the GSA. With this information, the GRRB can look for trends and evaluate the data along with climate indicators and other data. Community monitor work will continue in 2021.

**Divii (Dall's Sheep) Community-Based Research Project** **Édouard Bélanger (GRRB)** In the past two decades, the Richardson Mountains divii population has undergone a rapid decline. In response, the GRRB approved specific management actions for this population in 2014. In 2018, a community-based monitoring and research project was started. The goal of this project is to develop a long-term community-based monitoring program, assessing population changes in divii annually by collecting traditional knowledge and scientific information on recruitment, ratio of ewes:nursery, classification of males, habitat changes, predation and other variables that are known to affect population size. This project is important in the management of the divii population as set out in the draft management plan, by the actions approved for management by the GRRB and by community interest.

**Post-Calving Photo Survey of the Tuktoyaktuk, Cape Bathurst and Bluenose-West Barren-Ground Caribou Herds** **Tracy Davison (ENR)** Management actions recommended for these caribou herds by the Co-management Boards are being implemented. The draft management plan for the Cape Bathurst (CB), Bluenose-West (BW) and Bluenose-East (BE) caribou herds calls for population surveys every 3-5 years. Population estimate surveys will be conducted by ENR this summer. We will also be monitoring collars and will do periodic flights to locate stationary collars.

**Arctic Salmon: Samplers and Coordination** **Karen Dunmall (DFO)** The Arctic Salmon program is a successful community-based project that monitors changes in the relative abundance and geographic distribution of different species of Pacific salmon in the GSA via voluntary reporting and provision of samples from subsistence harvests. In 2020, fewer than 10 salmon were collected in the GSA. It is important to document these year-to-year changes to better understand the variables influencing distributional shifts of salmon northward and the relative abundances. We are requesting funding to continue to support salmon samplers in each community in the GSA and to support a fee for each RRC to handle the salmon in each community in recognition of the time and effort it takes to accept and store salmon and to coordinate with the salmon sampler. We are also requesting funds to support shipping within GSA and to purchase gift cards that would be provided in exchange for salmon heads from the harvesters. Salmon samplers will be trained in person if the opportunity permits, or remotely via Facetime or similar, as occurred in 2019/20.

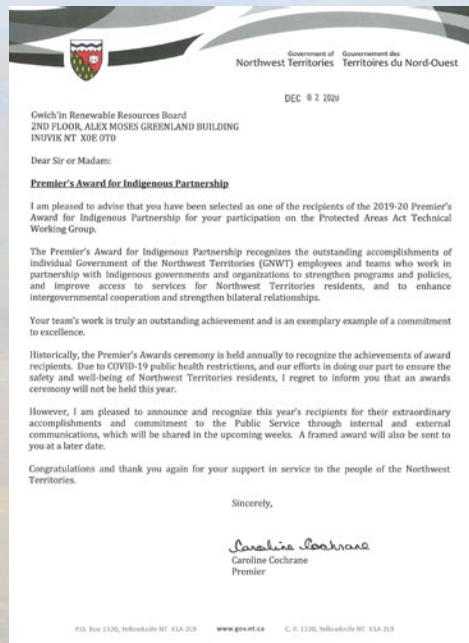


## 2019-20 Premier's Award for Indigenous Partnership for participation on the Protected Areas Act Technical Working Group

The Government of the NWT Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) has developed a *Protected Areas Act* to be used for the establishment of permanent protected areas in the NWT. The new *Act*, created in collaboration with Indigenous governments and organizations, regulatory boards, stakeholders and the public, provides the legislative framework for protecting, conserving and maintaining biodiversity, ecological integrity and cultural continuity of the NWT through the creation of a network of permanent protected areas that are representative of the ecosystems and cultural landscapes found in the territory.

The *Act* was developed through a partnership approach with a Technical Working Group (TWG) of Indigenous governments, organizations and regulatory boards (including the GRRB) and with input from a Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG) consisting of non-government organizations, regulatory boards and industry representatives. The partnership approach was based on the process used for the development of the *Wildlife Act*. Through the partnership process, the TWG and SAG assisted ENR in developing a framework for the drafting of the *Protected Areas Act*.

The *Act* explicitly recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and treaty rights, including the commitments of land, resources and self-government



agreements and recognizes the role of co-management bodies. Proposed language for the affirmation of these rights was based on the *Wildlife Act*, with modernizations as proposed by Indigenous governments through the Technical Working Group and consultation.

The GRRB received a letter signed by the Premier of the NWT, recognizing the accomplishments and importance of the *Protected Areas Act* Technical Working Group. We also received a beautiful gift (pictured below).

Visit the [ENR website](http://www.grrb.nt.ca) for more information on the *Protected Areas Act*.





## get in touch

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#### Environmental Coordinator

Vacant - recruitment in progress!

## upcoming events

Conference of Management Authorities (CMA)  
May 11-12, 2021 (virtual)

Deadline to apply for Environmental Coordinator position  
May 14, 2021 @ midnight

Deadline for comments on draft Grizzly Bear Management Plan  
May 18, 2021

GRRB Teleconference  
July 2021 (TBD)

GRRB Fall Board Meeting  
September 20-21, 2021  
Inuvik, NT



Please call your RRC for monthly meeting times:

Ehdiitat RRC (Aklavik)  
867-978-2336

Tetlit RRC (Fort McPherson)  
867-952-2330

Gwichya RRC (Tsiigehtchic)  
867-953-3608

Nihtat RRC (Inuvik)  
867-777-6650