

**HIGHLIGHTS OF
ARCTIC BORDERLANDS ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY'S
PROGRAMS FOR 2006-07**

MARCH 31, 2007

2006-07 has been a challenging year for the Borderlands Co-op, yet the Community-based Monitoring Program experienced another successful year of interviewing local experts. Interviewees and community members continue to express strong support and belief in the work of the Co-op which is very encouraging.

Community-Based Monitoring Program

- The Monitoring program experienced another successful year of interviews that were carried out in seven communities: Arctic Village, Old Crow, Aklavik Inuvialuit, Aklavik Gwich'in, Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson, Inuvik Inuvialuit, Inuvik Gwich'in and Tuktoyaktuk. There was a two & a half day training session in Inuvik with all the community monitors participating. Randall Tetlichy was the trainer. The workshop took place January 5 -7th which gave the Monitors two extra weeks to complete their interviews. We will plan to have the training in early January again next year.
- Community Summary Reports were prepared and submitted by the Community Monitors.
- We are continuing to work with the community of Kaktovik, Alaska to set up the community-based monitoring program there. It takes time to get established in small, remote communities and build the relationships needed to be successful. Our efforts will continue into the spring when we expect to have a Monitor trained and in place to do twenty interviews. The Co-op will be hosting a meeting in Fairbanks in April. The intent of the meeting is to bring folks together from Arctic Village and Kaktovik to further develop the program, strengthen relationships and increase the profile of the Co-op in Alaska.
- We were encouraged to have six of the eight Community Monitors return this year. We saw improvements in the quality of interviews and summary reports from most of the Monitors. The Monitors completed the interviews in a timely fashion. Of note, due to increased interest in the community of Arctic Village, thirty interviews were done. In Inuvik only ten Gwich'in interviews were conducted this year.
- The Borderlands' Community-Based Monitoring Database was further enhanced this year. A contract was completed to refine and clean up some of the data. We plan to continue with this work in the coming year.

Indicators of Ecological Change

- New indicators of ecological change were explored and the relevance of current indicators was assessed.
- We are working to identify relationships between indicators, as well as link scientific-based and traditional knowledge-based indicators. These efforts provide a more complete understanding of ecological change and its effects on the land.

Communication

- Community Summary Reports from last year were reviewed, printed and distributed and a copy is included with this report.
- The Website was updated and maintained (www.taiga.net/coop)
- Presentations on the Borderlands Co-op were given at meetings and conferences in Whitehorse and Inuvik.

Annual Gathering / Community Tour

- Due to cash flow difficulties we were unable to host a Gathering this year. We tried to arrange a less costly alternative – a community tour where three Borderlands representatives would travel to all the participating communities and host a supper and meeting – however, cash flow issues prevented us from doing this as well (see letter from Coop dated 14th March 2007).
- Michael Svoboda, Program Director provided a presentation on the Co-op and its activities in Inuvik on March 27th at the Inuvialuit “Research Day”. While in Inuvik, he met with Co-op partners, community members, and joint management board members from all IFA communities, and made a trip to Aklavik to meet with Aklavik representatives.
- Community Monitors were tasked with providing a presentation of their monitoring activities to their local RRC or HTC as a way to report back to the community.
- Cash flow and funding arrangements have been an on-going issue for the Co-op. The cashflow issue was exacerbated this year when a significant portion of operating funds that have been available to the Co-op in the past, did not come through.

Administration

- The Annual General Meeting was held on September 6, 2006 in Whitehorse. Financial matters were reviewed, and the financial statements were approved. There was an election of the Board of Directors. Immediately following the AGM was a business meeting.
- Eleven directors were elected, eight of which were returning members. On a sad note, William Teya our Board member from Fort McPherson passed away this fall leaving us with ten directors.

- This year saw change to the organization. Michael Svoboda started work in January as the Program Director. Deana Lemke stepped down as Administrative Coordinator and was replaced by Lisa Taylor.
- Improvements to policies and procedures were undertaken. Further work is being done by the review team.
- Board of Directors struck a Working Group to strategically review Co-op operations, vision, goals and direction. This work will continue into the coming year.

Next Steps

- We regret that the Gathering did not occur this year, yet this situation is signaling a time for reflection and renewal for the Co-op. We are looking at this as an opportunity to step back and evaluate where the Co-op is at after 12 years of operation. Clearly there have been some very positive accomplishments and some other areas where a closer look is required. There continues to be strong support and belief in the work of the Co-op in the communities.
- The Board of Directors has committed to a comprehensive review of Co-op operations, vision, goals and direction led by Michael Svoboda.
- As well, the Co-op is looking to have a Strategic Planning Session this spring with community people, monitors, partners, funders to look at next steps. This will be a great opportunity to evaluate lessons learned and establish future directions for the Co-op.

Final Comments

- Financial challenges have created an environment where carrying on as is, is no longer an option. We must take the Co-op successes and forge a more stable way forward.
- The Board of Directors, Program Director and Administrative Coordinator are committed to this and see it as an opportunity for Co-op partners, members and funders to further define and refine the work of the Co-op.
- We look forward to meeting and getting input from our supporters. Products from these discussions and planning sessions will be provided to you.

Indian & Northern Affairs – CIMP Funding

All the \$24,000 contributed by this agreement was put to good use for expenses related to the Community-based Monitoring Program in the Northwest Territories.

It supported costs of the NWT monitor contracts, training workshop expenses (travel, accommodation, trainer fees, coordination fees), and program coordination. As well, as contributing to the community monitoring questionnaire data entry contract and first phase of the community monitoring summary report development.

A revenue and expense statement will be forwarded to you by the end of April.

COMMUNITY SUMMARY REPORT - AKLAVIK GWICH'IN MONITOR - ROBERT BUCKLE

Time on Land

The majority of people interviewed said they spent a week or more on the land at a time. A few only occasional overnights and only one spent more than half their time or more on the land.

Weather

Summer - Almost everyone said this summer was warm, not too hot. They noticed more lightning storms this summer. They noted there was not much rain but enough for the berries. The rain levels were mostly thought to be normal or slightly drier.

Fall - The fall was mild not much wind or cold weather. No big storms like the past. Very little snow till after freeze-up. People were able to set their nets on the ice after the ice froze on the rivers. The lakes froze fast and the river took a bit longer to freeze because of the mild fall weather. Most mentioned the snow came later in November and December.

Winter - January and February was about 10 to 15 degrees warmer than normal. The few real cold days allowing the ice road to thicken good. But then the weather got mild again. It got colder in February and especially in March. Spring has been colder and falls milder.

Freeze-up Lakes

The freeze up of our lakes went well and at normal time. The lack of snow meant there was very little overflow. The absence of wind also made the freeze up very smooth, that is not much in the way of rough ice. Somebody noted some of the bigger lakes had air holes present and had to be very cautious and aware of these air holes. Some speculated about the causes that it could be from lower water level preventing the ice to freeze properly and maybe gas released from under the trees.

Freeze-up Rivers

The river took a few nights of cooler weather to freeze after the lakes froze. Some thought the river freeze-up was a bit later than normal. They all said the river froze good and quick as the river cooled. The river froze flat with no jagged ice due to the lack of high winds and no snow.

Problems from Weather

Everyone said the lack of snow made it easier for them to travel on the lakes and rivers. One person said they had to watch carefully for thin spots in the river ice where it took longer to freeze. People hunting in the mountains said the lack of snow made travelling rough because a lot of rocks were exposed. The people cutting firewood said the lack of snow helped in getting wood a lot easier than past years.

Changes Affecting Peoples Way of Life

Trappers are wondering about the real effects of global warming on our lives happening now. Lots of people noticed the river banks falling in. One trapper wondered if this action of the permafrost melting and the banks falling in on the lakes could be the main reason why the muskrat have seemed to disappear lately because their dens are in the banks.

The bush in some places is lush and thick. The willows are growing in the portage trails and the land is sliding in some places making travel to camps on these trails no longer available. Some trappers wanted to know how they can get help to try to clear these old trails or make new ones.

Human Activities

The only noted human activity affecting hunting and the animals is this year's gravel haul about 10 miles west of Aklavik using trucks, loader and a cat. They work 24/7 keeping the caribou and other animals from coming closer to Aklavik. There is no other industrial work in the area.

Berries

A few people went berry picking. Some picked yellow berries, some cranberries and some both. Yellow berries are available first for picking and everyone seem to meet their needs but all said they could have done with more yellow berries. The berries were reported of good quality but not too much around Aklavik. Everyone picking cranberries got enough and they were also of good quality.

Fish

We have a few people that fish for their family and some also for sled dogs. Everyone met their fishing needs. They caught their supply of whitefish and coney for the winter setting nets in the summer and under the ice in the fall. Lots of people caught loche and coney and jackfish by ice fishing this year. Most everyone said the fish caught were of good quality and in good health. The whitefish and coney were in very good shape with good sizes. But people noticed fewer egg whitefish. Some noted jackfish were getting bigger and more of them. There was noted fewer or no char, herring, suckers. Nobody reported catching any salmon this year. One fisherman asked if the banks falling in affect

the fish because more mud is in the river and would this cause the char and herring and others from coming up the river?

Caribou

Last Spring April – Summer

A few hunters travelled further from town towards the coast to get caribou this summer.

Fall – Winter

The caribou migration has been close to Aklavik this year within 10 miles. The caribou harvested are in good shape most often fat. No noticeable sickness or diseases. The caribou harvested this year have all been in good shape many with a good layer of fat. People met their needs. They reported the caribou broken into smaller herds from 10 -1 100 caribou to over 500 in only the larger groups. They were mostly mixed with calves included. The smaller groups were thought to be because the hunters seen a lot of wolves. They think the wolves chased the caribou breaking them up. Also the caribou stuck around feeding. The caribou began moving more south in December. They have mainly stayed around the mountainous areas feeding.

Moose

During the flood of the Delta spring 2006 people have seen moose floating on ice packs going down the river. The moose have also travelled to higher ground toward the hills. Elders say the animals know that a flood will happen and head toward higher ground. Moose populations are on the increase now. People are noticing tracks all over again.

Musk-oxen

Some hunters have seen the musk-ox this year while out hunting for caribou. There is a herd estimated at 30-40 animals on top of Black Mountain. People don't like them they think they scare away the caribou and would rather not have the musk-ox in the area.

Wolves

For the first time in several years wolves have been spotted in the Hamlet of Aklavik. In the past years wolves have been in the Delta to hunt moose. But not near the community. They may have been hungry. These sightings were in the fall. They are seen by hunters in the mountains this winter around the herds of caribou. One hunter got eight wolves this year.

Squirrels

People noticed less squirrels around their camps lately. The trappers say it might be because more marten are around. The marten may have cleaned out the squirrels.

Wolverine

There seem to be a lot of wolverines around the Aklavik area. Some trappers have caught them this year. Also more have been spotted in the foothills.

Red Fox, Silver Fox, White Fox

Less foxes this year the dog mushers are the one reporting this as they monitor the foxes around their dogs. We usually have all three species but only a few red foxes were seen this year and one silver fox. The mushers think the wolves might have got them plus the flood this spring may have drowned some.

Lynx

The warmer winter season has delayed the priming of fur. The trappers also noticed the thickness of pelts is less and guard hair is shorter. But the numbers are good and the trappers believe they are getting more of them as the rabbits come back.

Snowshoe Hare

Some are around more in the foothills and less in the Delta maybe the decline is caused by last year's flood. They are slowly increasing noticed by tracks in the snow this spring.

Muskrat

Not many rats, however some isolated lakes are getting rat houses (push-ups) on them this fall. There is many opinions amongst trappers and hunters why. Some are noticing more otters and martens in the country preying on the rats possibly. Also more bald eagles are nesting in the Delta and also preying on the rats. They noticed an increase in size of the jackfish also enable the jacks to take young rats. Global warming is thought to affect the muskrats dens in the banks alongside the lakes and creeks. The permafrost is melting fast in some areas are sliding into the water.

Beaver

Beavers, beavers everywhere. Lots of beavers were taken this spring. The sighting of beavers seem to be all over. There was even a beaver in the Mountains (Canoe Lake) area. Also the size of the beavers has increased some nearing 60 lbs. have been spotted. On almost every bend in the Husky River has some beaver cuttings.

Bears

Some sighting of bears were noted they are spotted at the dump more often since we quit burning garbage.

Waterfowl

Some hunters think the geese are travelling more by the mountains and by Anderson river and avoiding the Mackenzie River.

Mosquitoes

Normal levels this year only bad for a week or so till the dragonflies hatched.

Unusual Sightings

Tracks of a possible cougar were sent out to ENR for identification. The tracks were seen in the Delta.

The end of February a seagull was killed by ravens in town. This maybe the white bird some people were seeing lately.

Furbearers and Trapping

Only one person trapped full-time. He found he had less furs this year and the fall was too mild and he waited for the fur to prime. He thinks the flood affected the amount of furbearers. He noticed that there is hardly any rat house for muskrat trapping this spring. A few others only trap part-time and they noted less fur around. People are wanting to get into trapping and would like help to get started, traps, stretchers and assistance for building a cabin and purchasing a snowmobile. A couple have thought that if more people are involved the trails would be better and trapping might come back.

Final Words

Almost everyone said they have participated before and believe this should continue. Its good for all the regions and a few people mentioned that they look forward to see what people have reported and noticed out on the land.

I would like to thank the participants and coordinators from Arctic Borderlands in this years monitoring program. I would like to acknowledge and say a big thank you to our Elders for their Traditional Knowledge. Their knowledge is valuable and all decisions concerning the land, animals, birds, marine mammals and fish must include their input. I have learned new things listening to them for this I am very thankful.

Mashi Cho

COMMUNITY SUMMARY REPORT - FORT MCPHERSON MONITOR - MAY ANDRE

Weather:

June: Warm, some rain

July: Mixture of rain, good weather. There were some storms.

August: Good weather then it rained for two weeks straight (last two weeks of August). Wetter than most years and warmer than most years. Some Elders say it was unusually windy. Majority said fewer storms.

Sept: Warm

Oct: Warm. Temperatures ranged from -2 to -8. Very little snow.

Nov: Warm. Average amount of snow. Wetter than most years. Warmer than most years. Unusually calm with fewer storms.

Dec: Unusually Warm. Whenever it snowed the snowfall was light, not heavy.

Jan: Finally had some cold days. Other days were unusually warm. Dryer and warmer than most years. Most reported lots of north winds. Freeze up of lakes was later than most years. Freeze up of river was later and slow. Overflow was not much this year because there was not much snow. Now into February there is some overflow in some areas. Weather conditions created problems getting out on the land. Ice did not freeze well; some open areas on river, also lots of places with thin ice. Dangerous to travel; making it stressful for people used to being out on the land. Some people could not trap, not enough snow.

Changes Seen:

Weather too warm this fall. Ice did not freeze well. Lots of people had to stay in town or go 8 miles to fish as it was too dangerous to travel on the river and go to their camps.

Not much snow this fall; this is unusual. Fall was also unusually warm.

Too many willows growing all over, especially along the banks. Too much growth makes it hard to walk through and also makes it hard to see the river from some cabins. The old trail are grown over. Willows grow fast too. One Elder nearly got lost looking for her old berry-picking place.

Lots of banks are falling into the river. Lakes are breaking open near the rivers and drying up; willows are growing on them at a fast rate. Some people believe all the roots are soaking up the moisture and water. Because of erosion the rivers seem to be getting wider.

Temperature is too warm for this time of year. Long ago, the winter temperatures ranged from -40 to -65 or more. Now we say it's cold when its only -30. These changes are not normal and will be drastic in the near future.

Weather is very unpredictable also. Weather changes fast, storms happen suddenly.

Weather has a lot of bad effects on our wildlife. If there is too much snow the Caribou can not make it to the calving grounds. They usually lose their calves to predators.

Spring seems to be coming much earlier. This means the trappers have to pick up their traps much earlier.

This fall the leaves stayed green longer. Arctic Char were later than usual. Not much wildlife like past years.

No Muskrats, rat houses are sinking. Water level is low; lots of cutbanks and sandbars. Some people have to go below their cabins to get up the hill because of the cut-banks below their cabins.

Unusually warm weather packed the snow down hard. This makes it hard for animals to feed and travel. Lots of creeks did not freeze over well this fall. This also made travel dangerous.

Weather conditions created a lot of frost all over the land. This made it hard for trapping as the frost covers the traps and they freeze. Frost also covers the bait making it hard for the animals to smell the bait.

Weather conditions change suddenly making travel dangerous.

Permafrost melting fast causing a lot of cutbanks. Trees and willows falling into lakes and rivers. Someone said a lake behind his cabin was always dry but this summer there was a lot of water in it. This is due to melting permafrost.

Human Activities:

Airplane and Helicopter traffic:

Most say no change was seen in traffic. Causes pollution and too much noise

Snowmobile use:

Most say it is increasing. Too much use causes pollution in the air, on the land, lakes and rivers.

ATV's:

No change. There's too much noise, pollution on the land.

Hunting for food by local people:

It is increasing.

Tourism:

No change

Research by Scientists on land or water:

Seems to be increasing due to climate change and potential Mackenzie Valley Pipeline to Alberta.

Cumulative Effects:

When all of these activities are put together, there are some effects on our environment, animals, hunting, fishing & trapping.

Too much noise and traffic disrupts everything. All these cause pollution to our environment. Too much research is being done on animals.

Berries:

We had a lot of berry pickers this year. The berries picked this year were salmon berries, cranberries and blueberries. There were other berries like blackberries, red currents, rose hips. Nearly everyone met their needs. An exceptionally good year for all berries. There were lots and most were sweet and juicy.

Fish:

Most fishermen met their needs. The most harvested fish were white fish and coney.

Jackfish:

Over the past 5 years jackfish are getting bigger, fatter and are increasing in numbers. This year some people did not catch much jackfish. This depended on their location.

Salmon:

Some Salmon caught around McPherson area. What was caught was healthy. Some say water temperature may be causing them coming to our area; others don't know why.

Loche:

Some loche had bluish livers. Not as much loche as last year. People went jigging much later than other years The loche came much later than other years.

Whitefish:

Most people said that there were lots of whitefish. Some said not as many as last year. Most said the main run was from the end of June to the first week in July. Most said runs were late. The size was average to larger than usual. The quality as usual, some whitefish had parasites, and some were mushy.

Coney:

Most people said there were lots, but less up river. Main run was end of June. The size ranged from average to larger than usual. Quality was as usual with no parasites.

General Comments:

Some fish had crooked backs and whitefish had lumps on the guts (fish pipes). Some people reported fewer fish than last year. This depended on where they fished and if the water was low.

Arctic Char numbers falling from 12,000 to 3,500. Reason unknown. They were more "pinkish" than usual rather than their usual orange colour. There were a lot more worms in the flesh and they looked like small tapeworm. Fishery was closed except for char monitors. Usually female fish go up Rat River first, then males. This year they were mixed.

Caribou: April- June 30th

Most caribou was not close and required lots of effort to get to them. Lots were at Ogilvie. Most of them were cows. The snow was soft and deep, making it hard for caribou to travel and some places it was hard and icy making it hard for caribou to feed. Last spring there was a mix of some fat and some skinny caribou.

Migration:

Last spring was Yukon to past Engineer Creek. Farther away, late migration

Pregnant Cows:

- Fetuses were much larger than other years.
-

Caribou: July 1 - Nov 1 (Fall)

Caribou were close by and easily found. Most people met their needs.

The caribou migrated very early. As early as the first week in August.

Most caribou were bulls. There were lots (more than 500). Most reported in good shape and had lots of rump fat. Some reported fewer than usual. Migration route changed.

Caribou: Nov - Feb (Winter)

Caribou close by and easily found. Lots of caribou up in the foothills and even across the Peel from McPherson (on the river). Lots went by and came back.

Maybe because a lot of the Yukon is burnt up. Not much snow in our area, around McPherson, making good feeding grounds for the caribou. Easy access. More on east of mountains, some even around Old Fort. Most groups were mixed. There were really lots (more than 500).

What Effects Wintering Location:

- Snow conditions
- Not much snow
- Other weather conditions (warm)
- Good feeding areas

Caribou has not been this close since the 1980's. Since the beginning of the rut there was a mix of some fat caribou and some skinny caribou. Most people reported herd as healthy. Some say "no"; they say caribou is declining mainly due to weather.

Unusual Sightings of animals, birds, fish and insects:

Sept- Oct: A few people reported saw birds that looked like robins. This bird has a red body, with grey wings, same size as a Robin. This bird sang a different song than a robin.

Pickrel caught at 8 miles. Had quill like fins on back.

One person saw a grey caribou with black spots and curly horns.

Animals in places that you don't usually see them:

Beavers are building their houses on the sides of rivers. Some beavers are living in holes on the sides of rivers. Otters used to be only on the mountains, now they are down in the delta, up the Peel and on the preserve. These otters are killing fish, beavers, muskrats, and fish. Some trappers report otters stealing catches from their traps. Otters are really dangerous, even to humans.

Grouse & Ptarmigan:

Hardly any. Little more down in delta. In early 1900's there were thousands of ptarmigan.

Waterfowl:

Ducks, geese, swans and cranes. Most reported fewer to about the same. One Elder reported he did not see any snow geese going south. He said they probably took a different route via Alaska. He has never seen this before. Mackenzie ice moved first this year. Most wildlife went down the other river following the ice.

Eagles:

Lots of eagles all over.

Hawks:

Fewer seen

Owls:

No Owl's seen or heard. Lots around Jay Goodies

Small Birds:

Hardly any. Very quiet spring and summer. No blackbirds or snipers seen.

Mosquitoes:

Reports varied. Reports ranged from few to lots.

Insects:

The sunflies were bad. Hardly any bulldogs, dragonflies, flies and ants due to dry spells.

Mice:

There were some lemmings at 8 mile; then they all disappeared. Not much mice around McPherson. Lots at Carl Bets and other areas of the delta and preserve.

Ground Squirrels:

Very few

Rabbits:

Fewer

Moose:

Less than last year. Wolves are killing some. Some are moving up to the foothills.

Muskox:

None

Muskrats:

Few to none in delta and preserve. More around Jay Goodies. Lots of rat houses sank. Otters killing them.

Beavers:

Lots in delta and fewer in Preserve. One Elder saw a huge beaver house.

Marten, Mink and Weasels:

Lots of marten, but hard to catch. Not much mink or weasels.

Wolverine:

Hardly any.

Red Fox:

Less than last year. One trapper caught a pure white fox in the delta

Lynx:

Some say hardly any. Some say they are coming back.

Bears:

Blackbears lots in most places. Lots of grizzlies in the mountains.

Cubs:

Lots of cubs this year.

Wolves:

More wolves than last year. These may be killing moose. Lots of tracks seen in the delta. Less around Jay Goodies.

Trapping:

Most reported a good year for trapping.

What made it good: fur prices, warm weather and easy access.

Some reported trapping season was bad because of price of gas, weather too warm making for difficult access.

Animals trapped: marten (few), squirrels (few), Mink (few), lynx (few).

Flood drove lots of animals away.

Feedback from people interviewed:

Lots of people said the interview was too long. They said these interviews are worthwhile and need to be continued.

Thank you to everyone that welcomed me into their homes and gave me all of this valuable information.

2007 Inuvik Gwich'in Arctic Borderlands

Report.

By Allen Firth.

This was the first time doing the arctic borderlands report for me. I thought it would be a lot easier than it was. When I heard about the interviews, I thought it was a very good idea and should be easy to do 20 interviews of Inuvik Gwich'in people. I was wrong. People are busy, say they will call you back, are doing other things and some don't have the time to sit with you for a few hours. I did complete 10 of 20 interviews and recommend the continuation of this very important project.

Weather

Summer- The Summer weather started off hot in June and continued hot for the month of July. It started to get normal about mid July until the end of August.

Fall- The weather stayed warm during September and October, making for late freeze up (end of October).

Winter- The Winter weather was a bit warmer than usual from the beginning of November right up until Christmas. After that the weather was about normal with the usual amount of snow.

Freeze up

Freeze up was later than it usually is around this area. There was very little snow on the ground and the river finally started to freeze safely at the end of October. There was not much overflow because of lack of snow on the ice. The overflow came later in the Winter.

Changes

Most of the comments received were about the weather and how you have to adapt to the weather changes. Harvesting and harvesters depend highly on the weather for success, but the weather is getting harder to predict.

Human Activities

- Airplane and helicopter use were increasing in our area as more research is being done for the Mackenzie Gas Project.
- Snowmobile use has increased in the area. More people have them.
- ATV,s & 4 wheelers. No increase in use.
- Sport Hunting has stayed the same.
- Hunting for food by local people has remained the same.

- Tourism has remained the same.
- Oil and gas exploration has its peaks and valleys in this area and last year was slower than usual.
- Scientific research has stayed the same.

Cumulative effects

Some of the above activities leave very little footprint on the land, but can still have an effect on harvesting. For example, air traffic cannot damage the land, but can spook animals, which start running, and lose vital body fat stored for the hard Winter months.

Berries

The general comment from all the people that picked berries last year was that berries were plentiful all over. There were lots of blueberries all over the area, and were plump and juicy. Cranberries were numerous and it was a good year for them. The same for nukul (cloudberry). The weather was a big factor in the good berry crop.

Fish

Fishing was normal for the Summer and Fall months. Some people said the fish were soft while the weather was hot at the start of Summer. The whitefish and coney runs were around schedule. The water levels seemed to be lower than usual. Jiggling for loche was later than usual. The river froze later than normal so people were out later in the season than normal.

Caribou

Caribou hunting for Inuvik Gwich'in was for the most part good. There were a lot of porcupine caribou around the Fort McPherson area of the Dempster highway during the Spring and Fall. The round trip there and back is about 400 to 450 kilometers, so some people could not afford to harvest up there. Those that did were usually successful.

There were very few Bluenose caribou between Inuvik and Tuk this past year, according to the experts. Those that did harvest them had to travel about 200 kilometres round trip. The snow was very deep back there, so that may have deterred the travel of the caribou to go farther south and closer to town.

The caribou were in very good shape physically, both Porcupine and Bluenose herds.

Other animals

Unusual sightings – No unusual sightings were mentioned other than the fact that there were a lot more moose in the Delta than usual. There are also a lot of otters in the delta today according to the experts, which may have something to do with the muskrat decline.

Birds

There was nothing out of the ordinary for birds around this area.

Grouse and ptarmigan were normal.

Raptor sightings were normal. Waterfowl numbers seemed normal, and songbirds were normal.

Mice, voles and lemmings

Normal.

Ground squirrels

Normal.

Rabbits

Very few in the area. Experts mentioned they may be at the bottom of their cycle.

Moose

There are moose all over the delta today, according to the experts. You can run into 4 or 5 a day when traveling now, when a long time ago you were lucky to see 1 a week.

Musk rats

There were very few muskrats in the delta last year, according to the experts. The numbers have been down for the past few years and have been down like this in the past, so the experts think that the numbers of muskrats will start to go back up maybe as soon as next year. All of the snow last Winter made it hard for trappers to find muskrats during the Spring, and when the snow started to melt, it dropped the muskrats into the water prematurely, which possibly caused numbers to be low.

Beavers

Beaver numbers are very high in the area right now, according to the experts. With the price low for the fur, hardly anybody is trapping or hunting them, which may explain why the numbers are high.

Marten, mink or weasels

Marten numbers were high. Trappers were getting good prices for marten so a lot were trapped. Mink and weasel numbers were low.

Wolverine

Wolverine were normal.

Fox

Foxes were all over the place during the Fall after the rivers froze. After that the numbers dropped off. The numbers were normal.

Lynx

There are very few lynx around the area with the low numbers of rabbits.

Bears

Grizzly and black bear numbers were normal according to the experts.

Wolves

Wolf numbers were normal.

Furbearers and trapping

Trapping for marten was good this year, according to the experts. The prices made it worthwhile.

Final words

This monitoring program should be continued and expanded to include the Mackenzie valley communities. Some people thought that the 45 litres of gas was not enough incentive to sit down and give information.

COMMUNITY SUMMARY REPORT - INUVIK INUVIALUIT MONITOR - BUTCH KAGLIK

Time on Land:

The people I interviewed only took day trips from town

Summer Weather:

Most reported summer weather was mostly warm. Some said it was fair and warm. One person said it was cool.

Fall Weather:

Most said the weather was warm. No snow. Cloudy and no snow.

Winter Weather:

Most said warmer weather and hardly any snow. End of January and early February got a lot of snow.

Freeze-up:

Freeze up of the lakes was very quick. Freeze up of the rivers was very smooth this year. No change seen.

Human Activities:

All people reported no change. Didn't know about any increased human activity.

Berries:

One person said she met her needs for cranberries this year. Berries were said to be sweet and ripe.

Fish:

All met their needs for fish this year: whitefish, coney, herring and loche. Some said coney had parasites that looked like worms.

Caribou:

None seen last spring. In the fall, caribou too far away to hunt. In the winter, caribou close by and easily found. There were between 100-500 in a bunch. One person stated that they were feeding when seen.

COMMUNITY SUMMARY REPORT - TUKTOYAKTUK MONITOR - STEVE COCKNEY SR.

I did my survey work in Tuk this year. The first ten interviews were done in January. I took a break after those ten, because at that time hunters were heading out on the land to hunt Caribou. The people I interviewed gave me information mostly on fish and berries. A few managed to get Caribou during the fall and early part of the winter. Overnight trips were made because of the distance of the Caribou. Also, not much daylight. And it was a very late freeze-up with not much snow at the beginning of the winter.

Summer Weather:

Weather was dry and moist with rain at times. Easterly winds were very strong making it low tide at record numbers.

Fall Weather:

Very little rain. Fall seemed to be longer than usual and a lot of easterly winds. Freeze-up was very slow this year.

Winter Weather:

Not much snow at the beginning of winter. Very few or no storms.

Spring Weather:

When we finally got spring weather, it melted very fast. A lot of slush and water over top lakes and creeks. Temperatures soared above normal.

Helicopter, Snowmobile Activities:

Activities were minimal and mostly around Tuk area. A lot of helicopter activities throughout the spring and summer season. There were more snowmobiles active when the caribou were passing through.

Berries:

We had a mixture of rain and sunshine during the fall, which made it very good for salmon berries (okpiks). Cranberries and blueberries bloomed a bit late this year, which made it hard to find them. Whatever berries were picked tasted very juicy and sweet. Good tasting! Berries were picked mostly along the coastline around the Tuk area.

Fish:

The two or three main fish that were caught were whitefish, cisco herring and trout. Most of the fish caught were very large in size. With the unusually low tides and easterly winds, it made the fish run very minimal. The fish caught by the people were in good shape and good eating. Not very much parasites found.

Caribou:

I started my survey work in mid-January. Most of the information I got from the first ten people was mostly on fish and berries. Not much information on caribou because they were quite a ways out, making it hard to hunt. I took a short break after I finished those ten people as at that time people had just started going hunting for caribou. There were not many caribou killed by the first ten interviewed. I went back in February, after the hunters returned. Of the ten interviewed, six people reported getting caribou. Roughly about 130 caribou were killed, including some killed in the early fall season. The caribou killed were in good shape, not too many, if any, were in poor shape. A lot of the caribou killed were northeast of Tuk. Most of the hunters, however, had to spend one or more nights out on the land as the caribou were far away and heading eastward.

Some hunters did not go out because of the high cost of gas and supplies.

Birds, Animals, Fish:

There were a lot of eagle sightings right in the community of Tuk. Very, very unusual. Also more crows visible. There were usual sightings of other birds and animals in high numbers. Types of fish were lake trout, cisco, broad whitefish, and coney. Ducks sighted were mergansers, mallards, scoters, pintails, canvasbacks and oldsquaws. The geese were snow geese, white-fronted geese, canada geese, snow geese, brant as well as swans and snowy owls.

People interviewed were hesitant in reporting on caribou due to a lot of talk on the shortage of caribou. However, according to the information given, there were a lot of caribou travelling eastward.

This is my report from the hunters, berry pickers and fisherman from Tuk.

Weather

Summer –

The summer season was hot and drier than most years with fewer storms.

Fall –

The fall weather was warm and mild with hardly any snow, drier than most years and unusually calm with fewer storms than most years and very little snow.

Winter –

The beginning of December was very mild with very little snow. In January the weather started to get colder with more snow and drier than most years and unusually calm, with fewer storms and more snow.

Freeze-up –

The fall freeze up on the lakes was late this year due to warm weather. After the lakes began to freeze it was about average on the lakes, and the Mackenzie River froze up pretty late this year also. The weather was very warm mild and no snow.

Overflow –

The overflow in our area was an average amount; harvesters said it was no problem to get out on the land. Some had trouble it was harder to go on the land because of the lack of snow which made it hard for ski-doo's to travel on.

Human Activity –

The air traffic is increasing and the effects on the animals is very noisy and disturbing, snowmobile use has not changed from past years, no one uses ATV on the land and there is no sport hunting in our area. Harvesting for food for local people is down from past years. There is not as many activities with oil and gas, and not much tourism in our area. The research and study of the land in our area by scientists over land and water has increased over the years.

Climate –

The climate is becoming warmer each year with hardly any snow and less snow storms. We notice a lot of landslides in the summer and permafrost thawing more in some places on the rivers. We also notice the caribou is moving closer to the Peel River area due to forest fires on the Yukon side in the mountains, the water levels are changing every year.

Berries –

The berry picking season this year in our area was very good for blueberries, cranberries and yellow berries. There were a lot of berries and the quality was sweet and juicy.

Fish –

The salmon are coming into the area and this is because of colder waters and the people notice the jackfish are getting bigger with a lot more around. There was a lot of whitefish and these are getting bigger and are very good eating with no parasites. The crooked back was plentiful, average in size and good eating with no parasites. There were a lot of coney this year as well, average in size, with no parasites and very good eating fish. There were a few loche this year, average in size and good eating with no parasites. The fish run was in early October this year and the fish were healthy and very good in size.

Caribou –

The caribou spring hunt was good but the caribou were not close by this created the use of a lot of effort to get to them. There was lots caribou. They were in groups gathering in the valleys. They were eating and moving southeast. The fall caribou hunting season was good for hunting. At the time of this hunt they were moving north in mixed groups in the valleys and they were eating as well. There was nothing unusual about their bodies. The winter season hunt was good and they were close by and easy to find. They were moving south more than five hundred in mixed groups. They were feeding and in good shape, nothing unusual about their bodies. They were in good shape the amount of caribou harvest in our community was around 250-300 animals. This is distributed and shared with other communities as well as with the people of Fort Good Hope.

Other Animals –

The harvesters didn't notice any unusual birds or fish or insects this year. The grouse and ptarmigan were not plentiful this year and there were fewer black ducks. There are more Canada geese and more swans. There is an increase in the number of sandhill cranes this year. The migration route had no changes to report this year, not much hawks and falcon or owls, but there is a lot more eagles in the area. The harvesters notice moves, mice and lemmings are coming back slowly but notice hardly any ground squirrels and rabbits are fewer this year. There are fewer muskrats in the area, and seems to be more beaver and moose. There seems to be more marten this year with good fur quality, mink and wolverine are reported to be not too many around. There are a lot of red foxes in the area and fewer lynx to report. The black and grizzly bears are not seen much in our area. Harvesters reported seeing about 10 black and 2 cubs each this year. Reports are that they are in the mountains and up in the Arctic Red River area. The wolves were reported to be high in numbers and are in good shape.

Furbearers –

Trapping was reported as good this year because of good fur prices, animal abundance and the good weather. The marten, wolves, fox and mink were in fair and very good condition.

Other Comments –

The harvesters encourage that these interviews are very good and worthwhile and should be continued every year.

