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WORKSHOP IN POLITICAL THEORY
AND POLICY ANALYSIS
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**THE BEVERLY-KAMINURIAK CARIBOU MANAGEMENT BOARD:
AN EXPERIENCE IN CO-MANAGEMENT**

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Presented to the
Panel on Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Co-Management
Common Property Conference
International Association for the Study of Common Property
Winnipeg, Manitoba
27 September 1991

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Introduction

The Beverly-Kaminuriak Caribou Management Board was established in 1982 by intergovernmental agreement, in response to a widely perceived crisis in the management of the Beverly and Kaminuriak barren-ground caribou herds, which range between the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. The Board brings together four separate jurisdictions (table 1), as well as users and managers, for the purpose of coordinating the management of the two herds, and to promote conservation through education and communication.

Although the Caribou Management Board is simply an advisory body with no management powers, it is often cited as a positive and successful example of co-management (Monaghan 1984, Osherenko 1988, Cizek 1990, Thomas and Schaefer 1991, Scotter, n.d.). Certainly it is one of the early examples in North America, and the first for major big game herds.

Has the Board really been such a success, and if so, what accounts for it? The short answer is yes, but within limits. This is partly a credit to the Board itself, and to its supporting agencies, and partly a matter of good fortune. This paper, based on a recent evaluation commissioned by the Board (Usher 1991), outlines its

strengths and weaknesses, and the prospects for the future.

Background

The Caribou Management Board is the creation of the five signatory government agencies which fund its operations. The Board consists of eight user members and five government members, and meets thrice-yearly.

The Beverly and Kaminuriak caribou herds are often characterized as a shared resource -- not only among jurisdictions but also between Inuit and Dene hunters and communities. Yet in other important respects, these herds are not a shared resource, and this has made the Board's task easier than might otherwise have been the case.

First, the herd is used almost entirely for subsistence hunting, by about eighteen small aboriginal communities around the edge of the caribou range (table 2, figure 1). The licensed resident and guided sport hunt is very limited, and there is virtually no commercial hunt. The subsistence priority was recognized in both the Agreement itself and the composition of the Board. The consensus within the Board, from its very beginnings, about management for subsistence, has minimized a major source

of conflict that surrounds most other large mammal populations, and which is often a central task of management agencies to resolve.

Secondly, there is little competition for the range itself, which is among the least developed parts of northern Canada. Human settlement is limited to the periphery of the range, there are no roads or other rights of way through it, and there are only a few small non-renewable resource developments (although others are proposed). Most current activity, such as exploration and sport fishing, are seasonal.

How participants see the Board

Governments like the Board because it provides a venue for consultation with users, and for coordination (especially with respect to research) among jurisdictions. For some agencies, it provides a "single window": if there is a problem with caribou, the Board is the place to deal with it. It provides a sounding board for government initiatives, as well as early warning of user concerns and an orderly way of dealing with them. The Board's recommendations are generally regarded as sound, even if governments do not or cannot act on all of them. The Board is seen as realistic, responsible, relatively non-political, and diplomatic but firm.

From governments' perspective, caribou are no longer a high profile political problem, and the Board is seen as an important reason for that. If the Board ceased to exist, it would have to be recreated in a crisis, almost certainly both at greater expense than it currently requires, and with reduced effectiveness because the continuity of good relations would have been lost. Ministers and senior managers seem also to have recognized the political advantages, at times, of letting the Board take responsibility for some difficult decisions, rather than imposing their own solutions.

Users like the Board because it gives them an opportunity to speak directly with managers and biologists on the resource of most central concern to them. Governments must justify their policies to users, and are to some extent answerable for the results at the Board, although government representation is not necessarily as senior as some members would like. Users feel that, while the Board is by no means perfect, they get more respect and a better hearing, and that the situation is a vast improvement over the days when management policy was made behind closed doors.

The Board also gives users a chance to communicate with each other: to learn of conditions and developments

around the range and compare observations, to identify issues and develop common strategies, and to provide mutual support and make common cause. These opportunities are especially appreciated by users in the provinces, where in the past they have had little effective clout with resource managers, and where, historically, treaty rights have been interpreted restrictively. Inuit users, in comparison, do not see the Board as so central or valuable an institution. One reason is that they have more political power in the NWT, another is that claims process is providing some alternative venues for conflict resolution. Nonetheless, the work of the Board has been and continues to be valued by many users in the Keewatin.

From the perspective of ordinary users, the chief criterion of the Board's success would be to make caribou more accessible. This is especially so at the southern end of the range, where in some years people have to travel a long way at great expense to get their food. Some, for example, feel the best way for the board to spend its money would be on aircraft patrols to inform hunters where the caribou are. Inuit users would more likely focus on the Board's ability to protect the calving grounds.

From an aboriginal political perspective, the Board certainly does not measure up to such objectives as self-government or self-management. The distinction between users and managers remains fundamental to the Board's structure and mandate, and in this sense, the Board is not fully an instrument of co-management. On the other hand, neither do the proposed claims-based management boards measure up to these ideals, since they are instruments of public government, not self-government. Indeed, I predict that these boards, if implemented as planned, will be less satisfactory to aboriginal hunters and their communities than is the Caribou Management Board.

Achievements

The Board can take credit for several significant achievements. The Board works well as a team. It has been a reasonably effective lobby with governments, and advocate for the subsistence interest. It has been a success in coordinating research and monitoring among jurisdictions, and in both public and hunter education. It has communicated well enough with hunters and their communities to have their goodwill, if not their full understanding of its mandate and function.

The Board has had effective input into allocation and regulatory decisions. However these do not cost governments much money. The Board's success in protecting caribou, and caribou habitat, from external human activity is more limited. In this respect it can only act as a lobby group: other agencies must pay the costs (either as actual budget expenditures or as development benefits foregone), and most have been largely unwilling to do so. For example, while the Board has pressed for full protection of the calving grounds from industrial development, no such action is likely. Nor, despite the attention the Board has given to fire management (including research and coordination initiatives), has there yet been significant improvement in the protection afforded the winter range.

Overall, there has been substantial change in the approach to caribou management by all government agencies since the late 1970s. Emphasis on the technical aspects of management has given way to public relations and participation. Where caribou biologists and managers sought to minimize harvester access and use through top-down regulation and enforcement, there is now more emphasis on involving harvesters through conservation education and participation in management.

This is part of a broader national trend in wildlife management, to which the Board has contributed and also benefitted from. This development is, of course, not simply a gratuitous gesture of good will by governments. It is a result of years of political and legal struggle by aboriginal peoples to obtain recognition of their rights and claims. The Board is in part a product of that struggle, as well as of a recognition by governments that cooperation would be a more effective conservation strategy than draconian measures applied to a hostile and mobile group of hunters.

The Board owes part of its success to good fortune. For example, almost immediately after the Board came into being, it became apparent that both herds were more numerous than supposed, and that in the short term, at least, the dire measures advocated by some became widely acknowledged to be unnecessary and counter-productive. Instead of being an emergency response team cobbled together in crisis, the Board had some breathing room in which to develop a cooperative atmosphere and a management plan. The size and productivity of the herds continues to be satisfactory, and there are no immediately apparent threats to this situation. This outcome cannot be credited directly to good management by the Board (or even by its supporting agencies), except

insofar as the improved political climate, and sense of security among hunters, may have encouraged self-regulation.

The effect of this good fortune, however, is that the Board has never been tested by scarcity, and that may still be the most crucial test it will face in the future. On the other hand, what the Board can undoubtedly claim as a success is in contributing to, if not indeed creating, an atmosphere of mutual recognition, tolerance, and understanding, which is essential for dealing with any crisis.

Problems and prospects

It appears that the agreement that created the Board will be renewed, and that both managers and users are pleased by this. Certainly the Board will face some new challenges in the coming decade, and there are some important issues the Board has not yet addressed.

For example, there has been no contingency planning by the Board for crisis allocation. Such an event would require clear justification of need, and fairness of application. Communities would want powerful evidence that populations were really at risk, and this evidence would have to be consistent with their own concepts and

observations. They would also want to know what remedial and compensatory actions governments were prepared to take.

The Board does not yet have a clear strategy for dealing with major industrial or transport developments on the range, for which pressure will likely increase. Nor has the Board addressed questions of longer run management strategy, such as intensive versus low level or passive management.

One significant problem that the Board will likely face in a very few years is that its pride of place as the model of co-management will decline, and so also may its effectiveness. There are already many boards in the North, especially in the NWT, and there will be many more after Native claims are settled. Of especial concern will be the wildlife management boards.

The risk is that none of these boards, including the CMB, will continue to be the convenient "single window" that governments now find useful. Politicians may discover that the proliferation of boards is convenient not only because they can be delegated the political heat, but also because they provide a means for allowing issues to

get shuffled around with neither resolution nor obvious responsibility for it.

There is a need for the Board to renew its management efforts, partly with respect to the broader issues suggested above, but also with respect to more effective incorporation of traditional knowledge in that process. It is on that note that I would like to offer some concluding observations.

The Board tries to bridge a major cultural gap with respect not only to traditional environmental knowledge, but also to political process and to the principles by which the relations of humans and animals are managed. The Board attempts to do this through the structure of meetings and agendas, and through sincere and committed efforts by its members, yet there are bureaucratic imperatives that are difficult to avoid.

Effective bridging requires the listening and learning that come over a long time. Yet meetings in isolated communities can require a week away from home and office, and there is always pressure to move the discussion along. Longevity of membership, and regular attendance, have helped to develop continuity of dialogue, but this effect is not widely spread beyond the Board itself.

Another problem is language. English is the working language of the Board, and there is no translation, unless for the benefit of non-members present. Hunters with the most profound ecological knowledge tend thus to be effectively barred from Board membership, although they frequently attend community meetings.

The use of English as a common language masks the fact that the participants use significantly different versions of English. Some of the central terminology of the Board -- wildlife, management, census, population -- involves concepts which are not directly translatable between English, Chipewyan, and Inuktitut, and do not even necessarily mean the same things in English to all members. Indeed, such terms are all subject to negotiation in this and other forums (especially, for example, in the negotiation of wildlife agreements in land claims).

A major difference between the present Board and previous interjurisdictional technical committees is that biologists are required to justify their methods and conclusions (and managers are required to justify their policies and strategies) to users. Yet while user members are all reasonably fluent in English, most are not familiar with scientific or bureaucratic jargon.

Most government members and technical support staff do make the effort to explain their work and their conclusions to user members in plain English, although users do not necessarily understand it all, and few feel comfortable explaining it in their own communities.

However, if users do not fully understand what they are being told, or do not agree with it, they may either avoid seeking clarification, or state their concerns in a metaphor so unfamiliar to managers as to fail to promote useful dialogue. Consequently, approval of research agendas and proposals by user members may be more apparent than real.

While major field research initiatives are unlikely to begin without the approval of the Board, in practice this tends to mean delay rather than outright abandonment. The nature of caribou research itself remains in many ways unaffected by user perspectives or participation. User input affects research priorities, and the selection of research problems, but not research design. To the extent that users have systematic knowledge of caribou, Board meetings have not proved to be the venue in which it is articulated or drawn out. Nor, even, have meetings been the occasion for drawing out and systematizing observations from around the range, even though users

themselves share these observations informally at meetings.

There is another source of disparity. Government members are supported by, and sometimes accompanied by, technical staff. User members rarely have technical support.

I do not want to convey the impression that the Board is an adversarial forum between government and user members. Far from it. Members have developed a good working relationship and have a sense of participating in a team effort. The result has been improved respect for each other as people, and to some extent increased understanding of (if not always agreement with) their ideas and their ways of doing things. This was a major objective of the Board, for which it can claim significant success.

Some years ago I suggested that the criteria for co-management ought not simply to be user participation in the state system, or the appropriation of user knowledge by the state system, but rather a harmonization of the state and indigenous systems or approaches to understanding (Usher 1986). What I have described is certainly progress, but it is not to say that the knowledge of aboriginal hunters has been adequately

utilized, or that their views have been adequately understood and incorporated into the management process. That is a major and continuing challenge not only to the Caribou Management Board, but to other similar co-management arrangements.

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Table 1
Composition of the
Beverly-Kaminuriak Caribou Management Board

Government Members		5
Jurisdiction	Agency	
Canada	Indian Affairs and Northern Development	1
Canada	Environment	1
Manitoba	Natural Resources	1
Saskatchewan	Parks and Renewable Resources	1
Northwest Territories	Renewable Resources	1
User Members		8
Jurisdiction	Communities	
Manitoba	Brochet/Lac Brochet/South Indian Lake/Tadoules Lake	2
Saskatchewan	Black Lake/Camsell Portage/Fond du Lac/Stony Rapids/Uranium City/Wollaston Lake	2
NWT (Keewatin)	Arviat/Baker Lake/Chesterfield Inlet/Rankin Inlet/Whale Cove	2
NWT (Mackenzie)	Fort Smith/Resolution/Lutsel K'e	2

Table 2
Communities, Population, and Harvest, by Jurisdiction
Beverly-Kaminuriak Caribou Management Board

Jurisdiction	Communities	Population (1989)	Mean Annual Harvest (1982-89)	Per Capita Harvest (1982-89)
Manitoba	4	2445	2599	1.06
Saskatchewan	6	3446	2923	0.85
NWT (Keewatin)	5	4388	9112	2.08
NWT (Mackenzie)	3	3277	unreported	
Total	18	13556	13011*	1.27*

*not including Mackenzie communities

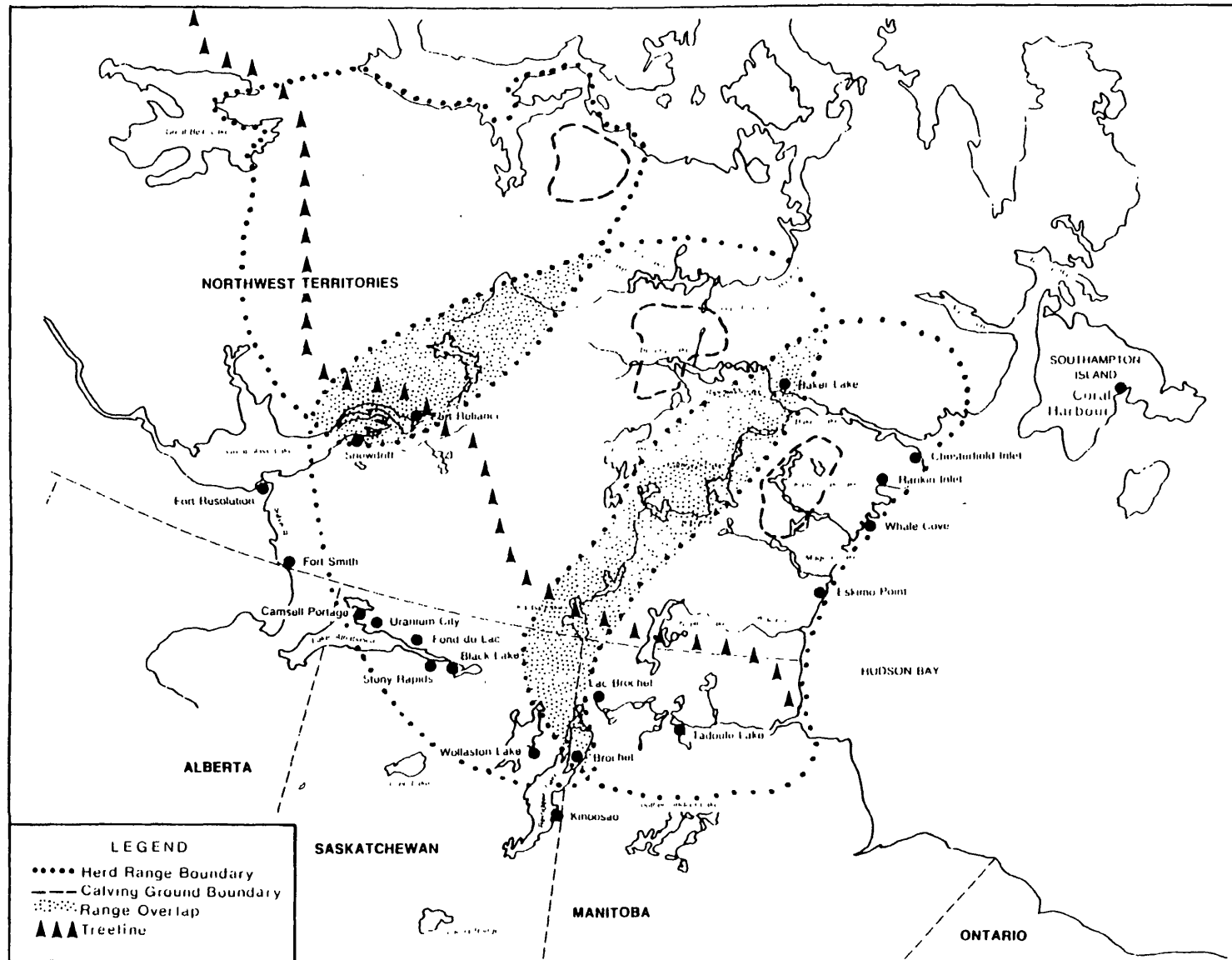


Figure 1 Traditional range of the Beverly, Kaminurak and Bathurst herds in relation to treeline communities of traditional users