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Caribou Crisis or Administrative Crisis? Wildlife and Aboriginal Policies on the Barren Grounds of Canada, 1947–60

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The postwar years were a time of rapid change in the Canadian North. There was a growing view in government that the old fur trade economy was no longer sustainable, but what should or could be done about it was unclear. The problem seemed especially critical in the least accessible and least developed parts of the North, not least in the central Barren Grounds between the Mackenzie River and Hudson Bay. The defining event of that place and time was the so-called ‘caribou crisis’: the apparent confirmation by science of long-held suspicions of severe depletion of the great Barren Ground caribou herds, due to over-hunting by the Inuit and Dene who, it was supposed, were unwittingly setting themselves up for disaster.

The ‘caribou crisis’ was, in retrospect, constructed on relatively little hard evidence. It was sustained largely by theory, conjecture and cultural bias, and assumed such importance because it in turn gave direction to the management of both people and caribou. The problem was not merely one of caribou conservation, and it required more than conventional wildlife regulation measures for its resolution. The ‘caribou crisis’ provided justification not only for imposing hunting restrictions, but also led ultimately to the relocation, sedentarisation and supervision of both Inuit and Dene, who lived on or near the range of the Qamanirjuaq, Beverly and Bathurst caribou herds, and for whom these herds were not only the staple food supply but also an important source of clothing. These measures were seen by the administration as critical requirements for both the modernisation of people regarded as among the most isolated and traditional of the entire continent, and the conservation of caribou herds. The scientific management of caribou became an integral part of a broad programme of social engineering that required consensus and cooperation among various federal, provincial and territorial agencies (Figure 11.1). I review these events,

especially as they unfolded on the central Barren Grounds, for the period 1947–60. I consider the nature and context of the crisis, the views of those charged with responding to it, the policies they promoted, and the outcomes.

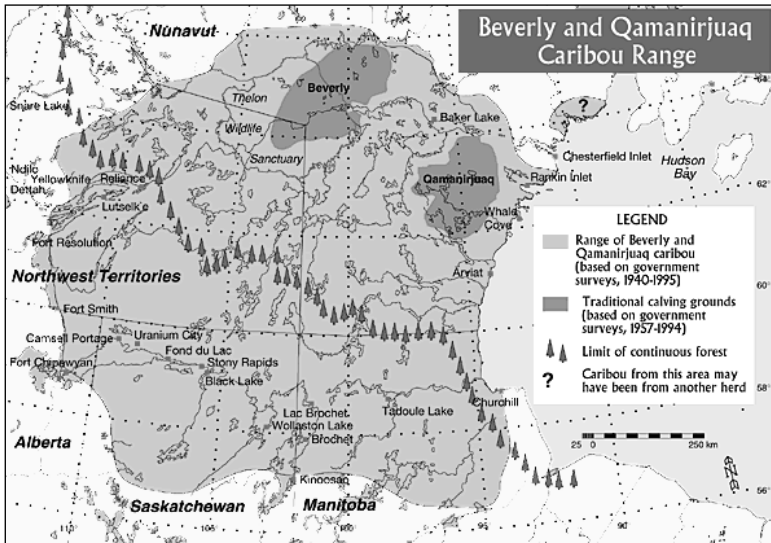


Figure 11.1 Map showing the range of Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou, Canada.

I have relied chiefly on the record groups of Indian Affairs (RG10) and the Northern Administration (RG22 and RG85) in the National Archives of Canada (NAC). Specific documents are thus referred to as, for example, NAC, RG22/. The notation PC refers to federal Orders in Council. The chief legislative instruments referred to are the Northwest Game Act (1917) and its successor, the Northwest Territories Game Ordinance (NWTGO) (1949).

The Caribou Crisis

The Canadian government's concern for the conservation of caribou on the Barren Grounds first arose in the 1920s, with the expansion of the fur trade and the influx of white trappers in the North. Not a half-century had passed since the demise of the plains buffalo herds, and the Dominion government was above all anxious to conserve the food supply of the Inuit and Dene so that they would continue to live on the land and not become dependent on public relief. Conservation measures

adopted during the interwar period included, first, restrictions on the location of fur trade posts, the trade in caribou hides, the sale of game meat, and the entry of white trappers; second, the creation of Native game preserves from which nonaboriginal hunters were largely excluded; and third, the payment of wolf bounties as a means of predator control. No licensing requirements, quota limitations, close seasons, or gear limits were placed on aboriginal people, however. Although all persons were prohibited from killing calves, and cows with calves, this limitation was rarely if ever enforced on Inuit and Dene.

The actual need for, and appropriateness of, these caribou conservation measures were based largely on reports (often hearsay) from the 'old hands' – chiefly Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Indian Agents, traders, missionaries, and the occasional government scientist. As would be the case for another fifty years, Inuit and Dene views on the matter were neither sought nor accounted for. But no one in authority had (or could have) actually counted the caribou, and herd distribution and migration patterns were poorly understood. There was no way of knowing whether occasional episodes of local scarcity were due to low numbers or varying migration routes. Likewise, hardly any outsider was actually in a position to observe the fall kills at the river crossings, because police patrols mostly visited the winter camps.¹ Nonetheless, allegations of 'wanton slaughter', 'excessive kills' and 'needless waste' by Inuit and Dene were recurrent themes of police reports and traders' accounts of the day.

After the Second World War, the rise of scientific wildlife management, and progress in air transportation, created new opportunities to address the issue of caribou conservation. In 1947, Canada, Manitoba and Saskatchewan entered into a cooperative three-year study of the entire Barren Ground caribou range, using aerial surveys of the entire range for the first time, under the direction of A.W.F. Banfield of the Canadian Wildlife Service (which was then responsible for wildlife research in the Northwest Territories). The study resulted in a population estimate of 668,000 animals (thought to be accurate within 20 per cent), far lower than previous speculative estimates. The annual mortality rate (including human harvest, wolf kills, and other causes) was estimated at 168,000, exceeding the estimated annual birth rate by 23,000 animals. These numbers alone suggested an impending crisis, even if population trends could not yet be firmly established.

Banfield considered that the problem could be solved without resort to drastic measures, and his recommendations to the Dominion-Provincial Wildlife Conference were modest. They consisted primarily of conservation education, greater involvement of aboriginal people in

wildlife administration, tighter restrictions on sales, exports, the hunting season and non-native bag limits, better kill reporting, the use of reindeer and buffalo meat instead of caribou in residential schools and hospitals, fire protection on the winter range, and experimental wolf control by poisoning. The minutes of the Advisory Board on Wildlife Protection, where caribou conservation was regularly discussed during the late 1940s and early 1950s, indicate that these recommendations fell on receptive ears. Most of these measures were put into effect in the ensuing years.

The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) studies, and the reports of other observers at the time, identified two causes of caribou depletion which, even if they were not necessarily the only or even the main factors, were the ones that could be most easily controlled. These were human hunting, chiefly by Inuit and Dene (although nonaboriginal hunting continued albeit on a more restricted basis since the late 1930s), and wolf predation. The first problem called for an end to both wasteful harvesting practices and the waste and misuse of meat actually taken; the second for a sustained wolf control programme. The issue of waste was at the fore throughout the 1950s, with the fall hunt (specifically, the alleged overkill beyond actual needs), and the practice of feeding caribou meat to dogs, being especially condemned.

There was more bad news to come, however. The Barren Grounds were resurveyed by air in the spring of 1955, resulting in a count of 279,000 animals, or little over 40 percent of the late 1940s count (although the Keewatin herds were reported to be stable in numbers). Two years later, the population was estimated at 200,000 on the basis of partial survey coverage (Kelsall 1968: 149–50). These results suggested that caribou were rapidly disappearing despite stricter controls, and that the crisis was more severe and urgent than previously imagined (*ibid.*: 283–84). Kelsall and other CWS biologists considered that radical measures were urgently required to avert a catastrophic collapse of herd populations.

The policy measures that the ‘caribou crisis’ inspired or accelerated must be understood in the context of another postwar crisis in the North, in the administration of Inuit and Dene. The old policy of leaving them to lead their traditional way of life, independent of government, was becoming unsustainable. Fur prices were in decline, the Hudson’s Bay Company was closing posts, and independent traders were leaving the country. The cost of trade goods was rising rapidly with post-war inflation, and the need for them was increasing. Bands of Inuit began living, in miserable conditions, around military bases and weather stations for security and material goods. Tuberculosis,

influenza and polio were rampant, and it has been estimated that by the mid-1950s, 10 percent of Eastern Arctic Inuit were in hospitals in southern Canada (Tester and Kulchyski 1994: 53). Reports of distress and starvation of isolated bands were reaching the southern media. In formerly inaccessible stretches of the provincial North, mines, commercial fisheries and sport fisheries were being developed. The North was changing rapidly, and both government and aboriginal people were unprepared. Beginning in the late 1940s, *laissez-faire* policies intended to leave Inuit and Dene as independent hunters were replaced by interventionist policies intended to bring them into the modern world, and the old colonial triumvirate of traders, missionaries and police was supplemented by government officials sent to implement these policies.

The Barren Grounds provided both opportunity and, it was thought, urgent necessity to experiment with new ideas and test capabilities in wildlife management and social engineering, on the part of a society eager to apply science, rationality and technique to peace-time reconstruction, as it had done so successfully in war.

Wildlife Management

Wildlife harvesting on the caribou range was regulated by the federal government in the NWT,² and provincial governments south of the 60th parallel. Canada had the power to regulate aboriginal harvesting, but provincial powers to do so were restricted by the Natural Resources Transfer Agreements of 1930.³ Until the postwar period, however, Canada placed virtually no restrictions on aboriginal subsistence hunting. This was not so much out of regard for aboriginal and treaty rights but because a key objective of the Northwest Game Act was to ensure that Indians and Inuit could feed themselves.

The Advisory Board on Wildlife Protection (ABWLP), an interdepartmental committee established by the Dominion Government in 1916, provided advice on wildlife matters of national concern, including areas of territorial jurisdiction. The ABWLP brought together representatives of the Northern Administration Branch, the Indian Affairs Branch, the RCMP, and the Canadian Wildlife Service (among others). It was thus a body that considered the social and economic, as well as the technical and enforcement, issues associated with wildlife management.⁴ These same agencies were also represented on other coordinating mechanisms for northern administration, for example, the Advisory Committee on Northern Development. Since the early 1920s,

federal-provincial wildlife conferences were held annually as a means of coordinating transboundary wildlife management.

Given these administrative structures, it should not be surprising that wildlife managers became involved in social and economic policy, and that social and economic policy makers participated in formulating wildlife regulations. The minutes of the ABWLP and the federal-provincial conferences, and the internal records of the Northern Administration Branch (NAB) and the Canadian Wildlife Service (both housed in the same federal ministry during the 'caribou crisis') provide substantial insight into the views of those involved.

In this section I outline the revisions to the already existing suite of wildlife regulations. These changes, relating to access, seasons, gear, the sale of meat, sanctuaries and wolf control, were in fact not extensive. In the next section I examine in more detail the development of integrated strategies for resolving the 'caribou crisis', which were of much greater significance.

Hunting by nonaboriginals in the Northwest Territories declined mainly by attrition, as those who had qualified for the General Hunting Licence (GHL) in 1938 continued to leave the North. There were still an estimated 200 white trappers within the caribou range in 1949, and exemptions for prospectors also remained in force. Nonaboriginal NWT residents continued to be permitted to hunt up to five caribou per family for their own use. The provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan imposed tighter limits on northern residents and travellers in the late 1940s; these also applied to Metis, who were not recognised as having aboriginal status. Saskatchewan was prepared to eliminate sport hunting, but as a condition wanted the NWT to ban the local sale of caribou meat.

The close season, rarely if ever enforced, was removed for aboriginal people in the NWT in 1955. The use of .22 calibre firearms was prohibited for caribou hunting in 1949 in the NWT, and in 1950 in Saskatchewan, to reduce wounding losses.

Although market hunting for game meat had long been prohibited in the Provinces, it was permitted within the NWT (but not for export) on account of its isolation and lack of alternative food sources. The desirability of harmonising the treatment of this practice on either side of the 60th parallel was frequently discussed at the ABWLP and similar gatherings, but was never achieved.

Commercial sale of caribou occurred primarily at the western edge of the caribou range in the NWT. In 1947, the Fort Resolution warden's report indicated that of about 3,000 caribou killed at Fort Resolution, Rocher River and Snowdrift, about 10 percent were sold by Indians to

local sawmills and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Sale of caribou meat to the HBC was also reported as significant at Fort Rae. It was regarded as a way of making money when furs were scarce. Hindquarters (usually the only part sold, with the rest being consumed domestically or fed to dogs) sold for \$1.25. Caribou was also sold in Yellowknife, where gold-mining operations had recently been revived.⁵ In that same year, new regulations prohibited the sale of caribou meat 'at hotels, restaurants, or other establishments where a charge is made for meals,'⁶ but trade in meat among individuals remained legal.

The system of Native Game Preserves, which had been expanded from the 1920s to about 1945, fell into disuse. The Arctic Islands Game Preserve (which included the northeastern mainland) was eliminated in 1966 (Hunt 1976). The repeated requests by Saskatchewan Dene chiefs for a 'reserve' (by which they meant an exclusive Dene hunting preserve between approximately latitudes 58 and 64 degrees North) were, despite sympathetic responses from field officials, ultimately ignored. During the 'caribou crisis' itself, however, no changes occurred. Expanding the preserve network would have had little practical effect as nonaboriginal trappers were abandoning the Barren Grounds at the time, the sport-hunting industry was not yet developed, and, with improved air transport, mineral exploration parties were better able to bring their own provisions.

The wolf bounty was abandoned in the early 1950s as ineffective. Manitoba experimented with poison baits in 1949, and, after some refinement, a wolf-poisoning programme was instituted in direct response to the caribou crisis by all wildlife agencies on the caribou range. It continued into the early 1960s, when it was considered no longer necessary (Kelsall 1968: 254–56).

Integrated Policy Initiatives

The four most important integrated policy measures in response to the 'caribou crisis' were: limiting institutional use of caribou; reducing waste of caribou meat; education and enforcement; and perhaps the most far-reaching, restricting the aboriginal harvest. Each of these had implications much greater than wildlife management itself and required consensus and cooperation of several agencies and jurisdictions. Implementing these measures would also require more aggressive and intrusive social engineering among Inuit and Dene. I explore the views expressed by administrators, wildlife scientists and enforcement officials as these initiatives were developed.

Institutional Use

The issue of serving caribou to aboriginal people in residential schools and hospitals became controversial in light of the 'caribou crisis'. The amount of meat involved was significant, in view of the rising number of aboriginal persons in those institutions the late 1940s. For example, the Roman Catholic Mission at Fort Smith was reported to have bought 400 hindquarters in 1949.

The NAB proposed to restrict the amount of meat supplied to institutions by imposing quotas and permits for hospital use, and eliminating the supply to schools. In the Mackenzie District, increased quantities of buffalo meat from Wood Buffalo Park would be supplied as a replacement.⁷ The ABWLP recommended a transitional allowance until increased supplies of reindeer and buffalo meat, and improved cold storage facilities, became available. In response, the RC Mission disputed both the proposed allocation and the reasons for it, and in some cases ignored the regulations. Although these infractions were noted, charges were never laid.

The Bishop told the government that

Even when the people are sick, and find other food distasteful, they will still eat the wild meat. They know there is an abundance of it, from time immemorial, and there will be until Divine Providence provides something else for this North country, as it has been provided across the prairies, where wild game was formerly without number. Actually the quantity of caribou meat we require for our institutions is less than a drop of water to a lake, when compared with the numbers of caribou now roaming through the North. To refuse those sick people that meat is inhuman.

He added that buffalo meat was disliked by patients, and it would be unacceptable in the south to deny patients the food they craved and substitute what they disliked. If patients were at home, no one would deny them caribou meat.⁸

Commenting on the Bishop's view of the benevolence of Divine Providence:

Mr. Wright mentioned to His Excellency at Fort Smith that no comparison could be made as between the Northwest Territories and the prairies inasmuch as the former was not suited to agriculture and that if the meat supply disappeared the natives would be in a bad way. The Bishop stressed that he was quite happy to leave it to a benevolent Providence to work out a solution. This is brought to your attention as a clue to the attitude of the Bishop towards attempts of the department to follow the advice of wildlife investigators.⁹

Evidently the Catholic Mission did not share the administration's enthusiasm for rational, scientific management of either caribou or aboriginal people. The Mission came to be viewed by the NAB as uncooperative with respect to the game laws, and encouraging 'backwardness' in Indians.

Government officials placed little importance on aboriginal food preferences, against the need for conservation. Indian Health Service officials, for their part, stated that preference for game meat was a matter of taste, that caribou was not necessary to the welfare of inmates if a balanced diet were provided, and that patients taken to southern institutions for treatment had quickly adapted themselves to the general diet. Serving game meat in mission hospitals was therefore a luxury, and on the basis of scientific advice the regulations must be enforced.

When a Fort Resolution hospital patient wrote to the NAB in Ottawa, asking why they were forbidden to eat caribou meat in the sanatorium and noting that 'We are tired of buffalo meat and can[ned] stuff, as we didn't live on these foods before, so it has become quite a change for us all, leaving a poor appetite which is bad for tuberculosis people', he was told that 'it is not any real hardship to have to do without caribou meat and particularly when you know that by doing so you are going to help your children and their children.'¹⁰

In the Keewatin District of the NWT, restrictions on institutions were even more severe, despite the fact that the government was even less capable of supplying alternative sources of meat there. In 1949, the ABWLP recommended against an application by the Catholic Mission to provide caribou at the hospital and industrial home at Chesterfield Inlet.¹¹ Under the game regulations, the mission itself could not take more than five caribou in each settlement in which it was established.¹² A Commissioner's permit further authorised the use of twenty-five caribou in 1954–55 for the residential school, but not for use in the hospital or the industrial home,¹³ with the advice that 'The Missions are naturally considered a most important influence in the communities they serve and may be counted on, we hope, to set a good example in observance of the law.'¹⁴ The NAB took the view that it could not make an exception for Chesterfield without doing the same for the Mackenzie River missions.

The Catholic Mission then took the matter up with the Minister, requesting a change in the Game Ordinance. The letter noted that healthy Eskimos were allowed to hunt for food and clothing all year, and that the only object of the present Act was to safeguard caribou herds so Eskimos could maintain their traditional economy. When

Eskimos were sick and sent to hospital, they were penalised because the hospital was managed by white people and they were thus deprived of the food most familiar and wholesome to them. Chesterfield had an average of fifty-five patients throughout the year, and 'supplying them with food other than caribou meat is very expensive and above all it does not bring them the physical and psychological welfare to which, as sick persons, they are entitled.'¹⁵

No change was forthcoming, however. The NAB took the firm view that unless there was clear evidence that the caribou population was increasing, there was no basis for relaxing the present policy, even though key wildlife scientists in the field recommended leniency.¹⁶

Waste

Up to the end of the 1940s, no solid evidence had ever been amassed to the effect that the Barren Ground caribou herds were being depleted by overhunting or waste by aboriginal hunters. There persisted, nonetheless, a widespread view that 'waste', in the form of 'needless', 'wholesale' or 'ruthless' slaughter, was a troublesome and threatening phenomenon. Opinions varied on who was most responsible for it: Indians, Inuit or white trappers, but the consensus usually went in the direction of the Denesuline (northern Chipewyan), especially the Maurice and Barren Lands Bands. The matter was commonly raised at meetings of the ABWLP, usually on the basis of police reports.

There cannot be much doubt that kill levels were substantial. Banfield (1954) estimated 125 animals per aboriginal hunter per year, of which perhaps half were for dog feed (per-hunter kill levels may have increased in the early twentieth century because, as people were drawn into fur trapping, they tended to use more dogs). Rough estimates from the 1920s and 1930s, based on anecdotal accounts, were even higher, but Canadian Wildlife Service estimates of kill levels for 1950 were substantially down from a decade before (Anon. 1982).

Whether these kill levels, whatever they actually were between 1917 and 1947, constituted waste in the sense of an unsustainable demand on the herds, has not been demonstrated. We may never have a conclusive answer to this question, or to whether the herds actually did decline during that period. There is a lot of evidence, however, that non-aboriginal observers were culturally predisposed to see waste in situations that Dene and Inuit were not.

Waste of harvested meat, as opposed to excessive harvesting, was not widely regarded as a problem until about 1950. The only references

in the files prior to that time are with respect to dogs, and the possibility that their numbers were excessive and therefore making too great a demand on the resource.¹⁷

When revisions to the Northwest Game Act were being considered by the ABWLP in April 1947, it was considered permissible for natives to feed caribou to dogs where necessary,¹⁸ which at that time was the rule. The Act only prohibited destruction or spoilage of game meat suitable for human consumption.¹⁹ Banfield, in his first progress report to the Federal-Provincial Wildlife Conference of 1949,²⁰ included both excessive harvest and unutilised harvest under the subject of waste. He considered the main sources of waste to be wounding with .22s, waste of meat from the summer hunt for hides, killing more animals than needed, loss of meat to predators from unprotected caches, and use of carcasses for bait. He did not mention feeding meat to dogs.

The administration soon took up Banfield's views and added to them. In 1950, its publicly stated view was that waste was due to killing more than could be utilised, wounding with .22s and nonretrieval, too many dogs, and excessive slaughter.²¹ Reports coming in from the field were mixed, however. Reports of substantial waste of caribou meat at Chipewyan camps were cited at the ABWLP meeting of 17 August 1950, but a 1951 warden's patrol to Rocher River found no evidence of waste. According to the Indian Agent at Fort Resolution, local Indians sold the hindquarters, used the forequarters for themselves, and fed the rest to their dogs.²² At its August 1950 meeting, the ABWLP endorsed a recommendation to prohibit feeding of any part of a caribou to dogs at settlements where other dogfeed was available, although members recognised it would be difficult to enforce.²³

At the same time, another strategy emerged. This was the provision of cold storage facilities in the Mackenzie River communities to enable the import and storage of fresh meat and relieve hunting pressure on big game.²⁴ In that year, the Indian Affairs Branch sent trial refrigeration units to Fort Chipewyan, Fort Resolution and Yellowknife, to preserve native foods for redistribution in times of scarcity, with the objective of installing several more if these proved successful.²⁵ However, this strategy was not regarded as feasible in the Keewatin. The Chief of the Forests and Game Section recognised that storage and caching was a problem in Eskimo areas, but while the Branch could encourage better caching and discourage carelessness, 'we cannot at present insist on a nomadic people carrying out careful storage.'²⁶

Following Kelsall's 1955 report indicating a continuing decline, dealing with the waste problem became a higher priority and was seen to call for more aggressive measures. Sivertz, outlining the options for

the Commissioner, noted that there were already provisions in the NWTGO prohibiting waste, but that these were difficult to enforce. He noted the Indian Affairs Branch policy of supplying refrigeration units to Indian communities (within the caribou range, Stony Rapids had already been added, and units were under construction at Fond du Lac and Snowdrift), and noted that there was nothing like this in Eskimo territory, except at the Catholic Mission at Chesterfield. He suggested constructing units at several places in the Keewatin, even while noting that underground cellars in permafrost would also suffice and that Inuit could be employed in their construction.²⁷ The NAB also proposed an increased slaughter of buffalo from Wood Buffalo National Park, and the distribution of low-cost buffalo meat to Mackenzie Valley settlements.

When the Technical and Administrative Committees on caribou were established in the fall of 1955, the top priority was to eliminate waste. All present at the meeting agreed that this was still a problem with both Indians and Eskimos, due to improper caching, feeding caribou to dogs when alternatives were available, and 'wanton killing with carcasses left to rot.' The last was considered most common at Duck Lake and Brochet in Manitoba, and Indian Affairs proposed to place a man in this area to attempt to curb it.²⁸ In Saskatchewan, local game officers organised fall fishing parties to promote Chipewyan to feed fish instead of meat to their dogs.²⁹

A paper prepared for the NWT Council in 1959³⁰ outlined in some detail the measures undertaken by the federal government to reduce the demand for caribou meat, consisting chiefly of importing game meat, promoting fishing and marine mammal harvesting, and expanding refrigeration capacity. The Indian Affairs Branch was distributing buffalo meat as a relief measure in the NWT and in northern Alberta and Saskatchewan. Of a planned distribution of 85,000 lbs. in 1959–60, about one-quarter was destined for Dene communities at the western end of the caribou range in the NWT and Saskatchewan. About an equal amount of elk meat (culled from Elk Island National Park in Alberta) was to be shipped to Churchill, at the eastern end of the range. The Indian Affairs Branch issued fish nets to Indians, Northern Affairs organised fishing, sealing, and whaling projects in the Keewatin, and the Department of Fisheries conducted stock surveys of inland lakes in the Keewatin. The Indian Affairs programmes continued at least into the mid-1960s.³¹

By the early 1960s, there was a growing perception that the waste problem was declining, even in northern Manitoba, although it was still reported from time to time, and occasionally investigated.³²

Education and Enforcement

Education had been seen as an essential element of wildlife conservation in the far north since the 1920s. Whatever form education campaigns took in those early years – propaganda, exhortation or threats – and whatever success they may have had, there was little alternative. There was virtually no effective enforcement capacity in any jurisdiction. Enforcement was mostly delegated to the RCMP, which maintained detachments (in some cases discontinuously) at Rae, Yellowknife, Reliance, Stony Rapids, Churchill, Eskimo Point, and Baker Lake. The NWT did not establish a separate warden service until the late 1940s. There was a Saskatchewan Provincial Police detachment at Fond du Lac briefly in the 1920s, and from about 1950 onwards, Manitoba stationed a Provincial Conservation officer at Brochet. All of these points are at the edge of the range; both Dene and Inuit spent most of their time on the land, in the heart of the range, far away from these places. Patrols were made at most annually or semi-annually, usually by dog sled, even long past the days when white trappers started going into the country by air.

Throughout the early 1950s, there was substantial debate within and between the Northern Administration Branch and the Canadian Wildlife Service about the balance between education and enforcement. On balance it seems that the CWS, and wildlife biologists generally, leaned toward enforcement, while the administration leaned toward education.

At the ABWLP meeting of November 1947, it was observed that the lack of a field force capable of enforcement had led to a lack of compliance. There was a need to train both staff and Natives, and it was hoped that in three to four years, Natives would learn to observe the game laws. Enforcement was progressively stepped up in the Mackenzie District, for example with emphasis on seasons in 1946,³³ and on the restrictions on the sale of meat in 1950.³⁴

The problem was again discussed in February 1950. The RCMP and the administration favoured leniency, especially in the more isolated areas where people were almost totally reliant on game. There was general agreement that Natives should not be forced to comply until there was more education, an improvement in economic conditions, and an effective substitute for caribou skins.³⁵ At the ABWLP meeting the next month, Banfield noted that:

It is necessary, therefore, to have suitable regulations for the protection of wildlife but in the administration of the regulations a liberal interpre-

tation had customarily been placed upon the provisions which affected the well-being of the native population. The native was privileged to kill game to prevent starvation and it was often necessary for him to kill game for food purposes out of season. There is no case on record of a native being punished for taking game animals contrary to the regulations when it was proved that an emergent [*sic*] situation had developed and it was necessary for him to take such game.³⁶

At its next meeting, the Board endorsed the recommendation of field officers that there should not be automatic cancellation of a GHL if the holder were convicted under the Game Ordinance. This penalty was regarded as too severe as it could deprive persons of their livelihood, and it was felt that cancellation should be at the discretion of the Magistrate or Justice of the Peace at trial.³⁷

In early 1951, wardens posted signs in the Fort Smith district warning that violations of the Ordinance with respect to feeding caribou to dogs would be prosecuted,³⁸ and in November, consideration was given to laying charges in a case of feeding caribou to hospital patients, but the matter was regarded as particularly sensitive and did not proceed.

Although education was regarded as the necessary and primary tool for conservation, concerns were expressed over its effectiveness. For example, at the officials' meeting in February 1950, the value of poster campaigns was questioned. The newly reorganised Northern Administration and Lands Branch (NALB) had just published *The Book of Wisdom* in Inuktitut, but did not have the resources to employ supervisors in Native hunting camps, as had been suggested by Banfield.³⁹

The Commissioner of the NWT (and Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources) noted, in a draft memorandum entitled *Education Can Help Save the Caribou*, that:

it is obvious that conservation cannot be taught by any form of coercion or regulation. The necessary restraint can only be secured, and the co-operation of the hunters enlisted, by explanation and persuasion.

Government agents, missionaries, teachers, traders and others, who live among the natives and have their welfare at heart, have a special responsibility in regard to educating the hunters in conservation. Such persons are asked to make clear by patient and continuous education how necessary it is for the hunters to kill caribou in moderation Those who teach in the schools and missions should make conservation of wildlife a part of the daily educational program, bearing in mind that the children of today are the hunters of tomorrow.

While some hunters are improvident, others are practical conservationists. Most of them will co-operate gladly if they are convinced of the facts and the need.⁴⁰

The emphasis, he stated, should be on teaching people not to kill more than they need, not to feed meat to dogs (and indeed to get rid of excess dogs), to cache meat carefully, and to use other foods like fish when available. The published version was sent to persons residing within the range of the caribou and whose assistance could be beneficial.⁴¹ These efforts were supplemented, in 1951, by the distribution of booklets and circulars, a motion picture, and a film strip.

However, as the caribou situation appeared more and more critical, some questioned the appropriateness of the education strategy, and even its priority over enforcement. Chief among these seems to have been Kelsall, who was then in charge of the CWS caribou research programme in the NWT. In a 1954 memorandum entitled *Education*, he commented on educational efforts to date, and asserted that, after thirty years, they were not working. He believed that the Department's films and film strips had had considerable circulation in the more 'civilised' areas of the North (by which he meant the Mackenzie River district), thanks to the initiative of individual wardens, missionaries and teachers. However, he felt that many of the Natives who saw them did not follow or retain the basic ideas after only one or two showings. While police and wardens had been instructed to convey conservation information to Natives, he thought this was being done in a haphazard and frequently ineffective way: 'Many of the persons involved are not equipped by nature or training to be efficient in such work and many refrain, sometimes wisely, from taking any action whatever.' Pamphlets and talks were not enough, Kelsall argued, and he urged that conservation should be taught in the schools. The curriculum should include training in efficient hunting and trapping, care and handling of fur and meat, and care and use of firearms. He drew attention to some of Banfield's unimplemented recommendations of 1950, including the hiring of special personnel to instruct Natives in their camps, and the employment of young Natives of superior ability as assistant game officers.⁴²

In view of the situation, Kelsall also called for improved enforcement. He claimed that infractions relating to seasons, permitting, gear, waste, and feeding caribou to dogs, were frequent, but also frequently overlooked. He attributed this partly to game officers overlooking infractions because 'in the Northwest Territories, and especially in Eskimo country, many persons are forced to break the game regulations in order to maintain themselves and their families'. He noted that fifty-four charges had been laid under the Act from 1948 to 1953, mostly in the southern Mackenzie, with eleven in the Fort Smith district and eight in the Fort Resolution district (there were by then still no war-

dens east of the Slave River, and no enforcement or charges by the warden service on the caribou range itself).⁴³ Most of these charges, he observed, were brought by the RCMP, and many wardens had never laid a charge. This, he said, was due to a lack of training in proper procedure, and the lack of adequate transport, as in some cases wardens did not even have their own dogteams (winter patrols by dogteam would continue to be routine for the RCMP for nearly another decade). Kelsall advocated enhanced enforcement with respect to waste and abandonment, feeding caribou to dogs, and the use of caribou as bait, although he acknowledged that the last was now rare compared to the peak of the practice in the 1930s by white trappers.⁴⁴

The NALB, commenting on Kelsall's report, regarded draconian enforcement as counterproductive. The Chief of Forestry and Game stated that '[t]o arbitrarily exact enforcement of what appears, from the viewpoint of relatively primitive people, to be very strict legislation, would lead to deep resentment and non-cooperation and would probably damage the cause of conservation for years to come.' Management, he suggested, required enlisting the support, cooperation and understanding of trappers, which could only be done by giving them greater responsibility in management in their areas, and a voice in the development of new game laws. This had been tried and proven in some provinces, whereas in the NWT, 'when proposals for legislation were being considered, the trappers did not have an opportunity to express their views and felt they did not share in it'. He went on to assert that 'natives do not consider a jail term for an infraction of the Game Ordinance any hardship or disgrace. In jail they are very well clothed, well fed and well looked after according to their standards. Their work is light and their families are generally maintained through the issue of relief rations. A jail term under such circumstances is a picnic.'⁴⁵

Burton's superior endorsed his preference for education over enforcement, but also noted the difficulties:

we must direct the minds of these people out of the deep channels in which they have been travelling for centuries by bringing to them entirely different concepts. Once this has been done, then I think we can start to instil into their minds some of the ideas of civilised man, which society, because of densities in population, have had to adopt for their own preservation. One of these is the careful managment [*sic*] and conservation of wildlife resources. We have numerous reports to show that every attempt to educate these people in game conservation has failed and although no one has given the reason for that failure, I think that we can infer that the reason has been that conservation education has been introduced too early in the overall education of these primitive people.⁴⁶

Within the year, the warden service had been relieved of its enforcement responsibilities, with these being returned to the RCMP by mutual agreement. This left the warden service with administrative, advisory and education functions which, it was considered, it would be better able to carry out without the encumbrance of being perceived as an enforcement agency. Nonetheless, it would supply the RCMP with evidence required to secure convictions. The relationship between the warden service and the RCMP in the Mackenzie District would thus become very much like that in the western provinces.⁴⁷

In the NWT, education campaigns consisting of talking to hunters and trappers while on patrol, speaking at meetings and at schools, and booklets in Inuktitut (although apparently not in Chipewyan), and sometimes coupled with threats of enforcement, continued in the late 1950s and into the 1960s.⁴⁸ These campaigns involved, as they had in the 1920s, the RCMP, the northern administration, the Indian agencies, and the more recently added game wardens. There were continuing calls for immediate clamp-downs. Kelsall, for example, asserted after the 1957 survey that without such enforcement, there would be no caribou left to resurvey.

Manitoba indicated a desire to implement an education campaign in 1949, coupled with enforcement, particularly on non-Natives in the North.⁴⁹ Provincial Conservation Officers seem to have favoured enforcement, but lacked the resources to do so. In the early 1950s, the Conservation Officer at Brochet submitted several reports on the problem of waste. During a patrol to the Seal River, he encountered a case of feeding caribou meat to dogs at a Denesuline camp. There had been, he said, no effort by these trappers to put up fish, and the nets issued to them had not been used. Having issued warnings on the matter for years, he said, he claimed now to have enough evidence to convict them. He therefore suggested getting an arresting party to come in by plane and take them out to the Pas. There, he said, they wouldn't be able to raise money to pay the fine, and would have to serve a sentence. If tried in Brochet, 'the gang just chip in and pay their fines and they think its a great joke. ... The hardest punishment that could be dealt to a Chip would be to lock him up where he couldn't talk to one of his kind for sixty days or so; he would be ready to work when he got back.'⁵⁰

The same officer (who spoke little or no Chipewyan) reported in a similar vein on a meeting with the Nueltin Lake trappers, while on patrol in that area in March 1953: 'I have just about run out of threats and warnings, but I have them all leaving for Nueltin Lake in the morning. They are going to leave their families here and make a trip up

there to pick up their mink traps. I feel helpless here dealing with these people, if they called my bluff it would put me in a tough position. If there aren't steps taken to clear up this type of situation very shortly, there will be no use in keeping a field man here.' His dislike of the Denesuline of the area is evident from his patrol report of November 1953: 'It is quite evident that the Nueltin and Fort Hall Chips, don't intend to improve their conditions, they still will not put up fish for dog feed or build proper meat caches, they still go in for the big slaughter of caribou by spear, and its certain that they are too lazy to dry this meat and look after it, so there is still a lot of waste at these two camps.' It would appear the feeling was reciprocated, as he reported that the people had moved to Duck Lake because he was too tough on them. The leader of another nearby camp, he recorded, had 'sent word down to me this fall, that it would be no use in me travelling in his area this fall, as they wouldnt give me any dog feed. Camped here for the night these guys all sat in their shacks and wouldnt even come out to talk to me none of them would sell me any dog feed, so I had to cook rice for my dogs. I couldnt see any sign of fish put up at this camp and very little sign of meat.'⁵¹

Petch (1994: 30) ascribes the use of 'sensationalised photos' of caribou kills in mid-1950s to Manitoba Conservation Officers, and regards them as the promoters of restrictions and sanctions on the Dene harvest, to which the scientists and government officials willingly responded (see also Figure 10.2 in Campbell's chapter). These measures are said to have included asking local Indian Affairs agents to issue smaller amounts of ammunition to Dene hunters, and imposing penalties for excessive or wasteful caribou utilisation.

Saskatchewan seems to have promoted conservation education through its Fur Conservation Program, begun around the same time as the reorganisation of trapping by fur blocks beginning in 1948. Some confiscation of .22s occurred at Uranium City, but apparently not from Indians, as there was no legal authority to apply this measure to them (Cranston-Smith 1995: 123). At a 1953 meeting of CWS, Indian Affairs, and provincial wildlife agencies to consider the caribou issue, a need was recognised to 'develop a sound workable educational conservation program and put it into operation'.⁵²

While there was some sentiment for enforcement, and sometimes very tough enforcement, it was restricted largely to biologists and field officers, usually Conservation Officers but sometimes Indian Agents. There is not enough evidence to say whether those were the *prevailing* views of such persons, but they existed and would certainly have been communicated to aboriginal people, particularly Denesuline. However,

such agitation for enforcement measures generally went unsupported. There was, on the other hand, tighter regulation and perhaps stricter enforcement of commercial harvesting regulations, especially for fur trapping, which was seen as a privilege rather than a right under treaty. Again this would have applied to Denesuline more than Inuit. There may have been some fur seizures but further research is required to verify this. There is a substantial record of objection and even resistance to regulations and enforcement by Denesuline, almost continuously from the signing of the treaties.

In any event the capacity for enforcement was virtually nonexistent until the late 1940s, and even then, only in the western part of the range, and it was always under-resourced. Aircraft patrols were virtually unheard of. Even so, neither the CWS nor the NALB had sufficient personnel for either education or enforcement. There was a continuing reliance on the RCMP, as well as on the agencies on the ground, such as the missions and, beginning in the late 1940s in the west, the schools. The HBC seems not to have been regarded as a useful ally in this regard, as in many quarters there lingered a hostility towards their profiteering on fur and wildlife, and, as noted above, there were also doubts about the Catholic Mission.

Another difficulty with conservation education, however well-meaning, was that few nonaboriginals in authority had any idea of how to communicate effectively with Inuit or Dene. Clancy suggests, probably accurately, that 'conservation education may have meant little more than upbraiding the natives for careless hunting and waste of game' (Clancy 1987: 12). The method was nonetheless effective insofar as threat of sanction often promoted compliance, obviating the need for the more problematic and expensive judicial route of charges and convictions. RCMP officers often threatened sanctions (with or without any legal basis for enforcement) as a means of getting Inuit in isolated communities to comply with the game laws, send their children to school, or otherwise do what the police wanted them to do.⁵³ Thus while the more extreme views noted above seldom prevailed at the policy level, they were often the ones that Inuit and Dene actually heard (to the extent that they understood them).

Limiting the Aboriginal Harvest

Perhaps the most extreme measure considered was to limit the aboriginal harvest itself. Sentiment for doing so had existed since the 1920s, especially with respect to Indian treaty hunting rights. The problem-

atic nature of these rights in the eyes of provincial wildlife managers was raised as early as 1922, at the first Federal-Provincial Wildlife Conference. One of its resolutions, noting that wildlife was an important national asset and that 'Indians and others if not restricted will eventually deplete the supply', and further noting the 'liberal' provisions for Indians in northern Canada regarding the taking of game for food at all seasons, called upon the Department of Indian Affairs to 'continue to point out to all such Indians that in their own interest and in the interest of the country that the Provincial and Federal Game Laws be observed'; and further that 'when in the opinion of game officials of any section of Canada, it is considered necessary to further restrict the killing of game due to a decrease in the supply' that DIA officials cooperate with them in their efforts to conserve.⁵⁴

Wildlife managers in the Prairie provinces believed that the Natural Resources Transfer Agreements of 1930 had only exacerbated the problem. A resolution of the 1932 Provincial-Dominion Wildlife Conference noted that whereas 'the Natural Resources Agreement between the Dominion and the Prairie Provinces provides opportunity and excuse for excessive killing of game and other wild life by Indians in those Provinces', it was resolved that while sympathetic to the actual needs of Indians for wildlife, the conference was

of the opinion that the existing provisions of the [NRTA], if literally carried out, will cause serious depletion and possibly practical destruction of game in the provinces concerned, resulting in great distress for the Indians, and therefore urges that any interpretation placed upon either any Indian Treaties or the Natural Resources Agreement should be based upon the necessity of preventing widespread extirpation of wild life and that in the best interests of game and of the Indians this interpretation should be consistent with the generally recognised reasonable principles of conservation and perpetuation of valuable game and other wild life resources.⁵⁵

The conviction that Indian hunting rights should take second place to scientific wildlife management, and that this was for the Indians' own good, would be repeated in the decades to follow. Following Banfield's studies, there were frequent assertions to the effect that nineteenth century treaty guarantees were outmoded in the light of current conditions.

Quotas, which to date had not been imposed on Inuit or Dene anywhere in the caribou range, were seriously considered in the NWT in the mid-1950s, although ultimately not adopted. Later, the idea resurfaced in the form of proposals to restrict access to caribou by Inuit having waged employment and therefore better access to alternative food

sources.⁵⁶ Although again not adopted, the idea of limiting GHs to persons without permanent employment continued to be discussed by the NWT Game Branch into the mid-1960s.

In 1957, the CWS proposed that caribou be declared in danger of extinction, and therefore subject to special regulations. The NWT Council did so, but a subsequent NWT judicial decision questioned the applicability of the NWT Game Ordinance to Inuit. The federal Northwest Territories Act was amended to ensure that it did, but at the same time barred restrictions or prohibitions on 'Indians or Eskimos ... hunting game for food on unoccupied crown lands, other than game declared by the Governor-in-Council to be in danger of extinction' (Clancy 1987: 22). A federal Order-in-Council declaring caribou, muskox and polar bear in danger of extinction was passed in 1960.⁵⁷

As this measure could not apply to Indians in the provinces, it was further proposed that the Natural Resources Transfer Agreements (NRTA) be amended to enable similar restrictions there with respect to endangered wildlife. Negotiations to this end proceeded among federal and provincial ministries for two years (1960–62), with draft legislation proposed to the federal cabinet.⁵⁸ Ultimately the proposed amendment did not proceed, chiefly because of the Sikyea hunting rights case in the NWT, and interventions by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (Cranstonsmith 1995: 127). Nonetheless, this policy continued to be promoted by the CWS, and particularly Kelsall (whose preferred option was a complete cessation of all caribou hunting for several years), into the mid-1960s (Kelsall 1968: 285–86).

Policies Implemented

Most of the integrated policy initiatives were not implemented in the way that they were proposed. The most effective was the limitation on institutional use, this being the most amenable to government control. Inuit and Dene harvesting, and the use of caribou for dogfeed, seems to have declined substantially from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, but not because of outright harvest limitations or the effectiveness of the regulations as such. It would also appear that conservation education programmes, such as they were, were largely unsuccessful. On the other hand, the 'caribou crisis' certainly contributed to the relocation and sedentarisation of Inuit and Dene, although this was more consequence than objective of the remedies originally proposed.

Relocation of aboriginal populations on the range (or elsewhere) was not new. The Hudson's Bay Company established the Caribou Post

in 1930 to keep the Sayeze Dene inland and away from civilisation. Those people moved to Little Duck Lake in 1941 when a US Air Force weather station was established, and the Ahlarmiut moved to Ennadai Lake in the mid-1940s when a Canadian military radio station was constructed there. The NAB promoted a relocation of the Ihalmiut to Nueltin Lake in 1947 to participate in a commercial fishery, and provided emergency rations there, but most returned to Ennadai.

As famine reports increased, relocation became the preferred government response as the most reliable method of supplying food. The Ennadai Lake people were moved to Henik Lake in 1956, and the next year to Whale Cove and Rankin Inlet on the coast.⁵⁹ This last move was justified in part as a means of allowing caribou to recover. By the mid-1960s, the relocation of a substantial portion of the Inuit population out of the Keewatin territory altogether was given serious consideration within the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, although never implemented.

The Sayeze Dene were also relocated during this period. The Duck Lake post was closed in 1956, and the Dene were evacuated to Churchill suddenly that summer, at least in part, some have suggested, because the Manitoba Game Branch wanted to ensure that the fall caribou kill would not take place. They remained in Churchill under appalling conditions for fifteen years before moving back to Tadoule Lake. The Barren Lands Band was encouraged to settle at Brochet in the mid-1960s, after which the people no longer spent the summer on the Barren Grounds as they formerly had done. In Saskatchewan, trapline registration in the late 1940s facilitated sedentarisation at Fond du Lac and Wollaston.

Thus, on the eastern part of the range, the key Inuit and Dene hunters were moved to the edges of it and sedentarised. No longer did they organise their movements around the caribou, especially at migration time when large numbers of animals could be killed. The Barren Lands Band and the Saskatchewan Dene bands now spent the summers south of the 60th parallel, in the provinces, and went hunting and trapping only after the snow came. The Indian Agencies supplied the people with fish nets, encouraged them to engage in the commercial fisheries on the large lakes in summer (and in guiding in the newly developed sport fisheries), and organised summer fisheries for dogfeed. They also installed walk-in freezers on the reserves.

In the Keewatin, the Ahlarmiut were removed to the coast, and encouraged to fish and hunt marine mammals. Whale Cove and Rankin Inlet became centres of 'modernisation', where services could be provided, a new economy built on commercial resource harvesting, edu-

cation, training, and industrial employment. Rehabilitation became a social as well as a medical concept. New housing meant new programmes to train people how to live in them, which meant that they needed to learn modern concepts of hygiene. Country food was only desirable to the extent that it could not be replaced by southern foods. These programmes were implemented with particular enthusiasm following the creation of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources in 1953 (which housed both the NAB and the CWS). Gordon Robertson, the new Deputy Minister, was from an early date convinced that the old economy was dead, and that the future lay in training and industrial employment (Robertson 1961).⁶⁰

These changes were by no means universally supported by the 'old hands', who often expressed concerns about the development of a welfare mentality and 'improvidence', and the discouragement of Inuit and Dene from 'hustling for themselves'. Nor did the 'old hands' always welcome the newly hired Northern Service Officers or facilitate their work. In this environment, it is not surprising that wildlife scientists in the field had, and expressed, their own views on these issues.

There was little disagreement, however, on the need for 'supervision'. The notion that aboriginal people needed supervising was certainly not new, and especially not with respect to wildlife harvesting. Indeed Banfield's first recommendation, that field officers be employed in native camps to instruct them on conservation and resource use, was all about supervision. But this proved impossible to implement on the ground, especially in the eastern part of the range. There were not enough staff, it was impractical to station monitoring or enforcement personnel in the seasonal camps, and there were not enough aircraft support for patrols or enforcement (contrary to the situation in Alaska during the 1950s, as described by Burch 1995). At the western end of the range, in the Mackenzie District, there was a trend towards 'supervised hunts' using aircraft, made both possible and necessary due to seasonal sedentarisation. These also had the effect of limiting the kill to the number of carcasses that could feasibly be brought back to the communities by air (Kelsall 1968: 203).

Relocation and sedentarisation accomplished the same ends as supervision in the field, and provided convenience in delivering services and administration. While the 'caribou crisis' was not the sole and perhaps not even the primary cause of relocations, even in the most dramatic cases such as the Ahlarmiut and the Sayeze Dene, it meshed conveniently with the administrative crisis and became a point of mutual support between the CWS and the NAB. It seems clear that the CWS readily came to support relocation as a means of reducing the

harvest, perhaps especially in view of its inability to impose harvest quotas at will.

Although Cranstonsmith argues that the wildlife scientists' recommendations went beyond the realm of science (1995: 96), this was not unusual given the administrative structure of the time, and the fact that wildlife management was then, as it is now, as much a matter of managing people as managing animals. It is perhaps more remarkable that CWS policy prescriptions went so far beyond the normal wildlife management tool kit, but, by the same token, the Northern Administration Branch had very significant input to wildlife management policy.

Supervision in town remedied the inability to patrol and supervise in the field, and the CWS fully supported the removal of Inuit and Dene from the range. Sedentarisation facilitated food replacement, and by effectively restricting the summer and fall caribou hunts on the range, reduced the supply of material for winter clothing. This in turn reduced the feasibility of extensive winter travel for trapping and hunting, and hence the need for large dog teams. Caribou harvests by both Inuit and Dene declined substantially once people became confined to the communities.

Thus relocation and sedentarisation, although not fully developed as a policy at the outset, proved the most effective solution to the 'caribou crisis'. And so the crisis faded (although did not disappear entirely) from the administration's view. The cost to Inuit and Dene who inhabited the caribou range was high, however, as their way of life was brought to an end in haste by highly intrusive administrative actions they could neither understand nor influence.

Epilogue

The influence of scientific wildlife management, and of wildlife management agencies, on the social and economic life of Dene and Inuit, and on their legal rights, declined rapidly in the 1960s. The consensus on the causes of and cure for the 'caribou crisis', which was given considerable popular exposure (Banfield 1956, 1961b), began to unravel, and dissenting voices were heard increasingly both within and outside of wildlife management circles (Cranstonsmith 1995: 128–36). In retrospect it may be impossible to determine whether the threat of caribou depletion was real. It may have been a product of the survey methods and the knowledge of caribou biology as it existed at the time.⁶¹ Low numbers, if real, may have been a low point in what is increasingly recognised by caribou biologists as a long-term cyclic vari-

ation in caribou populations. By today's standards, the scientific evidence for the crisis was flimsy indeed.

Caribou research methods continued to develop. Direct observation and census by aerial survey were supplemented by handling and tagging of the animals themselves to confirm movements and herd delimitation, beginning in 1959 in Manitoba and extended to the NWT in the early 1960s. Aerial census methods themselves became more systematic, issues of sampling and observer error were addressed, and in the 1980s it was discovered that photo counts produced higher population estimates, all of which led to reassessment of the earlier counts.

Aboriginal people themselves began to challenge the analysis and prescriptions of scientific wildlife management. Provincial and national Indian organisations began objecting to changing the NRTA and the Indian Act and, in the 1960s, several hunting rights cases, especially in the North, raised questions about the legality of proposed restrictions on Inuit and Indian hunting. There was increasing resentment and resistance at the local level, not only towards hunting restrictions as such, but also towards the methods of wildlife scientists. Both Inuit and Dene considered counting, tagging, and attaching radio or satellite collars, but most especially the matter of handling live animals, improper and disrespectful behaviour towards caribou. Caribou research methods soon came to be seen as the cause of caribou scarcity, rather than as an appropriate response to it.

In 1979–80 a third 'crisis' occurred, triggered by allegedly low herd counts and, again, sensational photos of large kills in Saskatchewan when wintering animals penetrated much farther south than usual. Again the same calls for immediate restrictions on aboriginal harvesting were heard, although in the outcome it transpired that the counts were incorrect and that there were in fact more caribou than the wildlife scientists had claimed. That episode, however, triggered the formation of the Beverly-Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (and in a larger context, the wildlife chapters of the modern land claim agreements that provide for co-management and the priority of the aboriginal subsistence harvest). It also led to a recognition that the Inuit may have been right after all.

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Notes

- 1 Csonka reports that the police almost never visited the section of tundra where Inuit and Dene met, and that there were only a few white trappers in the region (1999: 134).
- 2 The Northwest Game Act of 1917 was the applicable federal statute until 1949, when it was replaced by the NWT Game Ordinance. Both were administered by the Department of the Interior and its successors, and regulations were frequently amended on the advice of the Advisory Board on Wildlife Protection (ABWLP) and the Northwest Territories Council (the latter a mostly appointed body during the period).
- 3 These included a game laws paragraph that made Indians subject to provincial game laws 'provided, however, that the said Indians shall have the right ... of hunting, trapping and fishing game and fish for food at all seasons of the year on all unoccupied Crown lands'.
- 4 When the ABWLP was terminated in 1957, Barren Ground caribou management was coordinated by the federal-provincial administrative and technical committees recently established for that purpose.
- 5 NAC, RG22/7/33, RG22/249/40-6-6(2).
- 6 PC2567, 3 July 1947.
- 7 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(1), Gibson to Trocellier, 28 June 1950.
- 8 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(1), Trocellier to Young, 28 February 1951.
- 9 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(1), Sinclair to Commissioner, 5 December 1951.
- 10 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2), Chief Alexis J.M. Beaulieu, St. Joseph's Hospital, Fort Resolution, to Young 15 November 1953; R.G. Robertson to Beaulieu, 30 November 1953.
- 11 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(2,3).
- 12 NWT Game Ordinance, 25.2.b.
- 13 NWT Game Ordinance, 26.2.a; NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2), Cunningham to Commissioner, RCMP, 8 June 1954.
- 14 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2), Cunningham to Laviolette, secretary, Indian and Eskimo Welfare Commission, University of Ottawa, 9 June 1954.
- 15 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2), André Renaud to Jean Lesage, 6 August 1954.
- 16 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2), Cunningham to DM, 7 June 1955.
- 17 NAC, RG22/4/14, ABWLP Minutes, 7 February 1938.
- 18 NAC, RG22/1/14.

- 19 PC2567, 3 July 1947.
- 20 NAC, RG85/148/400-11-12(3).
- 21 Sometimes luridly described, e.g. 'There are times when aborigines take caribou at a disadvantage and are carried away by the lust of killing, so that they are quite beside themselves and slaughter far more caribou than they and their families and friends can possibly use.' (NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(1), Gibson to Trocellier, 28 June 1950.)
- 22 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(3).
- 23 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(3).
- 24 NAC, RG22/16/69, Richards paper on wildlife resources in the NWT, to 14th Provincial-Dominion Wildlife Conference, 1950.
- 25 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(3), ABWLP Minutes, 17 March 1950.
- 26 NAC, RG85/360/3-1-6-7-1-A(4), Burton to Fraser, 1 November 1954.
- 27 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2), Sivertz to Commissioner, 23 August. 1955.
- 28 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2).
- 29 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2), Churchman to Robertson, 29 August 1955.
- 30 NAC, RG85/1944/A401-22(1).
- 31 NAC, RG10/8933/140/20-16(2), McGilp memo, 20 May 1965.
- 32 NAC, RG85/1944/A401-22(1).
- 33 NAC, RG22/4/14.
- 34 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(3).
- 35 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(3), Meeting re caribou, 2 February 1950.
- 36 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(3), ABWLP Minutes, 17 March 1950. In an appendix to the minutes of this meeting, I. McT. Cowan recommended that limits be placed on Native killing wherever these could be enforced, noting, however, that unenforceable regulations bred harmful disrespect for authority.
- 37 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(3), ABWLP Minutes, 17 August 1950. Clancy (1983: 26-27) suggests that in practice, when Indian Affairs staff acted as JPs, they refused to convict. As well, the Act provided for exemptions to the close season when survival was at stake, which was, arguably, all of the time for Inuit and Dene on the eastern part of the range. This exemption gave considerable discretion to enforcement officers and at the same time made convictions difficult to secure.
- 38 NAC, RG85/636/420-2/101(1).
- 39 NAC, RG22/96/32-2-5(3), Meeting re caribou, 2 February 1950.
- 40 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(1), October 1950.
- 41 NAC, RG22/16/69, ABWLP, November 1950.
- 42 Cited in NAC, RG85/360/3-1-6-7-1-A(4), Cunningham to Fraser, 12 October 1954.
- 43 We found no record of charges laid, or convictions obtained, against Denesuline or Inuit on the eastern part of the caribou range, under either territorial or provincial wildlife ordinances, during the period under review. Weather station employees at Ennadai were found to have killed caribou in violation of the NWT Game Ordinance in 1963, but due to the statute of limitations, no charges were laid (RG85/1944/A400-1(1)).
- 44 NAC, RG85/360/3-1-6-7-1-A(4), Memo by Kelsall on legislation and enforcement, 1954.

- 45 NAC, RG85/360/3-1-6-7-1-A(4), Burton to Fraser, 1 November 1954.
- 46 NAC, RG85/360/3-1-6-7-1-A(4), Fraser to Director, 5 November 1954.
- 47 NAC, RG22/213/40-6-6.
- 48 See, for example, P.X. Mandeville Patrol Reports from Fort Smith, 1957, NAC, RG85/636/420-2/101(1), and 1959, NAC, RG10/8406/601/20-10(1), and 12 June 1958, memo re Barren Ground caribou situation in the NWT, NAC, RG85/1944/A401-22(1).
- 49 NAC, RG85/148/400-11-12(3), Provincial Dominion Conference 1949.
- 50 NAC, RG10/8399/501/20-9-2 (1), patrol report, 22 November 1951.
- 51 NAC, RG10/8399/501/20-9-2 (1).
- 52 NAC, RG22/248/40-6-3(2).
- 53 See, for example, Csonka (1995: 368, fn.362), and for a more general discussion of 'ilira' (an Inuktitut word for a particular type of fear of people and their power) and its effects on Inuit, Brody (1975).
- 54 NAC, RG85/148/400-11-12(1).
- 55 NAC, RG85/148/400-11-12(1).
- 56 Apparently first proposed in unattributed memo of 12 June 1958, and recommended in 1960 (NAC, RG85/1944/A401-22(1), Bolger to Brown, 23 August 1960).
- 57 PC1960-1256. These events are described in more detail by Clancy (1987) and Cranston-Smith (1995).
- 58 NAC, RG13/2723/19000-1.
- 59 The Inuit relocations in the Keewatin are described in detail in Tester and Kulchyski (1994) and Marcus (1995). It seems probable that at least some famine episodes were induced by sedentarisation and reduced mobility of the Inuit, rather than any actual disappearance or unavailability of caribou as such.
- 60 One thing that was not done, however, was to implement a programme of floor prices or subsidies for fur (Clancy 1983).
- 61 In a popular account of the history of caribou research, Urquhart observed: 'By today's standards none of the survey results would be considered even remotely accurate, much less meriting comparison with each other to establish a trend. But with aerial censusing being "high tech" for that era, the data were accepted with few reservations' (Urquhart 1989: 100).