

Preface

The 13th North American Caribou Workshop which was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, was a great success with more than 400 participants: people from Canada, the United States, Norway and Greenland, representatives from co-management and resource management boards across North America, First Nations, Inuit and Inuvialuit, governmental and non-governmental organisations, private companies, researchers, students and youth. The theme of the Workshop was *Sustaining Caribou and their Landscapes – Knowledge to Action* and the intent of the organizers was twofold: first, to provide participants with the opportunity to share scientific and traditional *knowledge* on different subspecies and ecotypes of *Rangifer* across the circumpolar North, the particularities of the different landscapes and land use management issues; second, to explore innovative ways to transfer knowledge to *action*, ensuring the long-term persistence of *Rangifer* throughout its range through the development of better governance structures, sound policies and effective communication.

The week began with several pre-conference seminars, including an Aboriginal Talking Circle facilitated by Walter Bayha (Délįnę First Nation) and Danny Beaulieu (Deninu Kue First Nation); a presentation on new statistical analysis to address correlation issues in habitat analysis organized by Nicola Koper (University of Manitoba); and a forum on the role of protected areas in the conservation of boreal caribou organized by Ron Thiessen (Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society).

The Aboriginal Talking Circle was remarkable both because of the large size of the audience (approximately 200 people packed the room in addition to the circle of invited speakers), and because it was the first forum of its kind in the history of the North American Caribou Workshop. Organized by Daniel Gladu (Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources) and Deborah Simmons (University of Manitoba), and hosted by Albert Thorassie (Sayisi Dene First Nation), the Talking Circle provided an opportunity for aboriginal speakers to share experiences and ideas about caribou research and stewardship. The focus was on local or regional understandings of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge about caribou, and how Aboriginal harvesting and stewardship practices relate to science-based research and management regimes. A number of key topics were identified during the day for more in-depth discussion at other Talking Circles later in the week.

As part of the main conference program, 75 abstracts were retained for oral presentations and 55 additional abstracts were presented in the form of posters. The conference began with a plenary session entitled *Knowledge and wisdom to assist with caribou management and land use planning efforts*; the session was chaired by Ovide Mercredi (current Chief of Mispawistik Cree Nation in Manitoba and former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations). This was followed by two symposia addressing key issues in barren-ground and woodland caribou management: *How does knowledge inform management decisions of barren-ground caribou?* chaired by Ron Thompson (Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board) and *Innovative approaches to woodland caribou management*, chaired by Dennis Brennan (Manitoba Conservation).

The contributions of other participants were presented in different concurrent sessions on a wide range of topics on the biology and ecology of *Rangifer*, on approaches to management and conservation. The conference included a multi-media dimension, including telemetry data mapping demonstrations, a showing of the new film *EALÁT - People and reindeer in a changing climate*, and a presentation on the barren ground caribou sculpture by Peter Sawatzky. As well, there were opportunities to socialize at a banquet followed by a dance with entertainment by the local band Bullrush, and two interesting field trips. The conference concluded with a closing panel chaired by Ross Thompson, *Future directions for caribou research and management*.

The 13th North American Workshop brought together researchers and managers, Aboriginal peoples, politicians and advocates to remind us of the grandeur and complexity of the northern landscapes and the rapidly increasing amount of anthropogenic activities across the different regions. The unparalleled diversity of the contributions was reflective of an impressive commitment to sound *Rangifer* research and good management across nation and state boundaries – while also exposing the major challenges in such work. A key message emergent from the conference was that to be successful, caribou conservation and management require information from many different experiences and ways of knowing.

In conclusion, I would like to propose that to take advantage of the amount and wealth of information on the species – to understand how *Rangifer* will respond to a rapidly changing world and what can be done to ensure that animals continue to move freely across the North – we should strive for greater collaboration amongst disciplines in research and a greater involvement of the different knowledge communities in management.

And again, thank you to all who contributed to this most unique event.

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