

Caribou management in times of uncertainty

Joe Tetlich

Porcupine Caribou Management Board, Box 31723, Whitehorse, YT, Canada, Y1A 6L3.

The *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* (PCMA) was agreed to in 1985 by the five First Nation and three public governments. That agreement established the Porcupine Caribou Management Board whose mandate is managing the health of the Porcupine caribou and its habitat, making sure the caribou are there for future generations.

In 1989, the Porcupine Caribou Herd peaked at approximately 178 000 animals and then declined to a low of 123 000 in 2001. Currently, best estimates show the herd to be at approximately 90 000 animals. There are a number of factors believed to contribute to the decline, such as high calf mortality, climate change and harvesting pressures. In 2004, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board undertook the challenge of putting together a Harvest Management Strategy or Plan (HMP), while respecting the jurisdiction of various governments and five claimant groups' comprehensive land claim agreements within the range of the Porcupine caribou herd. The HMP was signed off by all Parties to the PCMA in July this year and an Implementation Plan is currently being developed.

