



## Board Meeting Minutes

**Date:** 10-11 February 2026

**Location:** WRRB Boardroom, Denendeh Manor, Yellowknife, NT

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**Board Members:**

Joseph Judas (Chair)  
Travis Washie (Tłıchq Appointee)  
Janelle Nitsiza (Tłıchq Appointee)  
Suzanne Carrière (GNWT Appointee) (Zoom)  
Tom Lafferty (Tłıchq Appointee)  
Eddie Chocolate (Tłıchq Appointee)  
Stu Niven (Federal Appointee)  
Isabelle Duclos (Federal Appointee)

**Staff:**

Laura Meinert  
Mary Drake  
Aimee Guile  
Jody Pellssey

**Interpreters:**

James Rabesca  
Peter Huskey  
Sammy – PIDO

**Youth:**

Caleb Franki  
Orie Simpson  
Alex Lafferty  
Skydon Koyina

**Guests:**

Jocelyn Zoe, TG  
Tanisha Beaverho, TG  
Kelby Ogryzlo, ECCC  
Samuel Hache, ECCC  
Eliot McIntire, ECCC  
Allen Larocque, ECCC  
Kathryn Yarchuk, ECCC  
Elizer Gurarie, SUNY-ESF  
Megan Perra, SUNY-ESF  
Madeline Judas

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**Call to Order: 9:28 a.m.**

**Opening Prayer: Joseph Judas**

### 1.0 Agenda and Previous Minutes

#### 1.1 Approval of Agenda

**Motion #1016-10-02-2026** *To approve the 10-11 February 2026 agenda as presented*

**Moved:** Stu Niven  
**Second:** Tom Lafferty

**Motion Approved**

#### 1.2 Approval of Minutes

16-17 December 2025

**Motion #1017-10-02-2026** *To approve the 16-17 December 2025 minutes as amended*

**Moved:**  
**Second:**

Janelle Nitsiza  
Tom Lafferty

### **Motion Approved**

#### 1.3 Review of Action Items

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled “*Calf: Cow Ratios*”, tabled

Board discussions included: new technology (AI) being used for counting caribou on photos; recommendations to study caribou food and habitat; ENK program collects information on caribou food, plans to measure ice crystals during winter research, i.e., how far do caribou have to dig to reach food?; mine research on caribou, AEMP and SNP programs.

## **2.0 Business**

### 2.1 Update on Recent ECC Communication

On December 23, 2025, a letter written by ECC Minister, Jay Macdonald about conservation actions to support the Kq̄k'èetì Ekwò, i.e., to set the Mobile Core Bathurst Caribou Management Zone with a 60km buffer, was sent to IGO Leaders. The WRRB was not copied on the letter and learned about the letter from ECC and TG staff in early January 2026. The WRRB finally received a copy of the letter when a special meeting of the BGCTWG was held on January 16, 2026. On January 16, 2026, a letter written to Officials from ECC Wildlife Director, Rhona Kindopp about Mackenzie Ejie and a proposal to engage in collaborative decision making was forwarded to the WRRB via Terry Armstrong. The WRRB was not copied on the letter and only received it as a member of the Mackenzie Bison Working Group.

As per Section 12.1.2 of the Tłıchq̄ Agreement, the WRRB is “*to perform the functions of wildlife management set out in the Agreement in Wek'èezhì*”, as such, the WRRB is considered a wildlife management authority. Both letters exclude the WRRB on its distribution and copy list. As both letters propose wildlife management actions within Wek'èezhì and ECC is a Party to the Tłıchq̄ Agreement, the Board should have received these letters directly from ECC. ECC notes that they follow a matrix for communication created by ECC and IGOs, including TG, that identify which organizations should be on a distribution or copy list.

Board discussions included: concerns about GNWT and TG communications with the WRRB; concerns about mobile zone buffer, lack of Bathurst collars, and need for more precise information to make better informed decisions, noted that the WRRB meets weekly with TG and GNWT about the mobile zone during the winter road season.

**ACTION #723-10-02-2026 (ED):** To write letter to GNWT and TG to remind them of WRRB wildlife management authority and appropriate lines of communication.

## Update on Grays Bay Port and Road (GBPR)

The WRRB is intervening in the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) process. The Arctic Security and Economic Corridor map currently shows a draft road corridor for the NWT portion as there is limited environmental baseline, i.e., route is to be determined. The environmental assessment (EA) has not yet started for the NWT. NIRB and MVEIRB are working together. As there is so much concern about the corridor, the project has been split into sections. Staff have seen proposals that have the corridor going through Tlicho communities.

For the NIRB process for GBPR, the road is proposed in or near the Bathurst calving ground; however, the developer's impact statement has yet to be submitted, i.e., NIRB is only in the early stages of the EA. The MVEIRB has had a meeting to identify all the NWT impacts of the GBPR, including concerns about the calving ground. It is expected that Arctic Security and Economic Corridor will have a huge impact on the NWT and to the caribou forever. Many IGOs are concerned and, therefore, participating in the NIRB process. There is a lot of research that is looking into the impacts of roads on caribou.

### 2.2 Review & Approval of Wildlife Research Permit Application – Audiologgers for Monitoring Fine-scale Caribou Behaviour, Megan Perra & Elizer Gurarie

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled *“Using animal-borne sensors and acoustic recording units to monitor caribou behaviour, insect harassment and sound disturbance”*, tabled

GNWT Environment and Climate Change have partnered with Elizer Gurarie and his team from the State University of New York. They submitted a Wildlife Research Permit Application for attaching up to 40 audio-loggers to already approved ekwò collars in March 2026. 5-10 audio loggers will drop off in late April, to capture interactions with roads and mines. 15-30 audio-loggers will drop off in late July, to capture calving and post calving.

Community members can help with audio-logger retrievals. Participation opportunities will most likely be in July but may also be available in April. Audiologgers have limited additional impact to ekwò and will increase the information about caribou and their stressors.

Board discussions included: collars show where caribou are traveling while audiologgers give sounds of caribou and what encountering, really helpful to hear how the caribou is reacting, moving, eating, breathing, sleeping; researchers will be putting out five loggers that stay on for 1.5 months and 15 loggers that stay on from March to July (4 months), typically record average 45 days, split recording time in two week chunks, calving period and insect harassment; focused on spring due to concerns with caribou and winter road, focused on summer to find out where the best habitat is for protection from insects, hoping to expand the program to also hear them during rut period.

**Motion #1020-11-02-2026** To approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled *“Audiologgers for*

*Monitoring Fine-scale Caribou Behaviour”,  
as presented*

**Moved:**  
**Second:**

Tom Lafferty  
Travis Washie

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #725-11-02-2026 (ED):** To write letter to the SUNY-ESF to approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled “*Audiologgers for Monitoring Fine-scale Caribou Behaviour*”.

2.3 Review & Approval of Funding Proposal – Acoustic Monitoring of Fine-scale Ekwø Behaviour Using Audiologgers, Megan Perra & Elizer Gurarie

Eliezer Gurarie, Megan Perra, and Alicia Kelly have submitted a proposal for acoustic monitoring of fine-scale ekwø behaviour using audio-loggers. They have requested \$121,050. Their previous source of funding is sunsetting at the end of this fiscal year. They have funds for equipment this upcoming year, but not for data analysis and fieldwork.

The kind of information they can obtain from audiologgers include learning about their reproduction (calving, nursing, social interactions), energy budgets (resting, rumination, walking/running), and potentially causes of death. Audiologgers also provide detail into how ekwø respond to disturbance. They capture information on the presence of mosquitoes or flies, the sounds of traffic and mining activity, the presence of predators.

Board discussions included: TG requirement for community member involvement after calving is done; would like audiologger program to be expanded during migrations and fall rut, possibly provide future funding; researchers have applied for other funding (WWF – unconfirmed, Tribek Initiative – unconfirmed, \$20K acquired for equipment – confirmed).

**Motion #1021-11-02-2026** *To approve the funding proposal, entitled “Acoustic Monitoring of Fine-scale Ekwø Behaviour Using Audiologgers”, for \$121,050 as presented*

**Moved:**  
**Second:**

Janelle Nitsiza  
Stu Niven

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #726-11-02-2026 (ED):** To write letter to the SUNY-ESF to approve the funding proposal, entitled “Acoustic Monitoring of Fine-scale Ekwø Behaviour Using Audiologgers”, for \$121,050.

## 2.4 Review & Approval of Proposed Status for Kòk'èeti Ekwò Herd - BCAC

On February 4 and 5, 2026, BCAC held its fifth annual status meeting to discuss the 2026 Kòk'èeti Ekwò herd status. There were 48 people at the meeting, plus interpreters and a graphic recorder. Science and Traditional Knowledge were shared by the GNWT, Indigenous governments and organizations, hunter and trapper organizations, and management boards. The new population estimate of 3,609 adult caribou, recorded in 2025, was presented to the group. Community and Indigenous knowledge shared indicated the Kòk'èeti Ekwò showed some positive and negative habitat indicators, that many bulls were observed on the land and that most ekwò were in either fat or good condition. Diga (wolves) were observed on the land and were often times feeding on ekwò carasses found along the winter road.

The group determined that the herd status should remain at a Critical Low as described in the Bathurst Caribou Management Plan. A Bathurst Caribou 2026 Action Plan will be drafted for submission to governments.

Board discussions included: action plan has been in place for five years at critical low; mobile caribou conservation measures where smaller companies shut down operations or specific activities while caribou are within a certain distance; while the mine industry and exploration are starting to fizzle out, there is now proposals for the Arctic Security and Economic Corridor.

**Motion #1018-10-02-2026** *To approve the Critical Low status for Kòk'èeti Ekwò Herd as presented*

**Moved:** Stu Niven  
**Second:** Eddie Chocolate

### **Motion Approved**

**ACTION #724-11-02-2026 (ED):** To write letter to the BCAC to approve the Critical Low status for the Kòk'èeti Ekwò Herd.

## 2.5 Update on Species at Risk Implementation Actions – Boreal Caribou, Amphibians, Wood Bison, Barren-ground Caribou, Bats

Each year management authorities report on the work they have done to conserve and recover species at risk. These are called management actions. Annual reporting helps us gauge how we are doing year-to-year and make sure nothing gets missed when we report to the public on our progress every five years as required under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*. WRRB staff have reported on management action related to tòdzı (Boreal Caribou), ekwò (Barren-ground caribou), ejie (Bison), dı̀ą k'et'à (Bats), and amphibians.

Board discussions included: WRRB Bat ARU program, information will be able to be used for range expansion and clarifying presence in the NWT, purchase additional ARUs to expand the area of the program, currently no analysis costs for the WRRB as providing data under the GNWT's ECC wildlife research permit; bats eat 600 to 1200 mosquitoes per hour.

**Motion #1019-10-02-2026** To add \$10,000 to the Bat ARU Program

**Moved:** Stu Niven  
**Second:** Janelle Nitsiza

**Motion Approved**

2.6 Update on Help Shape the Future on our Ekwò: Community Meetings

Tłıchq Government's Department of Culture and Lands Protection hosted community meetings in Whatı (Jan 13), Behchokò (Jan 14), Gamèti (Jan 15), Wekweèti (Jan 18), and Yellowknife (Feb 3) to discuss the 2025 ekwò population surveys and ekwò harvest management options, including a temporary pause and a proposed 3 km no-shooting corridor along the Mackay Lake winter road. Feedback from the meetings will support informed decisions about ekwò by TG this winter and will be used in the joint management proposal to be submitted to the WRRB later in 2026.

Karin Clark, ECC, presented information at the meetings and addressed questions and concerns from the communities. Jody Pellissey, WRRB, attended the Tłıchq community sessions to listen to the discussions. Communities continue to support the need for dıga management to help the ekwò. The majority of attendees want to continue to harvest ekwò but are willing to consider a fall hunt or to support the 3km no-shooting corridor. Community members are very upset about harvesters not following Tłıchq Nàowq, such as wastage/wounding, hunting under the influence, and leaving a mess (gut piles, garbage).

Recommendations from Tłıchq Caribou Community Tour – January 2026

1. Hunt caribou in the fall: Community hunts in fall
  - Teach youth about hunting & respect for caribou
2. Restrictions, not closure, on caribou harvesting at Mackay Lake during winter
  - 3-km voluntary no-shooting corridor along the winter road on Mackay Lake
3. Education about respect for caribou and for the land

2.7 Update on 2025 International Wildlife Conference and The Wildlife Society Conference

International Wildlife Congress – Lillehammer Norway

The Wildlife Management Biologist, Laura Meinert, and Conservation Biologist, Amanda Weltman, attended the International Wildlife Congress in Lillehammer Norway in September 2025. The keynotes included a lecture from Dr. Krithi Karantha, CEO for the Centre of Wildlife Studies in Bangalore. Some of the plenaries included lectures from the Arctic University of Norway on the Climate-Ecological Observatory for Arctic Tundra, an ecosystem-based observation system that monitors how climate change impacts the Arctic tundra. Other presentations that Laura and Amanda found valuable were how caribou (and

reindeer), wolves, bison and other mammals are managed and researched across Europe.

Laura and Amanda presented on the Mackenzie Bison herd in the NWT and the WRRB's management of them. The presentation was well attended, and the question period was exciting!

#### The Wildlife Society – Edmonton, Alberta

The Wildlife Management Biologist, Laura Meinert, and Conservation Biologist, Amanda Weltman, attended the Wildlife Society's Annual Conference in Edmonton, Alberta, along with WRRB Advisor, Dean Cluff.

Dean Cluff presented on the paper "Evaluation of a Mobile Conservation Zone for Bathurst Caribou Recovery and Management", which Laura and Aimee are co-authors. The conference was attended by many NWT Biologists and researchers, including the GNWT Carnivore Biologist, Species at Risk Biologist, CIMP Scientist, Regional Biologists, and the NSMA's Biologist.

**ACTION #727-11-02-2026 (ED):** To send 2025 IWC and TWS conference presentations to Board members.

#### 2.8 Update on 2026 North American Caribou Workshop – Board Attendance

The 20th North American Caribou Workshop (NACW) will be held in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada from June 15 to 19, 2026. The conference will be hosted by the Government of the Northwest Territories and local wildlife co-management partners to bring together international managers, researchers, Indigenous and Local Knowledge holders, and other interested parties to share their knowledge of caribou. The conference theme, "*United by Caribou*," represents our joint interest in and concern for caribou as researchers and stewards.

As a Gold Sponsor, the WRRB has three complementary delegate passes as well as two passes for staff on the organizing committee. Early bird registration (\$750) is now open on the NACW website ([www.nacw2026.com](http://www.nacw2026.com)). The Tłıchq Government will be hosting a day long field trip to Behchokq̄ on June 19.

#### 2.9 Party Updates

##### a) Tłıchq Government

i) Update on Update on Ekw̄ Nàxoèhdee K'è Program, Jocelyn Zoe, Janelle Nitsiza, & Tanesha Beaverho

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled "*Ekw̄ Nàxoèhdee K'è: Tłıchq Caribou Guardian Program*", tabled

Board discussions included: drones bothering caribou, testing the disturbance, how high and low before disturbing caribou, planning to have multiple people trained to fly the drones, good to have to see where the caribou are, also planning 360 camera training to capture places on the barrenland to put on the

VR headsets for elders and to use on website; caribou and roads, observations over the past 30 years that barely see caribou cross roads unless being chased, always want to hear what people are seeing as ENK program can't be everywhere, research done in Yukon shows that lower leg injuries are due to shrubification, snow builds crust so caribou are learning to avoid the roads to prevent the lower leg injuries; BOTG program how to do the caribou research and monitor, is it a powerful tool, is it strong enough, do we need to improve the program? Gather information from hunters, do monitoring and research only on our own, we need neighbouring IGOs monitoring too, share information, GNWT has own authority, need to work together and amongst one another, gain more knowledge; how many caribou are being harvested? Moratorium for 5 years of harvesting along winter road, starting in 2027, prior to the can set up fall hunts, different technique in hunting, people needing to harvest with a tag?

b) Environment & Climate Change Canada

i) Update on Species at Risk, including Listing Consultations for Snowy Owl

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled "*Species at Risk Update*", tabled

ECCC will be seeking input on listings for Snowy Owl & Short-billed Dowitcher after October 2026. Common Nighthawk Management Plan is currently being developed. Progress Report on Wood Bison will be posted to the Species at Risk Registry soon.

ii) Forecasting Potential Habitat and Range Expansions or Retractions of Boreal and Barren-ground Caribou under Changing Climate, Wildfire, Anthropogenic Disturbance, Permafrost Thaw, and Vegetation, Samuel Hache, Eliot McIntire, & Allen Larocque

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled "*Learning from the Past & Present - Thinking about the Future of Caribou*", tabled

Board discussions included: permafrost along highways, person on the team will be compiling as many sources as possible to create a NWT wide forecast with respect to permafrost and how permafrost impacts habitat and infrastructure, permafrost is one of the key components, objective of program is to de silo components and disciplines, creating a network and more connectiveness; clarify in the presentation that talking about caribou habitat, not caribou directly, not talking about determining health of caribou or reproduction, just habitat and RSF model, suggestion to add seasons, have as many caribou experts, including caribou people, as possible, not creating but integrating, focus on trees, wildfire, caribou, feature of project, generalists at the top organizing the team; <https://wbi.predictiveecology.org/apps/wbi/>, Eliot McIntire manages the site development; forecasts can be done at many different timelines, both short and long term, update models as more information is available, working with ALCES group to incorporate their recent work; AI predictive modeling, defining hybrid modeling, marrying of two approaches, existing models and enhancing with AI, a lot of trial and error; western science and TK programs, what see on the land will validate the model.

### 3.0 Financial

#### 3.1 Review & Approval of 2026-27 Budget and Work Plan

Board discussions included: emergency meetings included in budget, Board can seek supplementary funding if required; change of funding agreement time period from 10 years to 5 years, no changes expected with implementation.

**Motion #1022-11-02-2026** *To approve the 2026-27 budget and work plan as presented*

**Moved:** Janelle Nitsiza  
**Second:** Stu Niven

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #728-11-02-2026 (ED):** To send 2026-27 budget and work plan to CIRNAC.

#### 3.2 Review & Approval of Financial Statement as of 31 December 2025

**Motion #1023-11-02-2026** *To approve the financial statement as of 31 December 2025 as presented*

**Moved:** Stu Niven  
**Second:** Isabelle Duclos

**Motion Approved**

#### 3.3 Review & Approval of Principal Protected Note Purchase

**Motion #1024-11-02-2026** *To approve the purchase of the Principal Protected Note as presented*

**Moved:** Stu Niven  
**Second:** Suzanne Carrière

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #729-11-02-2026 (ED):** To write letter to the Wood Gundy to approve the purchase of the Principal Protected Note.

### 4.0 Operations

#### 4.1 In-Camera Session

**Motion #1025-11-02-2026** *To go in-camera at 12:32 pm*

**Moved:** Janelle Nitsiza  
**Second:** Stu Niven



**Closing Prayer: Joseph Judas**  
**Adjournment: 1:45 p.m. (Motion #1027-11-02-2026)**

Minutes Approved:

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**ORIGINALS SIGNED**

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Chairperson

**May 5, 2026**

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Date