



Wapusk  
National Park

# Wapusk News

The Voice of Wapusk National Park

Issue 7, 2014



*Manitoba Breeding  
Bird Atlas Adventures*



**Commercial Trapping:  
A Foundation of  
Wapusk National Park**



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# Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas Adventures

## A behind-the-scenes account

**Jill Larkin**

Resource Management Officer

Wapusk National Park and  
Manitoba North  
National Historic Sites

Jill Larkin paddling on  
Fletcher Lake, 2013.

Parks Canada

As a resource management officer working in the remote subarctic Wapusk National Park, the 11,475 square-kilometre backcountry is my home away from home. When working in an isolated northern park, it is not out of the ordinary to travel by helicopter in the summer and by snowmobile through whiteouts in the winter, deal with polar bears and swarms of biting mosquitoes and blackflies, and endure temperatures ranging from plus-to-minus 30 degrees Celsius.

During my six year career with Parks Canada, I have done a lot of interesting work, but the *Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas* is like no other project I have ever worked on. The *Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas* is an initiative of many partners and organizations to document the distribution and abundance of all breeding birds throughout Manitoba. Between 2011 and 2013, I lead the logistics planning and was part of the field team on four canoeing and backcountry hiking expeditions in Wapusk National Park. This project has taken me on adventures in every corner of the park and offered me many new challenges.

The Breeding Bird Atlas project was physically demanding, with 14-day canoe trips and 100 kilometre backpacking trips. Sometimes the team worked 12 to 14-hour days, starting at 3:30 a.m.! Before the field season, usually in

“My friends and family thought I was crazy, walking for hours on the outskirts of Churchill with a backpack full of dumbbells, but it paid off.”

March, I would start a physical training regime to get in shape. This involved starting on snowshoes and switching to hiking boots once the snow melted. My friends and family thought I was crazy, walking for hours on the outskirts of Churchill with a backpack full of dumbbells, but it paid off. The benefit was obvious when I hiked my tenth kilometre of the day carrying a 50-pound pack over the

spongy peat plateaus in the interior of the park.

In taking on this project it was necessary for me to gain additional experience coordinating the logistics for canoeing and backpacking expeditions. To plan these trips, I needed to learn more about lightweight tents, sleeping bags, sleeping mats and other gear. Choosing gear to use in Wapusk National Park in June is tricky because the weather can be extremely variable. During the expeditions there were days when the temperatures were above 30 degrees Celsius and the night temperatures went below

freezing. This meant that in the planning process we had to decide if the extra weight of a warmer sleeping bag was worth it.

Knowledge of the different types of commercially-prepared dehydrated and freeze-dried foods was also a necessity. Many hours were spent online comparing the price, weight and number of calories in each meal. On the first trip, we experimented with both pre-packaged meals and homemade dehydrated foods. I much prefer to prepare and eat homemade food and have become an expert in dehydrating fresh fruit, vegetables and meat.

Although the bird surveys are done in June and July, some field work is required in the winter. Prior to the Broad River canoe trip, we had to prepare a cache with food, canoes, paddles, life jackets and other gear, and transport it to the park in the spring by snowmobile. Careful consideration was given to how to pack the gear so it wouldn't get damaged from bumping around in the sleigh on the rugged terrain. The food had to be able to freeze, thaw and not require refrigeration without spoiling.

Bringing out the cache was a pleasant half-day trip. We left from the Broad River camp, travelled upstream, dropped off the cache, had tea and then travelled back to the camp.

Removing the empty cache box the following winter was another story. Mechanical problems with the snowmobiles and bad weather prevented the team from travelling to the cache on three occasions. The fourth attempt started out well, but then the winds picked up and it started snowing, creating a whiteout that forced us to camp out for the night in a trapper's cabin.

The next day, the weather cleared up and we made it to the cache. Once we got on the river, we were in two feet of slush under a blanket of white snow. The snowmobiles kept getting stuck, leaving us soaking wet and exhausted. We decided to travel overland instead of on the river, but on land there were trees and once it got dark, travel was too dangerous. We were 12 kilometres from camp and decided we could not go on, so we dug a hole in a snowbank and

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Parks Canada

2012 Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas crew arriving at Nester 1 after hiking 70 km from the Broad River camp. From left: Jill Larkin, Martin Scott, David Wright, Ken Kingdon, Ryan McDonald, Ken DeSmet.

# Contents

Issue 7, 2014

<i>Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas Adventures:</i> A behind-the-scenes account	<b>2</b>
Superintendent's Update	<b>5</b>
A New Monitoring Plan for Canada's National Parks	<b>6</b>
Good Relations: Parks Canada working with partners	<b>7</b>
Working Together: Parks Canada and researchers discuss increasing cooperation at Wapusk National Park Research and Monitoring Symposium	<b>8</b>
Wapusk National Park Map	<b>9</b>
Wapusk National Park: Awesome!	<b>10</b>
Communicating Research in a Remote National Park to the World	<b>13</b>
Climate Change and the Lakes of Wapusk National Park	<b>15</b>
Commercial Trapping: A foundation of Wapusk National Park	<b>16</b>
Wapusk National Park Leadership Camp Students and Parks Canada Youth Ambassadors—Connect!	<b>18</b>
Word Scramble	<b>18</b>
What's Happening! Programs and Events – 2014	<b>19</b>
Wapusk Management Board Member Awarded the Order of Manitoba	<b>20</b>
The Wapusk Management Board	<b>20</b>



**Wapusk**  
National Park





Photos: Parks Canada

*continued from page 3*

slept the night. In the morning, we got on another tributary of the Broad River and made it safely to camp.

Another challenge was the mosquitoes and sandflies. I have never experienced so many mosquitoes as at Fletcher Lake in June 2013. The buzzing was so loud that it interfered with the bird surveys by drowning out the sound of the birds! At breakfast, to avoid swallowing mouthfuls of mosquitoes, we had to put our bowls of oatmeal inside our bug jackets and pull our arms inside to eat. To add to the bug situation, the temperatures were around 30 degrees Celsius, which made wearing the bug jacket unbearable. There was no shade near our camp and moving the camp into the forest was not a good solution because at least in the open, any chance of wind would keep the mosquitoes down. We dealt with the situation by staying in our tents most of the day after the surveys were done. That being said, I'd still rather be smothered with DEET wearing a bug jacket in the mosquito-infested Fletcher Lake area, than sitting at a computer!

Challenges aside, the *Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas*

**Top left:** Daniel Giesbrecht doing a point count in the Fletcher Lake area, 2013.

**Top right:** Jill Larkin on the Broad River in the spring of 2012 hauling the cache.

**Bottom left:** Taking a break to watch caribou while hiking on the beach ridges between Broad River and Cape Churchill.

**Bottom right:** Christian Artuso, Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator, hiking on a sandy beach ridge in Wapusk National Park between Broad River and Cape Churchill.

expeditions allowed me to experience the diverse landscape of Wapusk National Park in a more intimate way than any other project I have worked on. When hiking along the coast from the Broad River camp up to Cape Churchill, we followed the beach ridges on the historical fur trade route that once connected York Factory with Churchill. These ridges are also a travel corridor for caribou, with which we had some close encounters along our journey. Since the team started the bird surveys at sunrise, which can be as early at 3:30 a.m., this project had me up out of my tent and exploring at a time of day most people I know are still fast asleep. Imagine seeing the sunrise over the tundra every day for two weeks!

I am looking forward to my next challenge in Wapusk National Park, my home away from home! □

# Superintendent's Update

**Marilyn K. Peckett**

Superintendent, Manitoba Field Unit

They say that the only thing that is constant is change. As this edition of the *Wapusk News* is coming together, the Manitoba Field Unit of Parks Canada is in the midst of reflecting on the contributions of Cam Elliott, who held the position of Superintendent of Wapusk National Park and York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Sites for the past 11 years. Cam did not want a big fanfare preceding his retirement, which took place on January 31, 2014, and I have subsequently heard from many of you who were surprised to learn of his departure after-the-fact.

I very much appreciate Cam's contributions, which extended beyond his northerly responsibilities, as part of a large and dedicated team that assists me in my role as a superintendent responsible for managing nine national historic sites and Wapusk National Park. Cam's depth of knowledge of the biological and physical sciences, as well as the geography of the North helped inform our decisions and keep them practical. His collegial approach with researchers and our external partners helped Parks Canada to achieve more than we could by ourselves. He helped make the Churchill office a healthy and productive team, even during times of transition, as was experienced in government across Canada in 2012. In particular, his practical and thoughtful approach to problem-solving was valued by our management team. Cam assures me that he will be back in Churchill from time to time as he and his wife, Diann, truly found this community to be more than just a place to work. With the friendships and lifestyle of Churchill, this place will always remain a second home for them. Cam will be deeply missed, but we wish him and Diann all the best in this new chapter in their lives.

Cam's departure left big shoes to fill in the Manitoba Field Unit. As I stepped in to backfill his position and hire a new superintendent, I learned more about the day-to-day operational needs and staff of the Parks Canada office in Churchill. My time here has helped me to better understand the realities of working in remote communities—how the daily weather and environmental conditions impact deadlines and being “on time and on budget” in operations; how the availability of skilled workers affects when and if something can get repaired; and how people in communities like Churchill rally together to be good citizens supporting good causes. I have seen how our Parks Canada staff are more than just governmental workers in the community—they find real ways to get involved, whether in celebrations like Aurora Winterfest or in serving hot breakfast at the school. I am proud of our Parks Canada team and am



Marilyn K. Peckett




Cam Elliott

personally very thankful for this opportunity to develop a closer relationship with the people and Town of Churchill. Thank you for your warm welcome and generous sharing of your time, stories and skills.

“I am proud of our Parks Canada team and am personally very thankful for this opportunity to develop a closer relationship with the people and Town of Churchill.”

Looking forward, we are moving ahead with the staffing process for a new superintendent. Whoever the successful candidate is, I know that they will enjoy a tremendous opportunity and undertake an important responsibility to guide the staff of Wapusk National Park and York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Sites through some very interesting times and partnerships in the future. This summer, I am excited

about the prospects of hosting a new learning vacation at Prince of Wales Fort. The “Hands On History” public archaeology program takes place in August in partnership with the Churchill Northern Studies Centre. Coming up in the months ahead, please watch for your invitation to share your thoughts during the consultations for a new management plan for Wapusk National Park.

In the meantime, enjoy the variety of articles in this latest edition of *Wapusk News*! 



# A New Monitoring Plan for Canada's National Parks

**Cam Elliott**

Superintendent (retired)

Wapusk National Park

Over the past couple of years the park ecologist, with support from staff in Parks Canada National Office, has been developing an ecological monitoring plan for Wapusk National Park. The purpose of the monitoring plan is to develop and implement a suite of measures that index the relative health of the national park and whether the state of the various park ecosystems are stable, improving or declining. Wapusk National Park is not alone in this effort as all parks in the system are required to develop and implement a monitoring plan.

But why the focus and resources dedicated to monitoring and reporting on the state of our national parks? The reason is found in two sections of the *Canada National Parks Act*. The first section, known as the dedication clause, requires that parks be managed for the long term.

*4. (1) The national parks of Canada are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, subject to this Act and the regulations, and the parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.*

The second section requires that ecological integrity of national parks be maintained.

*8. (2) Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks.*

So while we can use, benefit from and enjoy national parks, we have an obligation to pass them on to future generations unimpaired. Furthermore, it can be interpreted from the second clause that “unimpaired” with respect to ecological integrity means in as good as or better condition than the national parks were in when we received the responsibility for their care and protection.



Cam Elliott

During the development of the ecological monitoring plan, and in the coming years of the plan's implementation, Parks Canada will expend a significant portion of its human and financial resources on the monitoring, maintenance and, in some cases, the restoration of ecological integrity in Wapusk and the other national parks. This investment is to ensure we meet the aspiration stated so clearly in the dedication clause: Our national parks will be passed on unimpaired to future generations of Canadians. □

## Did You Know?

**The area that is now Wapusk National Park was once a travel corridor between Prince of Wales Fort and York Factory, two important Hudson Bay Company trading posts on Hudson Bay.**

Most trips were done by a few men travelling by foot or by dog team. One epic and well-documented journey was that of the second wave of Selkirk Settlers. Pushed from their ancestral lands in Scotland, they embarked on a harrowing two-month ocean crossing only to land in the Churchill area in August 1813, sick with typhus. Following a severe winter spent in makeshift accommodations, 31 men and 20

women undertook a grueling trek from Prince of Wales Fort to York Factory. They departed over the frozen tundra on snowshoes in early April, taking two weeks to walk the 240 kilometres between the trading posts. Next came a difficult 1,000 kilometre river journey that would take them to the Red River settlement near present-day Winnipeg. The settlers arrived just in time to build their homes and plant the crops that would see them through the next winter. This formidable undertaking was one of the great stories of human endurance to come out of the fur trade era, and the trek across the land that is now Wapusk National Park is an important chapter in that story. □



# Good Relations:

## Parks Canada working with partners

**Donna MacKinnon**

Partnering and Engagement Officer  
Manitoba Field Unit

Great things can happen when we work together. By collaborating with partners, Parks Canada is better able deliver its promise to Canadians to continue to be a world leader in the protection and presentation of Canada's national parks and national historic sites.

Wapusk National Park was established in 1996 in the spirit of Parks Canada working with partners in the region and across the continent. Since then, the Wapusk Management Board has provided an important voice for the five key partners in the park—Government of Canada; Province of Manitoba; Town of Churchill; Fox Lake Cree Nation; and York Factory First Nation—to advise Parks Canada on the planning, management and operation of the park.

Over the past several years, Parks Canada has signed formal agreements with several long-standing partners. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is an agreement that expresses a commitment on the part of both parties to continue working together on common interests, and it can lead to more specific joint projects. The Churchill Northern Studies Centre (CNSC) and Parks Canada have signed an MOU to reflect the organizations' joint efforts in research and monitoring and in public education relating to the ecological and cultural resources within and around Wapusk National

Park. Polar Bears International Inc. and Parks Canada have committed to work together to research and monitor polar bears and their habitat within the park, and to collaborate on issues relating to polar bear tourism.

Additionally, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship and Parks Canada, including Wapusk and Riding Mountain National Parks, have signed an MOU agreeing to continue working together on resource management and public education. Finally, Travel Manitoba and Parks Canada have enjoyed a long-term relationship for the promotion of Parks Canada national historic sites and national parks in Manitoba, including both Wapusk and Riding Mountain National Parks, and 2014 will see a renewed commitment to this collaboration with a new agreement.


Specific projects with organizations can be formalized through Partnering Agreements, documents which clearly specify what each organization will contribute to the project. Under such an agreement, participants in the ArcticNet Schools on Tundra program enjoyed hands-on learning opportunities relating to Wapusk National Park and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site.

An exciting project to bring awareness and appreciation for the subarctic-coastal tundra ecosystem and the

wildlife that inhabits the region to the world, through the Internet, has been facilitated by a partnership between Explore and Parks Canada. Webcams have been installed in Wapusk National Park and at Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site, broadcasting live on Explore's website, [explore.org](http://explore.org).

Further to the spirit of telling the stories of Wapusk National Park beyond the Churchill region, the Assiniboine Park Zoo (Journey to Churchill polar bear exhibit) and Parks Canada are collaborating on a summer outreach program—bringing Wapusk National Park to residents and visitors in Winnipeg. Finally, for people who enjoy a hands-on learning experience, the CNSC and Parks Canada are working together to offer a new, exciting public archaeology experience in summer 2014 at Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site, led by Parks Canada archaeologists.

Parks Canada believes in sharing leadership and working with our partners to offer unique, inspiring opportunities for Canadians to discover our treasured places, including Wapusk National Park. Together, we can achieve extraordinary results.

For more information on Parks Canada working with partners in Wapusk National Park, visit [www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/mb/wapusk/partenaires-partners.aspx](http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/mb/wapusk/partenaires-partners.aspx). 



*Churchill Northern Studies Centre, a Parks Canada partner in research and monitoring and public education.*



# Working Together:

## Parks Canada and researchers discuss increasing cooperation at Wapusk National Park Research and Monitoring Symposium

**David Lavallee**

Public Relations and Communications Officer  
Manitoba Field Unit

Understanding Wapusk National Park and its ecology is a challenge. The park is remotely located in Canada's North, and its landscape is deeply complex. And yet, it is these very qualities that make the park so appealing—and important—for research.

For years, Parks Canada has worked closely with scientists and researchers from around the world who come to study the park and the species that live there. This research not only helps Parks Canada to better understand the park's ecology, but contributes to many other important scientific studies and bodies of knowledge.

On January 23 and 24, 2014, a group of scientists and students met with Parks Canada and the Wapusk Management Board at the Wapusk National Park Research and Monitoring Symposium in Winnipeg. The symposium, a forum where research in the park is discussed, planned and presented, has been held approximately every two years since 2008.

At this year's symposium, a major theme for discussion was how Parks Canada and researchers can work together more effectively to not only support research, but to have that research support the park's goals. As part of its conservation mandate, Parks Canada has specific objectives for monitoring various factors that impact the park, such as climate

change, but getting the data is not always easy. One example of scientists and Parks Canada working together is having researchers, who are in the park working on their projects, take some time to gather data on the factors Parks Canada is monitoring.

Dr. Brent Wolfe of Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario is a good example of this kind of collaboration. He leads a team studying lakes in the park. Specifically, they are looking at the impacts and consequences of two stressors on the lakes: climate change and the recent increase in lesser snow goose populations (see article *Climate Change and the Lakes of Wapusk National Park*, p. 15).

Several years ago, Dr. Wolfe and another team were conducting a study in Vuntut National Park in Yukon Territory. This led to Dr. Wolfe's team working closely with Parks Canada staff, who collect water samples and send them to him for analysis. Likewise, Parks Canada hopes that researchers in the field in Wapusk National Park can support its monitoring and data-gathering efforts in similar ways.

Another element discussed was the development of detailed, user-friendly monitoring protocols and an improvement in communications between Parks Canada and researchers. Having consistent guidelines for how information is collected makes it easier to do so. At the same time, improving communication keeps all parties informed on what is going on, and can make the process of overcoming some of the challenges of working in Wapusk National Park—



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**Top:** Parks Canada research and monitoring poster.

**Bottom:** Wapusk National Park Global Explorers high school research team.

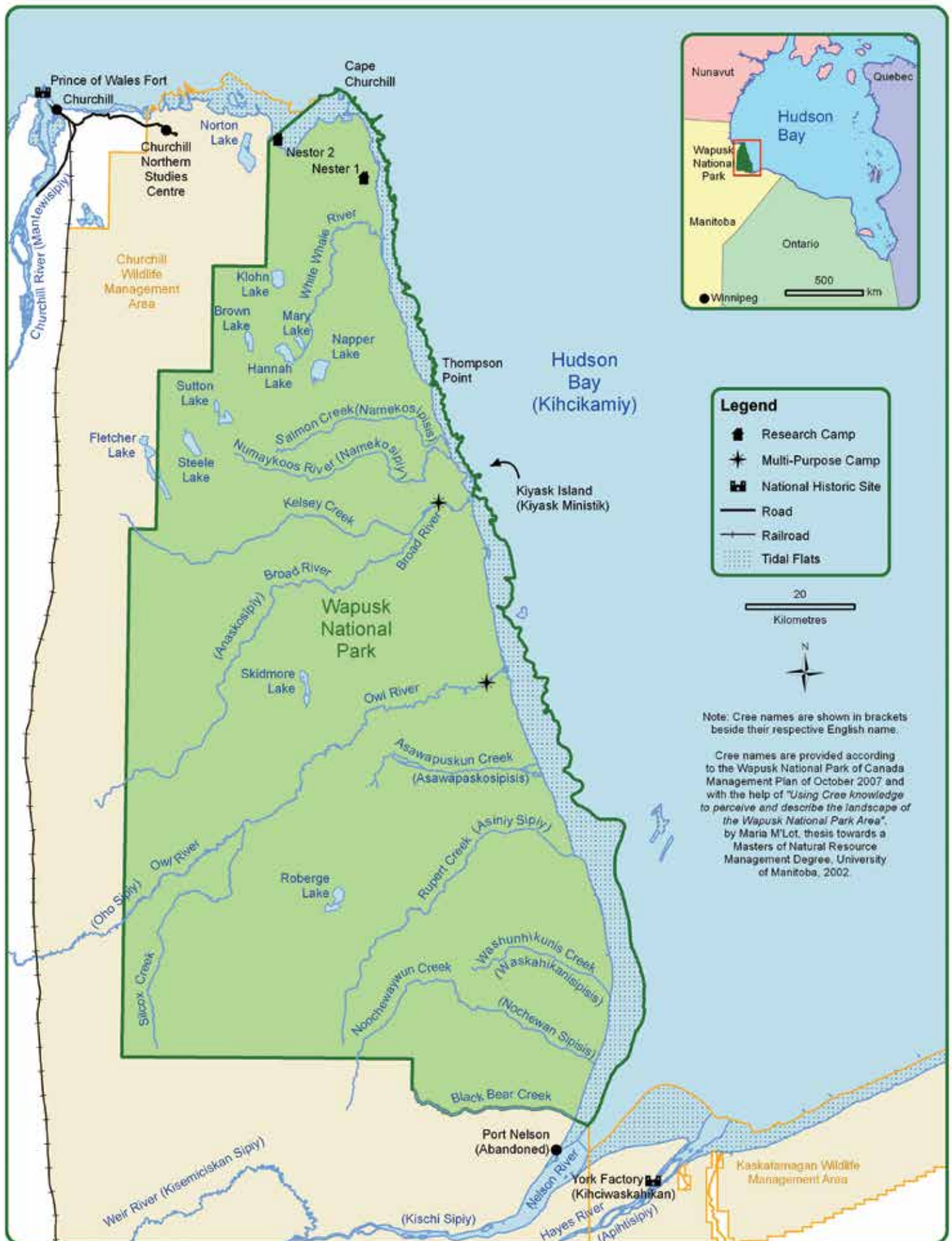
such as logistics—run more smoothly.

Dr. Robert “Rocky” Rockwell of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City has been conducting research on lesser snow geese in Wapusk National Park since 1969. He feels there is plenty of room for Parks Canada and scientists to work together for mutual benefit, and notes that this kind of collaboration has already been going on for some time.

“It basically comes down to combining the ‘purer’ ecology research we do with the practical needs of the park’s managers,” he said. “Once each group knows the needs of the other, we find that each can help the other in resolving them.”

Generally speaking, there was strong support from both researchers and Parks Canada to find ways to work together more closely in Wapusk National Park. While there is much work yet to do, this year's symposium was a step forward in achieving a better understanding of the park and its many fascinating aspects. □







# Wapusk National Park **Awesome!**







① Nestor 2 research camp

② Caribou on the tundra

③ Aerial view – tundra, ponds and Hudson Bay

④ Tower at Cape Churchill

⑤ Beach ridge on Hudson Bay

⑥ Polar bear on the beach ridge

Photos: Parks Canada







7



8

- ⑦ *Snow geese in flight*
- ⑧ *Nester 1 research camp*
- ⑨ *Polar bears at Cape Churchill*

*Photos: Parks Canada*



9



# Communicating Research in a Remote National Park to the World

## Jessica Lankshear

Resource Management Technician  
Wapusk National Park

## David Iles

PhD candidate  
Department of Wildland Resources  
and the Ecology Center  
Utah State University, Logan, Utah

Carrying out research in Wapusk National Park presents many challenges to Parks Canada staff and research partners. Accessing such a remote park requires much advance planning, including the acquisition of supplies, safety and travel logistics. As a result, very few people get to spend time exploring the rugged terrain and wildlife of Wapusk National Park. The majority are researchers who come from far-reaching places, often year-after-year, to study the natural wonders of sub-arctic Canada.

One technological tool that is helping to overcome some of the challenges of

Wapusk National Park's remoteness is the trail camera. Trail cameras are growing in popularity in research and educational outreach in Canada's national parks. They can be triggered by motion or set in a time-lapse mode, capturing hundreds of thousands of images of wildlife, vegetation, ice and much more. Operating year-round, 24 hours a day, the motion-triggered or time-lapse cameras serve as very hard-working research assistants! While the intended purpose of the imagery is for research, the results also provide a means for connecting the hearts and minds of public audiences, to develop a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Wapusk National Park.

David Iles is a PhD student at Utah State University who is using trail cameras to study predators of waterfowl nests in Wapusk National Park. "With earlier break-up of sea ice, polar bears are coming back to shore

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**Above:** David Iles holding eider ducklings.

**Below:** Fisheye view of the camera set-up.







David Iles

Polar bear cub, with mother, eating an adult eider.

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sooner each summer,” said Iles. “They are beginning to overlap with a huge population of nesting waterfowl and we want to know how many nests might get eaten.” If widespread enough, Iles and colleagues believe that polar bear predation could naturally reduce snow goose populations in the park to a sustainable level. By monitoring nests with trail cameras throughout the

summer, the researchers will be able to measure attack rates directly.

In 2013, Iles placed over 60 trail cameras in waterfowl colonies and collected an astounding 1.2 million time-lapse images. “Sorting through the images takes some time, but we’ve already found some gems,” he said. In early June, cameras filmed a female polar bear with a cub entering a colony of common eider ducks. Over the course

of two weeks, the bears ate close to 300 nests; nearly three quarters of the entire colony. “It was amazing to watch,” said Iles. “At first, the bears just stumbled across nests and ate them. But after a few days, they began systematically searching the colony and even managed to catch a few adult ducks!”

Surprising events caught on camera, like the montage of images of the mother and cub, are wonderful ways that staff and researchers can demonstrate atypical behaviour of polar bears and other wildlife to broader audiences. In other words, it is a way that people can experience the wonders of Wapusk National Park without setting a foot in the park.

With the purchase of 37 Reconyx™ trail cameras which will be loaned out to researchers, we can anticipate more extraordinary captures over the coming years and use them to continue to protect and present Wapusk National Park to the world. □

*Parks Canada gratefully acknowledges David Iles and the Hudson Bay Project for the use of the images in this production, and the National Geographic Society, the International Association for Bear Research & Management, the Norcross Wildlife Foundation, and Utah State University for funding the remote camera research.*

## Did You Know?




Polar bear den at Hannah Lake.

Researchers wanted to know how long female polar bears had been using particular denning sites within Wapusk National Park. They examined tree rings in the black spruce trees that grow above and around denning sites. By comparing trees at these denning sites with “control” trees that were located some distance away from the denning sites, they determined that the tree rings told a story about the dens. Polar bear activity would damage the growth of the trees and this damage would show up as anomalies in the tree ring timeline. This information gave researchers detailed information about the specific years that bears were actively denning in that area. In a study sample of 31 dens, they found that some dens showed signs of activity for 29 years, while most were used for about 12 years before they were abandoned. Incredibly, there were den sites that showed signs of activity over a 200 year period. □

Source of Information: Scott, Peter A.; Stirling, I. *Chronology of Terrestrial Den Use by Polar Bears in Western Hudson Bay as Indicated by Tree Growth Anomalies*. Arctic Vol. 55 No. 2, June 2002.

Parks Canada





# Climate Change and the Lakes of Wapusk National Park

## Hilary White

PhD candidate

Department of Geography and  
Environmental Studies

Wilfrid Laurier University

Wapusk National Park, a representative portion of the Hudson Bay Lowlands, has an abundance of shallow lakes. This freshwater landscape is a highly productive northern oasis and provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. However, the very existence of these lakes may become increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.


Since 2010, researchers at Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Waterloo have been conducting a number of studies to determine how the lakes have changed in response to recent warming and what is in store for the future. With the help and guidance of staff from Wapusk National Park, our research group has collected water and sediment samples from approximately 40 lakes that are located from the boreal forest to the coastal tundra regions in the park. A key focus of our research has been to examine both present and past hydrological conditions of the lakes.

To learn how current climate conditions influence the lakes, we use water isotope tracers ( $^{18}\text{O}$ ,  $^2\text{H}$ ) to track the varying influence of snowmelt, rainfall and evaporation. Our results show that there are strong relations among the hydrology of the lakes, meteorological conditions and catchment characteristics. For example, regions of the park with sparse vegetation and flat terrain are most susceptible to lake-level decline following springs of low snowmelt runoff. Notably, several lakes underwent partial or complete “desiccation” or drying during the summers of 2010, 2012 and 2013.

Understanding how lakes have changed over longer periods of time is also important and therefore we use “paleolimnology,” the study of sediments that accumulate at the bottom of lakes. We collected several sediment cores in summer 2013 from lakes that we had observed to desiccate. Analyses of these cores will be used to determine if lake desiccation is a recent outcome of climate change or if this has occurred in the past. Initial findings from one lake show that recently observed drying has not previously occurred over the past 200 years.

**Above:** PhD students Lauren MacDonald and Hilary White collecting sediment cores from a desiccated lake in Wapusk National Park (July 2013).

**Below:** A landscape shot of Wapusk National Park with evidence of widespread lake desiccation (July 2013).

Looking towards the future, we are collaborating with staff from Wapusk National Park to establish a lake monitoring program using the techniques we have developed. This information will help to track the ongoing and increasingly dynamic effects of climate change on lakes in the park. 





Manitoba Archives/Hudson's Bay Company Archives, 1887/363-Y-105/2 (112619)

**Above:** Martin Bovey, "York Factory: Buying White Foxes," 1923.

# COMMERCIAL TRAPPING

## A foundation of Wapusk National Park

**Cam Elliott**

Superintendent (retired)

Wapusk National Park and Manitoba North National Historic Sites

At first, a connection between a national park and commercial wild fur trapping wouldn't seem to make sense. After all, national parks are places where wildlife harvesting is often not allowed.

In Wapusk National Park, however, there is a strong historical connection to trapping, driven by a number of factors. These include geography, competition between European countries to establish and secure shipping routes to the Far East, and popular European fashions of the 17th century and beyond.

Hudson Bay and the lands surrounding its southern basin represent a significant region of the fur trade. Evidence

for this includes the struggle for control of the region by French, English and independent traders and the enduring presence of the Hudson Bay Company. Furs and the promise of financial gain encouraged the establishment of outposts and settlements, but this grew to be much more than just a business enterprise.

Wapusk National Park encompasses the land between two Hudson Bay Company posts at Churchill and York Factory. This small area has more than its fair share of prominence in Canadian history. Directly connected with the fur trade are three national historic sites in the region (York Factory, Prince of Wales Fort and Fort Churchill); five persons of national historic importance (Matonabee, Thanadelthur, Thomas Button, Henry Kelsey and Samuel Hearne); and many other significant and famous people who used the Churchill and York Factory fur trade posts as way points on their journeys (Pierre Radisson, David Thompson, Dr. John Rae and Sir John Franklin, to name a few).

Wapusk National Park was established in 1996 recognising not just the significance of the lands and wildlife of the region but also the "interrelated Aboriginal and European cultural themes." The fur trade is arguably the foundation upon which the relationship between the European and Aboriginal peoples and cultures in the area is based. Wapusk National Park is the area where this relationship began and continues to this day. The significance of






Manitoba Archives, A.V. Thomas Collection 98 (N8172)

trapping is outlined in the park establishment agreement:

*It is the policy of Canada that commercial exploration, extraction or development of natural resources, including commercial fishing, will not be permitted in the National Park, with the sole exception of trapping...*

So, while trapping—profitable to a few business enterprises and providing a modest income for trappers—is of minor economic interest, it rises to national significance in the history of Canada and the relations between Aboriginal peoples of Canada and other Canadians. This relationship, and the trapping on which it began, are cultural pillars on which Wapusk National Park was established. 



Manitoba Archives/Hudson's Bay Company Archives, E.2.2, Folio 12 (N411)

**Top:** A.V. Thomas, "Interior of HBC Store, York Factory," 1910.

**Centre:** James Isham, "Hunting Beaver," watercolour, 1743.

**Bottom:** Trapper's cabin, Thompson Point. Built in 1929 by Cliff Cochrane and Henry Johnson from logs salvaged from a beached barge.



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# Wapusk National Park Leadership Camp Students and Parks Canada Youth Ambassadors – Connect!

**Linda Sutterlin-Duguid**

Public Outreach and Education Officer  
Manitoba Field Unit

Take 14 high school students from nine different Manitoba communities, fly them into Wapusk National Park for a learning experience of a lifetime, and they are bound to capture amazing images and stories. Now, add two young Canadians whose summer job is to connect youth to Parks Canada through social media, and you have a recipe for a great virtual adventure!

That's what happened in July 2013 when Parks Canada held its annual Wapusk National Park Leadership Camp. Before leaving Churchill for Nester 1 research camp deep within the park, the Grade 11 and 12 students were able to connect via telephone with Parks Canada's Youth Ambassadors, Julia Belliveau and Colin Sutherland. Colin and Julia were excited about



Julia Belliveau & Colin Sutherland, Parks Canada Youth Ambassadors 2013.

what was in store for these students and promised to share photos, videos and daily blog entries from the Leadership Camp with their many followers on Facebook and Twitter. As a result, many more people were able to get a taste of Wapusk National Park through the eyes of these enthusiastic young Manitobans.

**Wapusk National Park Leadership Camp: Leaders for Our Planet** offers young Manitobans the opportunity to experience one of Canada's most remote places—Wapusk National Park. Students spend time in Churchill, Manitoba

before flying to the park where they get to experience the natural and cultural wonders this park has to offer. The camp involves developing self-confidence, personal skills and having fun while learning and contributing to current research in the sub-arctic. □

## WORD SCRAMBLE

Need a hint to unravel this word scramble? All of these words could be used when we speak about Wapusk National Park located in Northern Manitoba. Good luck!

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. oaprl eabr  | 10. ucb        |
| 2. spwuka      | 11. crspeu     |
| 3. tdnura      | 12. cseiflakkb |
| 4. rautbscci   | 13. wnossogoe  |
| 5. npaetadl    | 14. soudnh aby |
| 6. elnadt      | 15. gtairapnm  |
| 7. edn         | 16. lwfo       |
| 8. srhma       | 17. rolienewv  |
| 9. mrrerfoatsp | 18. irocabu    |

Answers, page 20



Wapusk National Park Leadership Camp.



# What's Happening! Programs and Events – 2014

*Taking the plunge at the Canada Day Bay Dip*



Parks Canada

## Canada Day Bay Dip

Parks Canada organizes this long-standing, world famous annual event in Churchill. Hardy participants gather on the shores of Hudson Bay, eager to plunge into the frigid waters in a team relay race challenge. Prizes are awarded for the fastest team and best costume.

*Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site*



Parks Canada

## Parks Day – July 19

Join Parks Canada staff for a full day of fun experiences at Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site (weather permitting).

Boat transportation will be provided.



Parks Canada

## Hands On History

### Public archaeology at Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site

Parks Canada is pleased and excited to partner with the Churchill Northern Studies Centre (CNSC) to offer this unique, first-time public archaeology experience at Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site.

As a member of the archaeology team, you will be re-discovering what life was like at the fort. Working side-by-side with Parks Canada archaeologists you will excavate, screen and document discoveries in the field, as well as clean and identify artifacts in a field lab. Participants will travel daily by boat across the Churchill River with beluga whales in pursuit and may get a glimpse or two of a polar bear on Eskimo Point. After an exciting day in the field, everyone will return to the CNSC to participate in lectures on related topics and interact with a dynamic group of scientists who study many natural features of the region.

This program offers two opportunities to participate - July 31, 2014 to August 7, 2014 and August 7, 2014 to August 14, 2014, and can be booked through the CNSC at [www.churchillscience.com](http://www.churchillscience.com).



*Archaeologist Donalee Deck at Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site*

Parks Canada



*Sloop Cove*

Parks Canada

## Sloop Cove Hikes

Take a hike! This summer, join Parks Canada staff for half-day hikes from Sloop Cove to Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site. The hike is a four kilometre trip that begins once you have been dropped off by boat at Sloop Cove and ends at Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site where you will be picked up once again by boat for the return trip to Churchill. Explore Sloop Cove where the Hudson's Bay Company dry-docked their ships and sailors carved their names into the rocks above the cove. Get an up-close look at the tundra and the shoreline ecosystem of the Churchill River estuary. Learn about the

nearly 4,000 years of human history in the Churchill area by visiting some of the many archaeological sites.

Contact SeaNorth Tours at 204-675-2195 or [www.seanorhtours.com](http://www.seanorhtours.com) for times and to book your hike.



*Approaching Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site through fireweed*


Parks Canada



*Parks Canada Visitor Centre, Churchill*

Parks Canada

## The Parks Canada Visitor Centre in Churchill is getting a make-over!

In the spring of 2014 Parks Canada embarked on a project to refresh the exhibits and dioramas in the Visitor Centre. All of the displays that were originally installed in 2002 have now been expertly refurbished. The next exciting development in the planning stages is an exhibit highlighting the world-renowned restoration and archaeology work that has taken place at Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site over the past 12 years. The exhibit will feature artifacts excavated from the fort, and is scheduled to be completed by March 2015. 



*Arctic fox display in Parks Canada Visitor Centre*

Parks Canada

For more information about any of these programs: 204-675-8863 or e-mail: [ManNorth.NHS@pc.gc.ca](mailto:ManNorth.NHS@pc.gc.ca)



## Wapusk Management Board Member Awarded the Order of Manitoba

Tracey Gonçalves: Manitoba Government photographer



His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales presenting the Order of Manitoba to Lorraine Brandon.

Parks Canada congratulates Wapusk Management Board member Lorraine Brandon who was awarded the Order of Manitoba, the province's highest honour, on May 21, 2014 at a Winnipeg ceremony attended by Their Royal Highnesses, The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall. Ms Brandon, curator of Churchill's world-renowned Eskimo Museum, archivist for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay, author and community volunteer was recognized for her devotion to preserving and promoting the culture, heritage and environment of our north.

Parks Canada



Learn more about Wapusk National Park and see past issues of **Wapusk News** online at [www.parkscanada.gc.ca/wapusk](http://www.parkscanada.gc.ca/wapusk)

**Wapusk News** is produced by Parks Canada and the Wapusk Management Board.

## The Wapusk Management Board

The Wapusk Management Board was established in 1996 to consider matters relating to the planning, management and operation of the park, and to make recommendations on these matters to Canada's Environment Minister and Minister responsible for Parks Canada. The ten member board is made up of representatives of Government of Canada; Province of Manitoba; Town of Churchill; Fox Lake Cree Nation; and York Factory First Nation. The work of the Board reflects the philosophy, expressed in the Wapusk Park Establishment Agreement, that people are Keepers of the Land.



# We want to hear from you!

Parks Canada and The Wapusk Management Board would appreciate any comments about this issue of **Wapusk News**, or suggestions for future issues.

Send your feedback to:

Wapusk National Park  
P.O. Box 127  
Churchill, MB R0B 0E0

Telephone: 204-675-8863

You are also invited to bring your comments to the Parks Canada Visitor Centre in Churchill, Manitoba, or send us an e-mail at: [wapusk.np@pc.gc.ca](mailto:wapusk.np@pc.gc.ca)

### WORD SCRAMBLE ANSWERS (from page 18)

- |               |               |                |               |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. polar bear | 6. wetland    | 11. spruce     | 16. wolf      |
| 2. wapusk     | 7. den        | 12. blackflies | 17. wolverine |
| 3. tundra     | 8. marsh      | 13. snow goose | 18. caribou   |
| 4. subarctic  | 9. permafrost | 14. Hudson Bay |               |
| 5. peatland   | 10. cub       | 15. ptarmigan  |               |

Aussi disponible en français

