

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NUNATUKAVUT ENCOURAGES CONTINUED MORATORIUM ON HUNTING OF CARIBOU

HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, LABRADOR, January 7, 2019 – The NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) continues with its community-driven moratorium on the hunting of the George River Caribou Herd (GRCH). The moratorium is a reflection of the important and significant relationship that Southern Inuit have with caribou and how fundamental caribou are to Southern Inuit culture and way of life.

A population census conducted by the Governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec in July 2018 estimated there are only 5,500 caribou in the GRCH, a 38 per cent decline since 2016. The ongoing and rapid decline and the need for Indigenous peoples to exercise their own responsibility for the protection of the caribou led to the establishment of the Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table (UPCART). NCC remains committed to the critical work of UPCART and has recently taken on the role of co-chair. UPCART's ground breaking caribou management strategy called "A Long Time Ago in the Future: Caribou and the People of Ungava" was signed in the fall of 2017. While the strategy includes the development of a sharing agreement to allow for a one per cent limited harvest of the GRCH, NCC is recommending that all hunters refrain from hunting given the latest population estimate. NCC strongly urges the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to also do its part to protect the caribou and has cautioned the Province regarding the permitting of any hunting of this herd.

NCC is also concerned about the Mealy Mountain Caribou Herd (MMCH), whose habitat is located wholly within NunatuKavut. It is currently listed as a threatened species under federal and provincial legislation. A survey of the herd's population estimates were last completed in 2012 and will require another updated population census. That work is set to take place later this year. NCC strongly encourages its people to avoid any harvesting of this herd until there is further information and data to inform management decisions.

Southern Inuit have always had a fundamentally important relationship with caribou, and their protection and conservation is a priority for NCC. NCC's approach has always been one that respects caribou, as well as other Indigenous peoples and their relationship with the caribou.

Quote

"The rapid decline in the caribou population in Labrador is a stark reminder to all who care about the caribou that action must be taken to ensure no further decline. We are, therefore, asking that all NunatuKavut hunters refrain from hunting caribou until we are sure that the herds are healthy and well again. I believe that we have a responsibility as Inuit, as do other Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, to do all we can to help protect the caribou and their habitat. We want our future generations to know about caribou and to always have it be a part of Southern Inuit culture."

- *Todd Russell, President of NCC*

Quick Facts

- The population of the GRCH was estimated at approximately 800,000 about 20 years ago.
- The population of the GRCH was estimated to be 8,900 in 2016 and 5,500 in 2018.
- In 2003, NCC developed its first Caribou Harvesting Plan, as well as interim conservation and safety guidelines for its hunters. In 2012, NCC initiated a voluntary hunting moratorium on the GRCH based on traditional knowledge and science.
- UPCART was established in 2013 to unite all Indigenous groups and Nations in the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula in conserving migratory caribou herds.
- NCC is the representative governing body for approximately 6,000 Inuit of south and central Labrador, collectively known as the Southern Inuit of NunatuKavut.
- NunatuKavut means “Our Ancient Land” in Inuttitut and is the traditional territory of the Southern Inuit.
- In July 2018, NCC entered into talks with the Government of Canada on the recognition of its Indigenous rights and self-determination.

Associated Links

- For further information on NCC, please visit www.nunatukavut.ca. Please also join in the conversation at Facebook.com/nunatukavut and Twitter @nunatukavut.

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