



Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table reaffirm their commitment towards caribou conservation.

Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador and Kawawachikamach, QC, December 10, 2020. The Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table (UPCART) reaffirmed its shared commitment to the conservation and protection of caribou following a meeting of the executive committee in late November.

Ungava Peninsula Caribou populations have been in decline since the 1990s. The George River Herd (GRH) dropped from a peak of 770,000 about 20 years ago to 5,500 in 2018. In 2020, this herd experienced the first increase in more than 25 years, with an estimated count of 8,100 animals. The Leaf River Herd has dropped from 628,000 in 2001 to 181,000 in 2016. While members are encouraged by the positive results observed for the GRH, they nonetheless recognized the critical state of both herds and the difficulties that this is already bringing to our people and to the future for our children.

“The caribou are so deeply important to NunatuKavut Inuit and all of the Indigenous peoples represented at UPCART. We each express our relationship to caribou in our own ways yet we share a common bond in protecting and conserving this important resource for this generation and the generations to come. I am optimistic about the latest increase in the George River Herd and am encouraged by the recommitment from the groups who are part of UPCART. More can be done and more will be done to ensure the health and well-being of the caribou for now and into the future,” said UPCART Co-Chair and NunatuKavut Community Council President Todd Russell.

“In this challenging time, the Naskapi have made great efforts and sacrifices to help protect the George River Herd. We need now to coordinate our action to be more effective and work on capacity to give UPCART the means of achieving its mission and to ensure the survival and viability of caribou herds for our children and grandchildren,” said UPCART Co-chair and Naskapi Chief Noah Swappie.

In 2017, UPCART released their own strategy which is a unique collaboration between seven Indigenous groups (at the time Innu Nation¹ from Labrador was still part of UPCART)

called “A Long Time Ago in the Future: Caribou and the People of Ungava.” It provides high-level strategic direction for caribou management on the Ungava Peninsula in response to critical population declines. The strategy outlines five action plans, which are listed below in priority order:

- 1) Indigenous Sharing Agreement
- 2) Research and Monitoring Plan
- 3) Habitat Management and Environmental Impact Plan
- 4) Stewardship, Education and Communication Plan
- 5) Social and Economic Plan

The UPCART executive committee agreed that the next steps to implement the strategy’s action plan will be to develop a plan for habitat protection and continue discussions on an sharing agreement. In 2018, the Innu Nationⁱ withdrew from UPCART; but a standing invitation has been extended in hopes that they will re-engage in discussion with the UPCART. Finally, the UPCART wish to work on finding ways to take ownership of the management of the herds in an inclusive way.

About the Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table (UPCART)

The UPCART is comprised of the Inuit of Nunavik (represented by Makivik Corporation), the Inuit of Nunatsiavut (represented by the Nunatsiavut Government), the Inuit of NunatuKavut (represented by NunatuKavut Community Council), the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, the Cree Nation Government, and all the Innu communities from the Quebec region. The UPCART mission is defined by “working together in solidarity to preserve caribou and our relationship with them, in respect of all Indigenous cultures, for the well-being of present and future generations.”

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ⁱ Two political organizations represent the Innu. In Quebec, it is «Nation Innue» (9 communities - more than 20,000 people) and in Labrador, it is «Innu Nation» (2 communities - 2,000 people).