

FINAL REPORT
Ft. McPherson Hunter Education
and Cultural Program



Tuesday, September 16 to Friday, September 19, 2008.

Completed by:
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Introduction:

The first fall/winter caribou harvest program was initially implemented in the fall/winter of 1997. Over the last ten years the Department has worked in conjunction with several organizations (PCMB, YTG, GTC, GRRB, community RRCs & HTC's, etc.) to implement similar programs. Our primary goal is to improve hunting practices among young aboriginal hunters that harvest from the Porcupine Caribou Herd and the Bluenose (Cape Bathurst, East and West) Caribou Herd through the Sight In Your Rifle Programs (SIYRP).

Other conservation education objectives are to provide youths from the Inuvik Region communities, an opportunity to learn and experience their culture and language, field-dressing caribou, preparation of caribou meat, bear safety, on-the-land survival skills, animal biology, telemetry, wildlife management, etc.

In the last several years there has been a decline in the caribou population in the North. Since 2005 the GNWT has developed and implemented a five-year NWT Caribou Strategy that also focuses on improving harvesting practices among caribou hunters. As a result we have also incorporated the SIYRP in several of our community trapper training program.

We have implemented several caribou harvest programs in Ft. McPherson and the community itself has implemented several community caribou harvest that focuses on the above goals and objectives. Over the last several years we believe we have seen a decline in caribou wastage as a result of encouraging harvesters to use higher caliber rifles, implementing the SIYRP, reducing wounding caribou and ensuring caribou that are wounded are harvested as per the NWT Wildlife Act.



Implementation:

Daryl C. English, Conservation Education Officer (CEO), consulted with the Tetlit Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council (TG RRC) in late August and assisted in developing the proposal for submission to several agencies for funding. During this time the CEO was requested to assist with the implementation of the ENR Wildlife Check Station along the Dempster Highway.

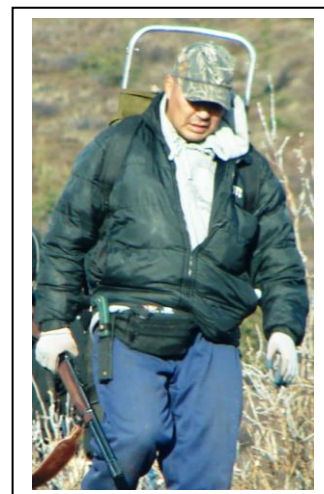
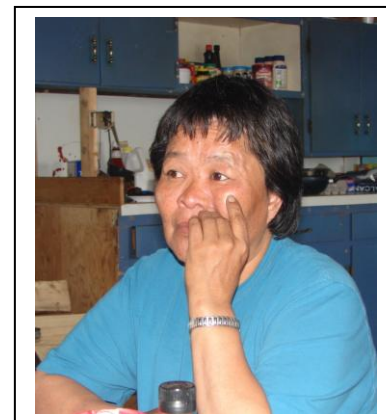
While the CEO was in the community of Ft. McPherson he worked in conjunction with the TG RRC Resource Person Ms. Gina Vaneltsi and the RRO Glen Alexie to organize and implement the program from the ENR Ft. McPherson Area Office. RRO Alexie provided many on-the-land skills that the students enjoyed learning from him.

We hired Mr. Abe Petersen as the Gwich'in Elder/Hunting Instructor for the program. Mr. Petersen is a respected elder from the community and spent many years on the land. His experience and knowledge was very invaluable and was one of the reasons the program was so successful.

Ms. Effie Snowshoe and Ms. Helen Wilson were hired as the cook and cook assistant, respectively. Both ladies have assisted ENR in past conservation education programs and their traditional dishes and presence ensure that the participants were well fed and looked after throughout the program.

We decided to stay at the Midway Lake Music Festival site because of the high numbers of grizzly bears in the Yukon's Rock River Territorial Campground. We contacted the organizers of the Midway Lake kitchen shelter that is used during the festival and we made arrangements to rent the kitchen for \$200 per day. We also made arrangements to rent several tent frames for the program.

Mr. Ernie Francis has been employed with the Department of ENR Forest Management Division (FM) for many years and the CEO has requested Mr. Francis's assistance on several conservation education programs because of his on-the-land skills and traditional knowledge. Mr. Robert James (RJ) Francis was hired as the resource person for the program and assisted all our participants throughout the program, he is known as an excellent hunter.

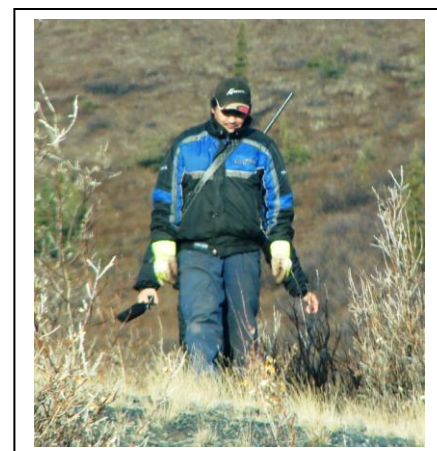


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The program was to take place while the teachers attended a teacher conference in Inuvik. We advertised for students through the vice-principal at the high school and he spoke to each class about this educational program. The TG RRC and our ENR office contacted many youths as well and we received several inquiries from youth that expressed interest in the program.

However, when the time came to transport the youth to Midway Lake site to implement the program we only had two young ladies that showed up. The CEO made several other inquiries later that evening with a few more community members and it was decided that they and several youths would join us the following day.

That evening, at Midway Lake, after we had a delicious supper and we did introduction of all our staff members. We completed orientation with all participants and we watched ENR's 'The Caribou Hunter' on the CEO's laptop computer. Everyone retired early that evening and look forward to a successful caribou harvest the next day.



Sight In Your Rifle Program (SIYRP):

On Wednesday, September 17, we started off with a delicious breakfast and then made preparation to implement the SIYRP. RRO Glen Alexie and CEO Daryl English spoke to the community students and staff about the importance of sighting in your rifle prior to hunting caribou. Each participant was given the opportunity to sight in a rifle and if the opportunity became available they would harvest a caribou.

After lunch we traveled to Rock River on the other side of the NWT/Yukon Border. Between Rock River and Sheep Creek there were several large caribou herds on the east side of the highway (see map below). We waited for the caribou in a small ravine and picked out the large bulls as they approached us. While we field dressed the bulls other caribou continued to approach and we finally harvest five bulls for the first day.



Hunting and Field Dressing Caribou:

After we completed the SIYRP we made preparations to harvest several caribou and teach the students field dressing techniques. The first day we harvested five bull caribou. Even though the young ladies did not harvest any of the caribou, they participated in the hunt and thoroughly seem to enjoy themselves.

There were many grizzly bears in the area and a few hunters in the past couple of weeks lost their caribou to fearless grizzly bears. We were very fortunate that this did not happen to us but we were very aware of the situation and every precaution was taken to prevent a bear encounter and what we would do if we did encounter a bear(s).

All participants assisted in field dressing and hauling the caribou back to the vehicles. We were very happy with the first day results. The last two days we harvested three more caribou.



Budget:

Funding for this proposal was provided by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) 'Take A Kid Trapping Program' (TAKTP), the MacKenzie Gas Project's (MGP) Ms. Grace Blake, Gwich'in Liaison, and the Tetlit Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council.

ITI provided \$5,050 through the TAKTP and the MGP provided \$1,000 through their funding program. The TG RRC provided the remaining funding for the program.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) provided in-kind services such as personnel (CEO Daryl English, RRO Glen Alexie and FM Ernie Francis), three vehicles and the ENR Wildlife Check Station, camping equipment, fuel, etc.

We would like to thank all of the above funding agencies for their generous donations and for assisting us with another successful program.



GB Mother and two cubs not far (2 km) from Rock River Campground two days prior to beginning of program.



Conclusion:

The program was considered successful even though we got off to a slow start with only a few students on the first evening. By the second evening we gained five additional students and on the final evening a few more community members came out to participate in the last day harvest.

We harvested eight caribou and the majority of caribou were bulls or young bulls. The participants took the caribou back to community to share the harvest.

This was the first time we utilized Midway Lake as a camping site. In the past we always stayed at Rock River Territorial Campground, but because of the high numbers of grizzly bears in the area the participants felt safer at the Midway Lake site.



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