

2007 SAMS Caribou Hunt

Rock River, Yukon



Tuesday, October 2nd to Thursday, October 4th

Report completed by:

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Participants:

Jason Dayman – SAM School
Dave Deering – SAM School
Ariana Hauck – SAM School
Andrew Stuhl – SAM School
Daryl English – Department of ENR
Jimmy Kalinek – Department of ENR
Ernie Francis – Department of ENR
Kevin Allen – Department of ENR
Neil Colin – Gwich'in Elder, Ft. McPherson, NT
Ryan Petersen – Fish and Wildlife Stewart from the
Tr'ondëk Hwéch'in First Nation,
Dawson City, Yukon.
Kirby Meister – Conservation Officer from the
Yukon Government, Dawson City.



15 students – a mix of boys (8) and girls (7)

Vehicles:

2 Beaufort Delta Education Council Vehicles
3 Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Vehicles

Description of the Program

The goal of the program was to travel down the Dempster Highway and hunt several caribou to show the students how to skin and prepare caribou. In addition to this, we focused on how the caribou need to be monitored to ensure the future of the herd.

Students were taught about bear safety (Safety in Bear Country DVD), watched a video of how to prepare a caribou (The Caribou Hunters – Dept of ENR) and listened to many interesting presentations while at Rock River. The students spent three days and two nights out at Rock River and learned from a very experienced and knowledgeable elder.



Events while on the Caribou Hunt:

Tuesday, October 2nd:

We left Inuvik and traveled by vehicle to Rock River, Yukon. We stopped in Fort McPherson to eat pizza that we brought with us. We also used this time to gas up.

Once we arrived at Rock River, the students were given a talk about safety with regards to bears and just safety in general by not wandering off. After the talk, the students assisted Jimmy Kalinek and Ernie Francis with setting up the four tents that we had to sleep in. While some students set the tents up others gathered wood from the wood boxes for the fires during the night. Everyone worked together to get this done.



Jimmy, Ryan and Daryl went looking for caribou that evening and the students and the remaining staff under the guidance of Neil Collins went on a walk around Rock River Campground and listened to many stories from Neil about the area and past hunting trips that he has been on in the area. The students really enjoyed this and also enjoyed seeing the old bear tracks and lots of moose tracks.

The students and chaperones from the Fort McPherson caribou hunt also stopped by and visited with the students from Inuvik. Later that evening, the students ate hamburgers for supper and enjoyed many snacks that we had with us. They got everything ready for bed and had a wonderful night sleep.



Wednesday, October 3rd:

We woke up and ate breakfast and prepared for the day. We packed a lunch that we could eat on the road and had a quick visit from Kirby Meister the Yukon's wildlife officer. He told us about a group of caribou that were spotted about 5 kilometres down the road towards Eagle Plains. We quickly packed everything up and got everyone in the trucks and down the road.

Sure enough, there was about 20 caribou spotted and the hunters went after the caribou while the students prepared their orange safety vests if we got anything. The hunters returned and the caribou were too spooked and got away. The rest of the day went by and no more caribou were spotted, but we were fortunate to see an enormous Grizzly Bear walking along the road. The students really enjoyed this.

We traveled to Eagle Plains and put more gas in the trucks and had our lunch just outside of Eagle Plains in a gravel pit. We slowly made our way back to Rock River looking for caribou but did not see any. Once back at Rock River, Kevin Allen, GNWT wildlife officer, came in and talked to the students about the caribou and about why they collar caribou. The students really enjoyed the presentation and there were some good questions around this topic. Kevin did a great job.

In addition, Kirby the wildlife officer from the Yukon came in and talked about careers as a renewable resource officer and answered many questions that the students had about the caribou and the area. The students really enjoyed Kirby's presentation and we thank the Yukon for taking the time to work with our students.

Finally, Neil Colins our Elder came and talked to the students about the history of the area and the perspective of the local Gwich'in people. He incorporated a lot of Gwich'in language, culture and countless stories about hunting, fishing, trapping and just general travel with his family in and around the area. Neil did a superb job teaching the students about the area and how we must protect it for future generations.

After these presentations, the students got themselves ready for bed and assisted with cleaning up after supper.



Thursday, October 4th

The students woke up and cleaned their tents out and took everything down and packed up. They had a big breakfast of bacon and eggs, pancakes, cereal and fruit. We got everything cleaned up and inspected the campground to make sure that nothing was left behind. We were on the road by 10:30 a.m. and headed back to Inuvik.

All in all, the trip was very successful. It was great to once again work with Daryl English, GNWT Conservation Education Officer, and the Department of ENR to have a great trip. The elder was the icing on the cake. He provided many stories and perspectives that were enjoyed by all. The only thing that could have made the trip better would have been to harvest some caribou.

In addition to this, we would like to thank Mike Gravel at ENR Forest Management for the use of the tents, camping equipment and mess kit. Also, the students and staff would like to thank Neil Colins for all his wisdom and stories. Each student completed a journal of their trip. We are hoping to use these as pieces of writing for their schoolwork.

We are glad to have had this opportunity to have our grade six students introduced to this kind of program. These programs would not be possible without everyone assistance who take the time and ensure our students are being educated about the future of our caribou herds and how to properly manage them. We look forward to many more programs like these.

Great job! Mahsi Cho!



How where students selected?

Students had to write an essay about why they should be chosen to take part in the caribou hunt? Also, they had to write about why we need to monitor the herd. We opened it up to all grade 6 students and put all of their names into a hat that completed the assignment and drew names for the 15 spots. We had many great pieces of writing to go with this assignment. Here is one example of the assignment from a student:



"I think I should go to the hunt because I like to study animals and there habits. We should monitor the caribou because if we don't people will hunt too many and caribou will become extinct and other animals will have nothing to eat, then they will die. That is why we have rules like no hunting females, young caribou or leaders. In lots of places caribou are endangered and are protected by other people. There is a danger of not hunting them too, they will over populate and kill other caribou. We have to keep the balance animals like bears and wolves help too. So really there are lots of reasons to monitor caribou. Monitoring caribou helps us monitor bears too, we can watch the bears near the herds. The end."

That was just one example of many of how aware students are of the situation with the caribou in our region and how important it is to watch them. We enjoyed the various pieces of writing that the students did for this assignment.





Funding

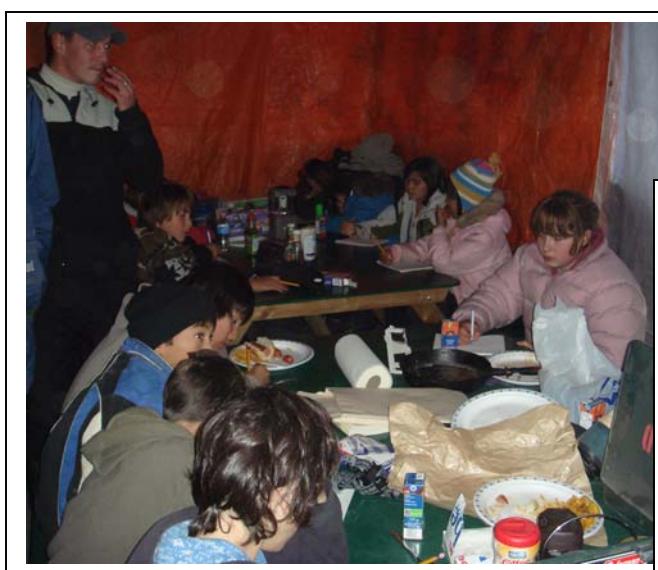
- Inuvik District Education Authority - \$1,800.00
- Take A Kid Trapping (Dept. of ITI, MACA and ENR) - \$750
- Beaufort Delta Education Council – 2 vehicles plus gas and staff
- Environment and Natural Resources – 3 vehicles, gas, plus Jimmy & Ernie
- ENR Forest Management – Mess kits, tarps, chainsaws, axes, shovels and tents
- Plus all the above staff that assisted

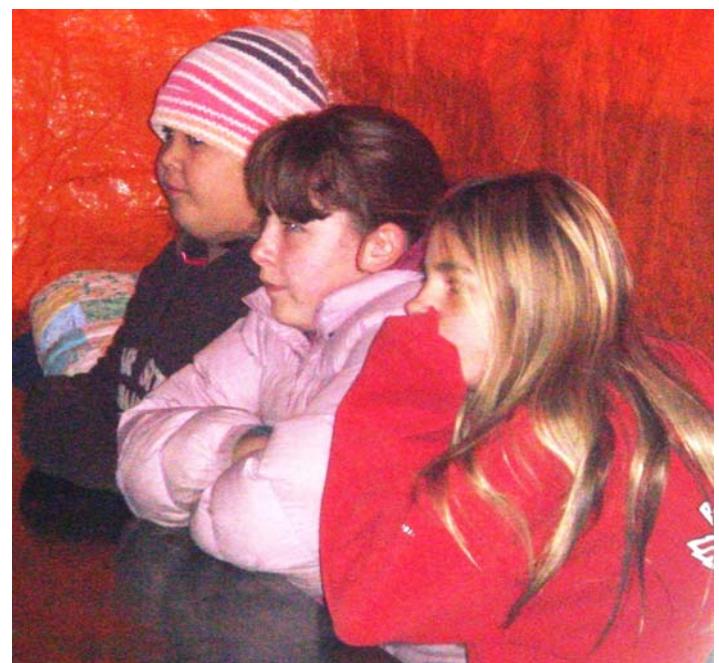
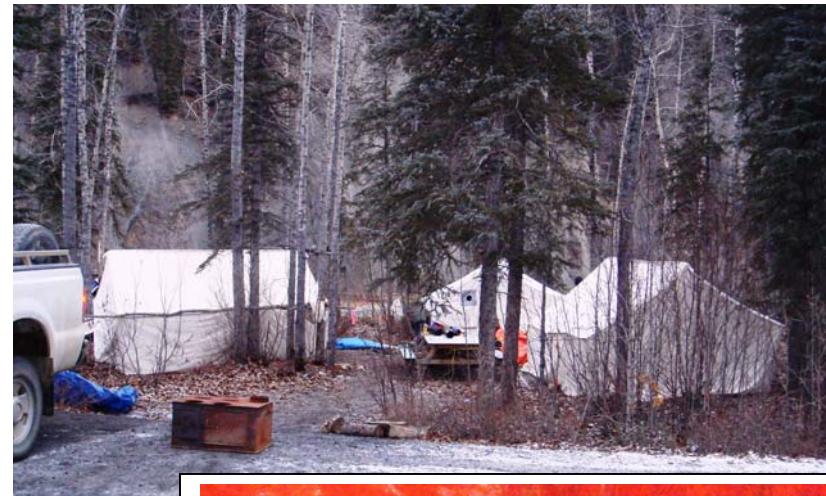
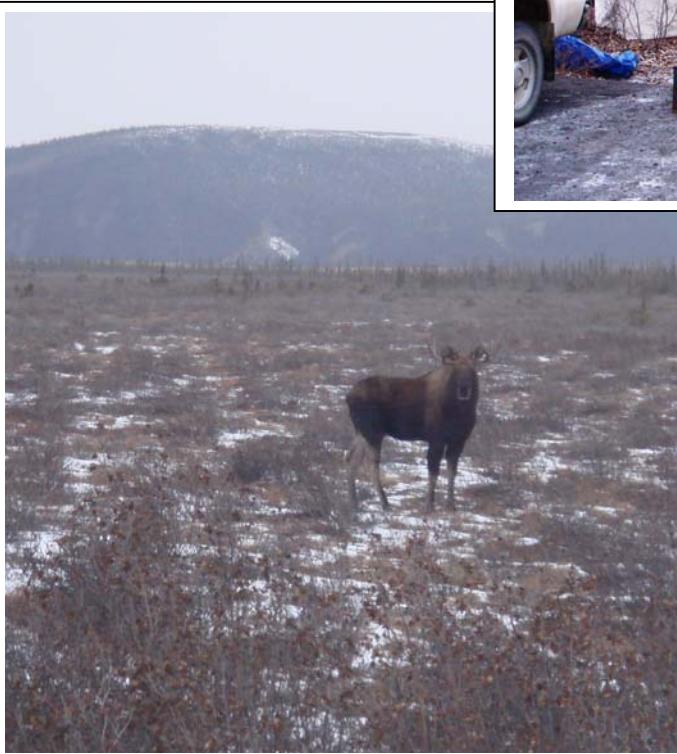
If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Jason Dayman, SAMS Vice - Principal at 777 – 7182.

Thank you.



Other Images:





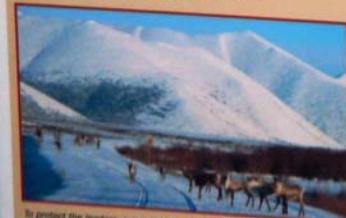
Caribou (Vadzaih)

"When we killed caribou, we gave meat to everyone in the camp. People took care of each other. People still practice this today." (Vuntut Gwitchin Elder Dick Nulon: *The Land Still Speaks*.)

The Porcupine Caribou herd is one of the largest herds of migratory caribou in North America. Scientists have identified a 40-year cycle for caribou populations. The Porcupine Caribou herd population peaked around 1987 and is currently in decline.

Hunting is only one of the factors affecting the herd although caribou remains a staple of the Gwich'in diet. The annual spring and fall migrations provide meat for the whole year. Aboriginal hunting rights are protected in First Nation final land claim agreements and can only be restricted for conservation and public safety reasons.

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation is recognized as a leader with the Gwich'in Nation for their role in protecting the Porcupine Caribou herd calving ground.



To protect the leaders, a moratorium on hunting is called when the caribou start crossing the highway. (Y photo)



Wayne Nagano and his first caribou. (Trondie Hwachin photo)

Knives with caribou antler handles made by Derek Apipusiechak (Wayut Gwitchin photo)

Waste not – want not

Caribou provide a high quality lean meat with more protein per kilogram than beef, pork or poultry. In the spring and fall, the meat is cut into large, flat sections and hung on curing racks over a smoky fire. This dried meat (Nilt Gail) supplies nutrients in a concentrated form. Meat from the rump, neck and leg is roasted and pounded to tenderize, then mixed with melted fat, and sometimes berries, and rolled into balls to make ch'itsuh, a type of pemmican.

The heart, kidneys and liver supply a large range of vitamins and minerals. Eating caribou liver, chewing the soft ends of bones, boiling bones to make soup, or eating tongue, blood and intestines provide a healthy diet. Caribou heads are a delicacy either roasted over an open fire or made into head soup. Bone marrow is extracted, cooked and eaten. Bone grease is rendered out and used as a dip for meat. Even the lungs can be fed to the dogs.

