

NORTH SLAVE MÉTIS ALLIANCE

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February 9th, 2023

Mr. Andrew Nakashuk, Chairperson
Nunavut Planning Commission
P. O. Box 1797
Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0
Via e-mail: submissions@nunavut.ca

Dear Chairperson Nakashuk:

2021 Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan

The Bathurst barren-ground caribou herd has an annual range extending from Bathurst Inlet, Nunavut, where the herd calves, through Northwest Territories to northern Saskatchewan where the herd occupies summer, fall, winter and spring seasonal ranges. Along its migration, Indigenous peoples have practiced a respectful relationship with caribou through a rich body of cultural practices that have sustained the herd for thousands of years.

Over the past two decades, the Bathurst herd has declined drastically from a high of over 470,000 in the mid-1980s to 6,200 estimated in 2021. Indigenous Knowledge tells us that caribou herds cycle naturally, but the drastic decline may have been influenced by recent effects of human development on the range, primarily related to exploration and development activities, diamond mines and roads, and extreme weather events such as drought leading to the fires of 2014 which saw 3.5 million hectares burn in the NWT.

Migratory barren-ground caribou congregate on calving grounds year after year to give birth to their calves. Indigenous knowledge has always told us that the calving grounds are known to be sacred places where caribou should be respectfully left alone. **We recommend that caribou calving grounds in the Nunavut Land Use Plan remain Limited Use Area designation to ensure not only that female caribou and their calves are protected from disturbance, but also that the herd can replenish.**

We have all made major sacrifices to take our traditional roles as stewards and guardians seriously by committing to refraining from harvesting as well as taking the steps necessary to protect important water crossings and land bridges. As you can imagine, this has been very difficult for our people who have historically been so dependent on harvesting caribou for food, clothing, shelter and tools. We appreciate that providing the protection of the calving grounds that we are requesting will also create hardships for your own people, we respect and honour that reality. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Sincerely,

Marc Whitford, VP
North Slave Métis Alliance