



PRESS RELEASE

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The Cree and the Innu continue to strengthen their relations to protect caribou populations as they sign the renewal of the *Traditional Mutual Understanding on the Harvest of Caribou* for the year 2023

Chisasibi, Eeyou Istchee, December 16, 2022 – Following a successful implementation of the *Traditional Mutual Understanding on the Harvest of Caribou in Cree Traditional Territory of Chisasibi, Eeyou Istchee*, the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee, the Cree Nation of Chisasibi and the Innu Nation in Quebec are pleased to announce the renewal of this Understanding for the year 2023.

The **MAAMUU NISITUHTIMUWIN / MATINUEU-MASHINAIKAN ATIK^U EUAUINAKANIT** which translates to " Mutual Understanding / Mutual Understanding on sharing of Caribou" was first signed on January 24, 2022 after years of efforts and collaboration between both Nations to find solutions enabling Innu communities in Québec to access caribou within the Cree traditional territory of Chisasibi.

In February 2022, following the signature of the Understanding, the hunt by the Innu communities was accomplished through close coordination between representatives of our Nations. The implementation of the Understanding was successfully achieved thanks to the expert knowledge, guidance and wisdom of the tallymen and land users involved who provided great support throughout the hunt, and to the Innu hunters who shared their cultural ways and knowledge and demonstrated great respect as guests in Cree traditional land.

"I am amazed by the experience last year and can confidently say that it was a successful implementation of our Understanding. The caribou harvest by the Innu last winter would not have been possible without the wisdom, knowledge and guidance of our elders and tallymen, and I wish to specifically acknowledge the great support and involvement of John Pachanos and his family who have welcomed the Innu hunters in his family hunting territory. I also wish to express my appreciation to the Innu for the amazing work they have done on the planning of this event and ensuring the respect of the Understanding. As we pursue our journey again this year, we will reaffirm the core principles of sharing, sustainable harvest, and respect for the caribou, and continue to honor the traditional customs and values of our ancestors." – Chief Daisy House, Cree Nation of Chisasibi.

This winter, the Cree Nation of Chisasibi will be welcoming again the Innu communities to access the caribou in the territory of Chisasibi as of January 9th, 2023, until March 1st, 2023.

This hunt will be undertaken under the same terms of the Understanding as concluded last year, and as such it is important to emphasize that both the Cree and Innu Nations will only be accepting the community caribou hunting groups authorized through the procedure of the Understanding which include an official permission issued by letter of consent from the Chisasibi local authority.

Marked as a historic moment between the Nations, the signing of this Understanding honored and strengthened the teachings of our ancestors on the sacred values of sharing and respect for the caribou (atik^u). Through this Understanding our Nations have agreed to pursue common objectives to protect the herds in critical state such as the George River Herd, and boreal caribou herds, to ensure a sustainable harvest from the Leaf River Herd and to preserve our cultural ties with the animal.

'We are pleased to highlight the success of last years' experience and to be able to continue to strengthen our relation between our nations and with the caribou. The sharing of this resource is carried out in a manner that is sustainable and respectful of our traditions and the health of the herds. We are thankful for the guidance of land users and tallymen who continue to be essential to this process.' - Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty, Cree Nation Government.

Caribou is a central part of the Nations' culture, health and identity, and since the critical decline of the George River caribou population, access to this animal by the Innu people has been greatly impacted. The Understanding establishes a framework inspired by our traditional customs, values and practices which will enable the Innu to access caribou from the Leaf River herd during the winter migration within the traditional territory of Chisasibi. It also includes terms and procedures respecting the Cree traditional governance system and the interests and concerns of our respective Nations while prioritizing the health and sustainability of caribou.

"We are very proud that our collaboration with the Cree Nation continues. It is a priority to maintain the thousand years old relationship between the Innu people and the caribou (atik^u). The hunting and responsible use of caribou are central to our culture. They allow for encounters and knowledge sharing between our elders and the youth of our communities. The preservation of our relationship with the caribou goes hand in hand with the preservation of our culture. This agreement also demonstrates the ability and willingness of Indigenous governments to work together in a Nation-to-Nation relationship and we reiterate our appreciation to the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee and the Cree Nation of Chisasibi," declared Chief Mike McKenzie, spokesperson for the nine (9) Innu communities in Quebec and Chief of Uashat Mak Mani-utenam.

Key Elements

The ***Maamuu nisituhtimuwin/ Matineue-mashinaikan atik^u euauinakanit*** establishes mutually agreed upon terms by which Innu communities in Québec will be able to access caribou within the Cree traditional territory of Chisasibi, Eeyou Istchee.

The Understanding establishes an authorization procedure whereby only community caribou hunting groups who have received consent letters will be accepted by both the Cree and Innu Nations. This procedure also includes terms respecting the stewardship role of the tallymen concerned.

Other measures include terms with respect to;

- The hunting area defined on the Cree traditional territory (Chisasibi);
- A total allowable harvest limit of 300 caribou for the winter season of 2023 to be shared amongst the nine Innu communities;
- The obligation to be accompanied by a Cree person determined by the Chisasibi local authority or concerned tallyman;

- The respect of traditional customs and values so as to ensure the utmost respect for the animals, the environment and the safety and security of individuals;
- The purpose of the caribou harvest which shall be for ritualistic, cultural, educational, communal and sustenance purposes and not for the purpose of sales or any act that may be for the purpose of monetary profit;
- The animal whereby in accordance with traditional customs and values, all parts of the harvested animal shall be used; no wastage shall be left behind; no unnecessary or prolonged chasing of the animal will be accepted,
- The security and safety of hunters and individuals including the use of proper firearms;
- Prior authorization for use of camps, except for emergency purposes and in such case must be reported;
- The reporting of harvesting activities.

Background

In 2013, several Indigenous nations gathered to create the Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table (UPCART) and developed a strategy for the conservation of Ungava Caribou. This strategy entitled A Long time Ago in the Future: Caribou and the People of Ungava was released in 2017 and identified several priority actions including actions to determine how a limited sustainable harvest can be shared amongst Indigenous Nations in times of scarcity. The Traditional Mutual Understanding on the Harvest of Caribou in Cree Traditional Territory of Chisasibi, Eeyou Istchee between the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee, the Cree Nation of Chisasibi and the Innu Nation in Quebec is a part of the accomplishments towards priority actions identified under the UPCART Caribou strategy.

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