



PRESS RELEASE

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The leaders of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee and the Innu Nation in Quebec continue on a journey of collaboration for sustainable management, cultural resilience, and economic strengthening

Chisasibi, January 12, 2024 – In a summit meeting in the Cree community of Chisasibi on January 9th and 10th, leaders of the Cree Nation and the Innu Nation reiterated their commitment to the values of sharing and mutual support for the third consecutive year. They renewed the Common Understanding of Nation-to-Nation on Atiku (caribou). This Understanding allows the Innu Nation in Quebec to hunt 50 caribou from the Leaf River herd for food security on the traditional territory of the Cree in Chisasibi. The harvest has been limited to 50 this year to ensure resource preservation and to alleviate the potential impacts of the 2023 forest fires on the herd. Although this number may seem modest, it reflects our continued commitment to maintaining relationships based on mutual respect, good faith, and collaboration. These 50 caribou hold particular significance which will be prioritized for elders and contributing to knowledge-sharing with the younger generation.

Both Nations acknowledge that the vulnerability of caribou could be exacerbated by the adverse effects on their habitats resulting from the devastating forest fires of 2023. In response to these challenges, recommendations are made to mitigate the impact on caribou populations by reducing the number of harvested individuals. This proactive measure aims to minimize additional stress on the caribou population and facilitate their adaptation to the changing environment.

"Following the 2023 forest fires, our community continues to mourn profound losses affecting our community, land, and caribou. As we embark on the path to recovery, we seek acknowledgment and understanding of the challenges we face. Recognizing the vital role of caribou for the Innu, we commit to maintaining our relationship based on trust and cooperation for the recovery and well-being of the caribou population. The recommendation from our tallymen [Kiniwhapmakinch] emphasizes the importance of giving a voice to the caribou. With empathy and unity, we must offer the caribou the opportunity to recover and adapt, especially amid growing climate challenges," stated Chief Daisy House of the Cree community of Chisasibi.

Additionally, discussions regarding the Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table (UPCART) took place among the leaders present. In 2017, UPCART member nations including the Innu, the Cree, Naskapi, and Inuit, have initiated discussion to implement a management strategy for the caribou herds of the George River and Leaf River.

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"The Common Understanding represents a continuation of the expression of our relationships and aligns with the goals pursued by UPCART. We have committed to reactivating the work that was interrupted in 2018, and we will convene the Table." said Chief Mike McKenzie of the Innu community of Uashat Mak Mani-utenam, who leads the caribou dossier for the Innu Nation.

Leaders expressed a positive assessment of the meeting, and a commitment to sign a Cree-Innu memorandum of understanding has been submitted for chief's analysis.

"A political Nation-to-Nation protocol to strengthen our relations reflects what we have always been, two sovereign nations on our territories. As our ancestors have always done and taught us, we demonstrate our values of mutual aid, sharing, and respect, and we intend to affirm it through this historic protocol," concluded Chief McKenzie.

"We are pleased with the ongoing continuation of our relationship through the avenues outlined in this MOU, recognizing it as an exemplary model for building stronger ties. This MOU, as a catalyst for ongoing dialogue and cooperation, reaffirms our commitment to fostering a resilient and enduring relationship built on mutual understanding and shared goals." Stated Mandy Gull-Masty, Grand Chief of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee.

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For information:

Cree Nation of Chisasibi

Deputy Chief Mark Wadden

markwadden@chisasibi.ca

Innu Nation in Quebec

Chief Mike McKenzie

Spokesperson on Caribou for Nation

Innu

Interview requests: Serge Ashini Goupil

Email: ashinigoupil@me.com

Cree Nation Government

Tina Petawabano

Director of Federal and Indigenous Relations

Email: tina.petawabano@cngov.ca