

SOUTHERN LAKES CARIBOU

NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2026



For more than three decades, the Southern Lakes Caribou Recovery Program has brought communities together, working for caribou.

In 2025, the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee completed the Southern Lakes Caribou Relationship Plan, a keystone in the recovery effort.

The occasion was marked by a celebration at the inaugural Annual Gathering in Carcross, Yukon on June 4–5, 2025. Leadership representatives from each of the nine governments were on hand to endorse the Relationship Plan.



The Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee
Photo: Andrew Serack



The signing ceremony at the annual gathering
Photo: Andrew Serack

The Relationship Plan

- Emphasises relationship with the land, animals, and each other
- Tells the story of the Caribou Recovery Program over 30-plus years
- Uses traditional stories and the words of Elders and knowledge holders to give context for the plan and its recommendations
- Uses the seasons to present recommendations from the caribou's perspective
- Implementation will be coordinated by the Steering Committee, including a review of the Plan in 2030



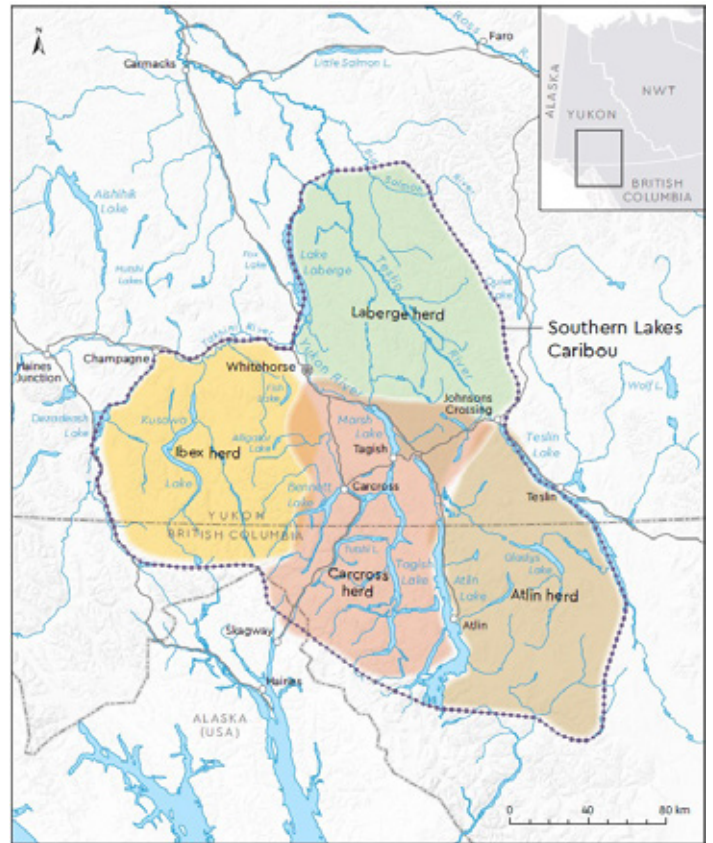
“ Today is a day of celebration and reflection. I want to recognize the launch of the Southern Lakes Caribou Relationship Plan, a landmark achievement grounded in respect, cooperation, and a shared vision.

NILS CLARKE,
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

HERD STATUS

The herds grew substantially in the decade between 2008 and 2018, with population surveys in 2018/2019 roughly estimating a doubling of the herd size over that time, matching local observations of herd growth over the same period. However, not all herds grew at the same rate.

The Ibex and Atlin herds are currently larger than the Carcross and Laberge herds. Composition surveys have shown low numbers of calves since the last population survey, and herd growth has likely stabilized or declined, especially for the Laberge and Ibex herds which have had the lowest calf numbers.



The ArcGIS StoryMap

View the Southern Lakes Caribou ArcGIS StoryMap site to view caribou range and highway collision maps, collaring program information and more.



CARIBOU-VEHICLE COLLISIONS

Caribou-vehicle collisions continue to have an impact on the Carcross, Laberge, and Atlin herds.

Minimum known losses from vehicle collisions:

- Winter 2024/2025 – 7 caribou
- 10-year Average – 7.5 caribou

Report vehicle collisions:

- Yukon – TIPP line – 1-800-661-0525
- BC – RAPP line – 1-877-952-7277



KWANLIN DÜN CULTURAL HUNT

In 2025, following the recommendations of the Relationship Plan, Kwanlin Dün hosted a cultural caribou hunt, bringing together experienced hunters and youth out on the land. The hunt was carried out to:

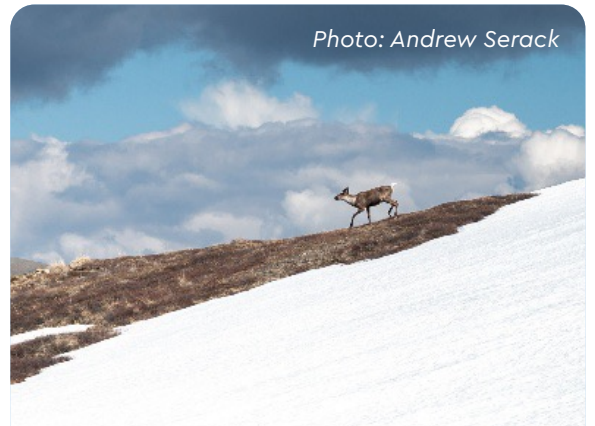
- Celebrate and honour the recovery of the Southern Lakes caribou populations, recognizing decades of conservation leadership.
- Transfer cultural knowledge and skills to youth, reconnecting them to traditional harvesting practices following more than three decades of restricted hunting

The hunt was successful, and all aspects of the animal were respectfully utilized, reinforcing traditional values of stewardship and gratitude.

The Cultural Caribou Hunt honours more than 30 years of conservation stewardship while restoring direct cultural practice for a new generation. The initiative fosters intergenerational knowledge transfer, strengthens youth identity, and reinforces KDFN's long-standing commitment to respectful land stewardship.

All Southern Lakes First Nations ask their members to continue to respect the voluntary hunting moratorium while the cultural hunt is being implemented.

Photo: Andrew Serack



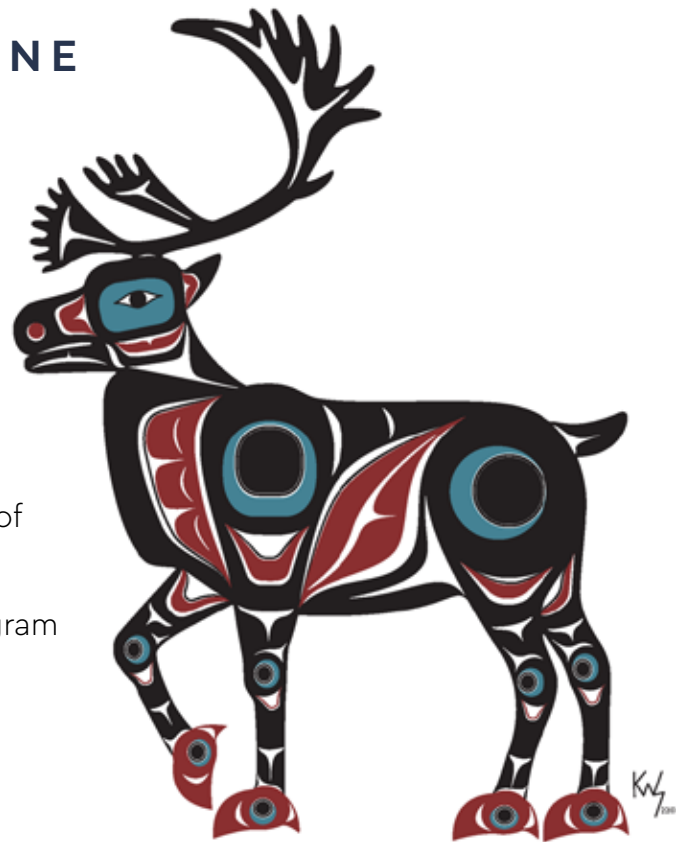
2026 Plans and Priorities

- Promote the Caribou in the Schools program
- Continue to build the cultural hunt program
- Develop range assessments for the herds
- Host the next Annual Gathering in June 2026
- 2026 monitoring programs:
 - Composition surveys for Carcross, Ibex, and Laberge
 - Ground-based monitoring
 - Maintenance of GPS collars



CARIBOU RECOVERY TIMELINE

- 1993:** Southern Lakes Caribou Recovery Program and First Nation voluntary hunting moratorium initiated
- 1994:** Southern Lakes Game Guardian Program starts, Wildlife Hotline opens
- 1996:** Clean-up of old telegraph and barbed wire begins
- 1997:** Signs go up at Judas Creek to warn drivers of caribou on the roads
- 1998:** Southern Lakes Caribou in the Schools Program first enters schools
- 2008:** Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee begins its mandate
- 2012:** Regional assessment of wildlife in Southern Lakes and associated recommendation completed
- 2018:** Southern Lakes Caribou planning process begins
- 2023:** Caribou in the Schools Program updated
- 2025:** Southern Lakes Caribou Relationship Plan approved



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee would like to acknowledge and thank all the people who have contributed their efforts and knowledge to make the Recovery Program so successful over the years, including, Elders, knowledge holders, youth, Guardians, leaders, teachers, the public, and Steering Committee members and support staff past and present.

GET IN TOUCH

**Southern Lakes Caribou
Steering Committee**

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