



July 2018: Caribou Patrol

A look back at how this all got started...



The Aseniwuche Winewak Nation of Canada (AWN) in Grande Cache, Alberta initiated the Caribou Patrol Program in 2012, with assistance from the Foothills Landscape Management Forum (FLMF). AWN formed a dynamic partnership with the Government of Canada, Government of Alberta, FLMF and fRI Research in this collaborative project that contributes to recovery efforts for woodland caribou and advocates for this iconic at-risk species.

For decades, AWN has witnessed the decline of woodland caribou and struggled to follow the advice of their

Elders who said, “We must speak for those that have no voice”. Despite lobbying government and industry for increased habitat protection, AWN was unable to affect any real change that deterred further extirpation of local caribou herds.

The Caribou Patrol Program provides AWN a conduit to share traditional ecological knowledge and to demonstrate AWN’s core value of *Protection and Preservation of the Environment* in a hands-on, meaningful way out on the land.

Caribou Patrol work in two worlds; the traditional Aboriginal world, using knowledge passed down through generations to observe animal behavior, and the modern world, using cutting-edge technology to create electronic records and populate GIS databases.

“This project meant keeping wildlife protected, and speaking for nature and animals that need a voice in their time of need... [The Caribou Patrol] makes a person feel like they are actually making a difference.”

~ Cheyenne Delorme, former Caribou Patrol Crew Member



Environmental benefits of the Caribou Patrol Program:

- reducing the potential of vehicle collisions with woodland caribou on area roadways through periodic patrols;
- increasing the awareness of caribou management through education and outreach for three specific audiences: the public, industry and students/school groups; and
- collecting data on wildlife sightings to improve knowledge of local caribou herds and other species.

Patrolling and Outreach complement each other. Caribou Patrol crews safely divert caribou from roadways and the patrollers' presence reminds us of the uncertain future of caribou. Social media is the catalyst of making the plight of caribou personal for everyone. School presentations have inspired a new generation of environmentally-conscious individuals and presentations to industry and the general public encourage people to have a compassionate understanding of the importance of species protection and preservation. The rapid encroachment of development, urbanization, and climate change are creating pressures on the environment unknown to previous generations. It is critical that people from all walks of life work together to create and implement solutions to maintain a healthy landscape that is inclusive of all values.

"... It is only through collaboration and community engagement that we will retain caribou in Alberta into the future. The Caribou Patrol have demonstrated their commitment to caribou conservation and collaboration through their work in the field (patrols), with public engagement, and with members of the scientific community (participation in scientific conferences, workshops and meetings). In addition, as a research scientist I have had the pleasure to collaborate with the Caribou Patrol on projects related to caribou health and caribou forage in west-central Alberta. Working closely with the Caribou Patrol on empirical research not only demonstrates the continued commitment of the Caribou Patrol to caribou conservation, but also demonstrates the complementary knowledge that can be gained when we use science and aboriginal traditional knowledge together. The Caribou Patrol are valued partners in caribou conservation efforts in Alberta."

Dr. Laura Finnegan, PhD CBiol, Lead Researcher, fRI Research Caribou Program

Education & Outreach

A significant achievement of the Caribou Patrol is the involvement of the public in this grassroots movement, as evidenced by use of both the Caribou Patrol website and engagement on social media.

www.cariboupatrol.ca



- 10,000+ page views
- 650+ EduKit views



- 7,270+ printed EduKit booklets have been distributed
- 74 presentations have been given
- Information display booths at 9 public events/festivals and 4 regional Tourist Information Centres
- 1,970+ wildlife sightings have been recorded

