



Caribou Monitoring Project for Alberta First Nations

With support from the Government of Canada's [Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk](#) (Species at Risk Stream), the Alberta First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group ([TSAG](#)) undertook a three-year Boreal Caribou monitoring project from 2013–2014 to 2015–2016 to contribute to caribou recovery efforts and build capacity within First Nations groups to conduct Caribou monitoring projects.

WHY THIS PROJECT IS IMPORTANT

The [Boreal population of Caribou](#) (*Rangifer tarandus*) ranges across northern Alberta, where vast amounts of land act as important critical habitat for these species. Listed as Threatened under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), Boreal Caribou are at risk from habitat destruction and fragmentation, hunting and predation. Caribou are central to the culture, spirituality, and subsistence lifestyles of many Indigenous communities. Four First Nations were involved in this project: Dene Tha' First Nation, Trout Lake First Nation, Loon River First Nation, and Whitefish Lake First Nation (Atikameg).

WHAT WAS DONE

TSAG held community training sessions for participants to learn about SARA, caribou ecology and threats, and monitoring techniques. Some sessions were indoors and others were outside where participants identified caribou scat, tracks, and the lichen that caribou eat. Participants learned about the design and the techniques used for environmental monitoring and data collection. Elders and other knowledge holders shared their oral histories and experiences with Boreal Caribou, and provided teachings to promote Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) transfer. School students were encouraged to attend the training sessions through partnering schools. The four First Nations each set up winter transects and learned how to survey for scat, tracks, and lichen to monitor the Boreal population of Caribou.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THIS PROJECT

- Trained 195 participants in monitoring techniques for the development of the Boreal Caribou monitoring program. Training included information about SARA, current threats to Boreal Caribou populations, the basics of environmental monitoring, scat and lichen identification, and tracking.



▲ Boreal Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*)

- Through partnerships with local schools, six youth engagement and knowledge-transfer events were held to share and document Elder ATK on Caribou populations.
- Promoted careers in science and technology for youth through hands-on training activities related to SARA and Boreal Caribou monitoring programs.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROJECT

TSAG helped four First Nations communities in Alberta gain the skills and knowledge to monitor Boreal Caribou on their traditional lands.

INVESTMENT: 2013–2014 TO 2015–2016	
Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk Funds:	\$92,000
Partner Support Leveraged:	\$24,350
TOTAL:	\$116,350