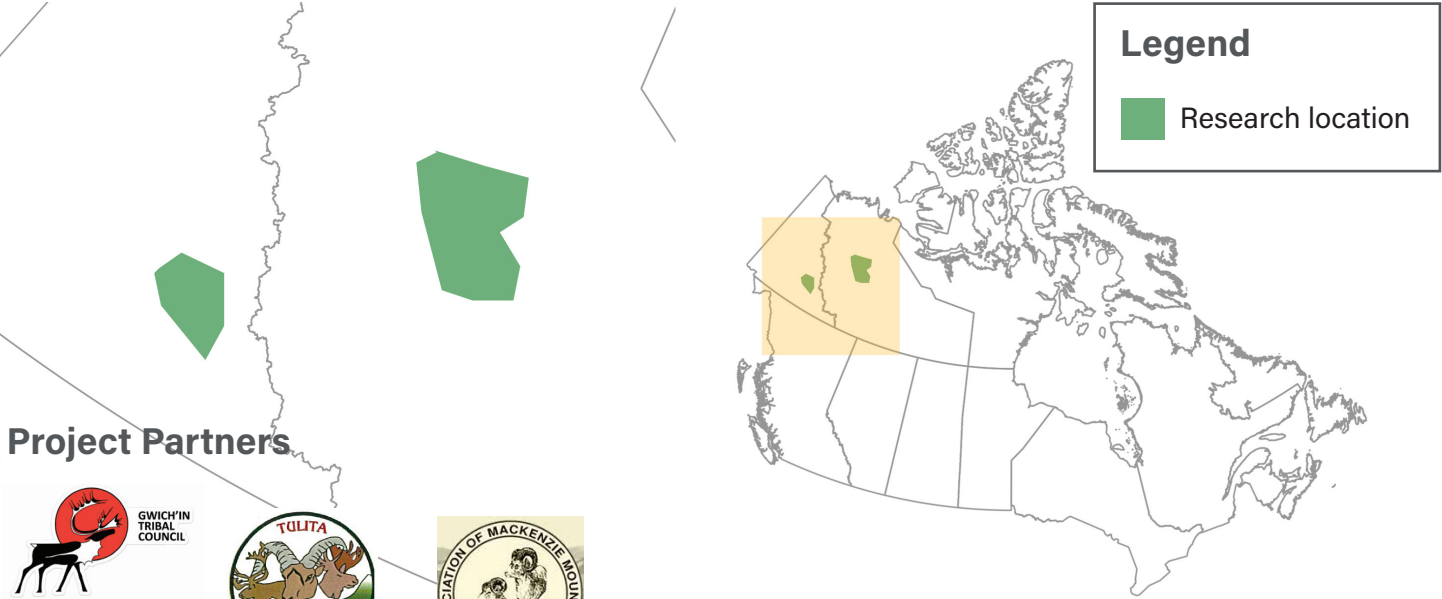


RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

Níó Nę P'ęneǵ – Trails of the mountain caribou: renewing Indigenous relationships in conservation

This research was needed to understand the relationship between Indigenous well-being and caribou conservation in the Níó Nę P'ęneǵ area of the Mackenzie Mountains, which spans the Sahtú Region in the Northwest Territories and Ross River Dena traditional territory in Yukon. For the Mountain Dene/Dena communities of Tulít'a, Norman Wells, and Tu Łidlini, Níó Nę P'ęneǵ is a vital part of their culture and sustenance, serving as a gathering place for people and caribou for countless generations. However, with increasing pressures on the caribou population and their habitat, there was a pressing need to develop a comprehensive plan for research, monitoring, and land protection to ensure the continuity of Dene traditions and culture in harmony with caribou.

<p>Principal Investigators: Leon Andrew & Catarina Owen, Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB)</p> <p>Trainees: Naokah Bailes, Jessie Yakeleya, Kimberleigh Schultz, Cory Fournier, Blair Kennedy, Jasmine Plummer, Alyssa Bougie, Manisha Singh, Ben Dosu, Jonathan Yakeleya</p>	<p>Collaborators: Frederick J Andrew, Rhea McDonald, Norman Barichello, Tracey Williams, Frank Andrew, Micheline Manseau, Tavis Molnar, Adam Bathe, Jennifer Throop, Sharon Snowshoe, Daniel Jackson, Dawna Hope, Nadine Gauvin, Jonathan Tsetso, Craig Walter, Heather Sayine-Crawford, Lindsay Norwegian</p>
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Project Partners



Nío Nę P'ęnę – Trails of the mountain caribou: renewing Indigenous relationships in conservation

Objectives

The goal of this Indigenous-led program is to conduct research that explores the intricate relationship between Indigenous wellbeing and caribou conservation in the Mackenzie Mountains. The partnering communities of Tulít'a, Norman Wells, and Tu Łidlini recognize the Nío Nę P'ęnę area as a vital part of their cultural heritage, as it holds immense significance in sustaining their language, ways of life, and laws. The project seeks to ensure the preservation of Indigenous culture, reinforce Indigenous wellbeing, safeguard caribou populations, and serve as an exemplary model for the harmonious coexistence of Indigenous communities and the natural environment.

Research Plan

The program team integrated Indigenous methodologies and scientific inquiry, with Indigenous community participants leading all research phases—design, implementation, analysis, knowledge dissemination, and mobilization. While some technical aspects occurred outside communities, a learning approach empowered Indigenous members to conduct the work, aided by appropriate support. Methods included focus groups, interviews, community-based mapping, modeling, genetic sampling, and collecting samples, along with ground-truthing landscape data through remote sensing.

Key Outcomes & Impact

Through this research, a wealth of evidence was gathered about the biocultural significance of the Nío Nę P'ęnę area. The study provided insights into the intricate connections between Indigenous well-being, caribou conservation, and habitat protection. It deepened the understanding of how the land, caribou, and Indigenous ways of life are interwoven, emphasizing the importance of preserving this delicate balance.

The knowledge gained from this research should have a significant impact. It will serve as a foundation for the establishment of Indigenous-led Guardian and land protection initiatives in the region. By combining traditional Indigenous knowledge with scientific research, the research outcomes will contribute to a framework for caribou conservation and habitat protection that is rooted in Indigenous stewardship. This will not only ensure the continuity of Dene culture, language, and law but also set a standard for similar initiatives across Canada. The findings will also inform policy decisions, fostering collaboration between Indigenous communities, governments, and ENGOs to work towards sustainable caribou populations and the preservation of Indigenous ways of life. Ultimately, this research aims to safeguard the Nío Nę P'ęnę area and its significance for current and future generations.



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