



T̓SILHQOT̓'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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Media Release
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T̓silhqot̓'in Nation Alarmed by Crashing Mountain Caribou Populations in the Chilcotin

Williams Lake, BC: The T̓silhqot̓'in Nation is alarmed by the crashing Mountain caribou populations in the Chilcotin. All three caribou populations in the Chilcotin have been on the decline since 2003.

The Rainbow caribou herd was estimated to have 40 caribou remaining in 2016. The Charlotte Alplands caribou herd is believed to have already disappeared. The largest herd, the Itcha-Ilgachuz herd, had a population estimate of 2,800 caribou in 2003. This summer the Itcha-Ilgachuz herd is estimated to have 385 caribou, a decline of 86% in 16 years (meaning only 14% of the caribou still remain). At this rate the Itcha-Ilgachuz herd will disappear from the Chilcotin within the next 7 years.

Canada's *Species at Risk Act* lists the Southern Mountain caribou (which includes the Chilcotin herds) as a Threatened Species. The province of British Columbia lists these same caribou as blue, which indicates that BC considers Southern Mountain caribou as a Special Concern. Currently, there is no endangered species legislation in BC, and therefore the Chilcotin caribou are not protected by the Province of BC, which allows for threats to the caribou to continue.

Given the dire circumstances of caribou, the T̓silhqot̓'in National Government (TNG) reached out to propose a formal partnership with the province of BC on herd management where TNG would have been a leading partner. The BC Government declined the request and therefore, the TNG has decided to undertake a caribou herd management plan of our own to address this crisis and will be looking to our neighbors for support.

Quotes:

Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chair, T̓silhqot̓'in National Government:

"Our caribou are in crisis right now. I was shocked to hear the population numbers for caribou are so low. It's serious, and a threat to our people. The T̓silhqot̓'in have declared a state of local emergency over the salmon crisis, have put restrictions on hunting over the moose crisis and now the caribou are in crisis. Historically, our people relied on caribou as a traditional food source so the continued mismanagement of all these species is just a full assault on our people's way of life. We aren't going to sit around and allow the province to continue to mismanage these caribou herds into extinction. We have reached out to BC to be a leading partner on managing these herds and they are not open to it, even though they are clearly failing. We want to take the lead on this and we know we have to get involved so the T̓silhqot̓'in National Government will be initiating our own herd management program to do our best to save these herds"

Nits'il?in (Chief) Otis Guichon, T?ideldel First Nations Government:

“The province’s approach to managing the caribou herds has failed us. They are too reactive. We need to be proactive about how we manage these caribou herds. This crisis greatly impacts my community of T?ideldel since caribou have always been in our backyard here. I’m disheartened by the province’s decision to not see the value in a formal partnership with our people. T?ilhqot’in are stewards of the land, we offer a different perspective having lived off of it for centuries. Our people will work with our team at the T?ilhqot’in National Government with the goal to replenish the caribou.”

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