

# COMMUNITY-BASED MUSKOX AND CARIBOU HEALTH MONITORING

ACTIVITY UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2023

## DOLPHIN AND UNION CARIBOU: TRENDS IN ABUNDANCE AND DISTRIBUTION



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### PARTNERS



Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association



Olokhaktomiut Hunters and Trappers Committee



Ekaluktutiak Hunters and Trappers Organization



Government of Nunavut



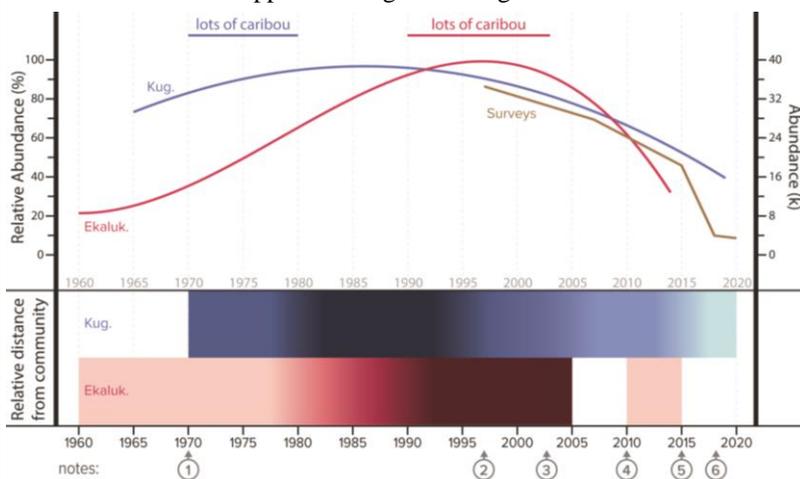
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### WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The Dolphin and Union (DU) herd are caribou who are smaller and whiter than Barren-ground but larger and darker than Peary caribou. They generally spend winter on the mainland and summer on Victoria Island. In 2020, the survey estimated there were only ~3,815 caribou left, a significant drop from 1997 when there were ~34,558. We held interviews with harvesters in Kugluktuk from 2018-2020 to learn about caribou abundance, locations, and health. Afterwards, we put together the abundance and distribution results that were available from various interviews and surveys.

### WHAT ARE WE FINDING?

We found that the different information sources reported different findings. We think this is because communities and researchers interact with caribou at different times of the year in different parts of their range. In practice, this means that we must understand study findings according to the community context and study design. We also found that the various data sources suggested the general DU caribou abundance increased since around the 1990s and decreased after approximately the 2000s. The abundance decrease happened alongside a range contraction.



Trends in relative abundance and distance from community. The darker the colour on the bar, the closer caribou are to the community.

- Notes:
- 1) Sighting near Umingmaktok
  - 2) High density E of Ekaluktutiak (survey)
  - 3) Decline in numbers near Kugluktuk (interviews)
  - 4) Decline in numbers near Ekaluktutiak (interviews)
  - 5) Lower density in E range (survey)
  - 6) Lower density in N and E range (collar data and survey)

### WHY DOES THIS WORK MATTER?

This work shows how Traditional knowledge, surveys, and collar data can work together to teach us about the DU caribou herd. This information provides co-management with the tools needed to uphold their responsibilities outlined in land claims agreements, thus creating opportunities to center Inuit knowledge in policy recommendations that directly affect Inuit life.

# THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO MAKE OUR RESEARCH IN THE ARCTIC POSSIBLE

For over 10 years the Kutz Research Group, the communities of Ulukhaktok, Kugluktuk and Cambridge Bay (Ekaluktutiak), the Government of Nunavut, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and Canada North Outfitting, have been partnering to investigate and monitor wildlife health on Victoria Island and the adjacent mainland. The results presented here are a direct result of this program. We thank all our collaborators and funders who have supported this specific research and our broader caribou and muskox health research program. Please contact Susan Kutz [skutz@ucalgary.ca](mailto:skutz@ucalgary.ca) if you have any questions about this program.



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