

SOUTHERN LAKES GAME GUARDIAN PROGRAM

FINAL REPORT

CARCROSS/TAGISH FIRST NATION

March 2009



Ted Hall and Art Johns 1

Title: **Southern Lakes Game Guardian Program**

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Abstract: This project constitutes the third year of the wildlife monitoring program for the southern lakes area of Yukon. Caribou monitoring, designed to help recover the caribou herds of the area, was the initial incentive, back in the 1990's. Since then, we have expanded the goals of the program to include all wildlife data collection and harvesting observations. CTFN will soon have in place its own Wildlife Act. This program is the precursor to a wildlife monitoring program that will extend into the future indefinitely.

Project Objectives: - To monitor wildlife populations, their movements and status, as well as any hunting, trapping and fishing activity in CTFN's traditional territory, and to especially monitor and investigate any such activity taking place on Category A lands. Another objective is to collect and record data relating to the above activities, ecological or environmental changes, and unusual sightings.

Project Activities:

Teams of two were sent out on designated routes (twelve routes were established), allocated randomly. One team may take out the ATV's on a trailer pulled by a pick-up in order to go off road, while the other team uses a RAV for road patrols. Satellite and cell phones were provided as well as cameras, GPS units, binocular cameras, reporting sheets and clip boards, and other supplies, all neatly carried in a special case. Completed report sheets are regularly handed in by the monitors to the department, for processing.

Fourteen hundred and sixty-four hours of monitoring were completed. Newspaper articles were published about our program, and the status of moose populations in the Southern Lakes region.

Our activity on the land made the people out there aware of our program. They met our game guardians and had mostly friendly conversations with them about the project and the conservation of our big game.

Often the game guardians have observed what appears to be illegal hunting, or hunting without the First Nation's permission on Category A land. Some wounded animals have been observed. Any observations of wildlife occurrences or behavior have been recorded. Now that we have a trained Deputy Conservation Officer, we can do a little more in the way of enforcement.

CTFN advertised in the Yukon News (from October 1 till October 13), thanking hunters for their cooperation with our game guardians, and promoting the monitoring program. Subsequent to several inflammatory articles in the Yukon News concerning the decline in moose numbers in the Southern Lakes area, CTFN officials met with the reporter and editor involved, and invited the reporter and his photographer to go out on patrol with our monitors. This resulted in a front page photo of two of our monitors on Friday, October 17th, with a full page article on page 3, outlining their activities relating to species and habitat protection.

This ensures that the public reading the Yukon News is well aware of the program. This, in itself, may serve as a strong deterrent to illegal hunting and over harvesting. The newspaper articles, both positive and negative, really made the general public aware of what we are trying to do. The last article, with a photo of our game guardians on the front page, was exceptionally effective in getting our message out. These were unexpected results, and in the long run, quite beneficial.

The effects of the program can already be seen, in that many people have commented on the program, indicating a heightened level of awareness amongst the general public. Hunters know that the game guardians are out on the land. We will see this hunting season, just how much impact our program has had on the public, when our guardians and conservation officers report how much poaching has been witnessed in our Traditional Territory. This week, an article will go into the Yukon News, thanking the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust for its support for the game guardian program.

The hunting survey got wrapped into a general survey being done by our governance department to all CTFN members. The data is not yet available.

We spent a lot more hours monitoring than would have been covered by this funding alone. The cost of the monitoring for 1464 hours was \$34090 in wages, \$3200.00 for gas for road vehicles, and approximately another \$300.00 for ATV's and skidoos. The administrative costs came to \$3840.00, (see budget sheet). This work spans July 2008 until March 1, 2009.

Communications: Our results will be reported in our next newsletter, which goes out to our citizens, all PO boxes in Carcross (210) all other Yukon First Nations, as well as CYFN.

The Enhancement Trust is thanked in the CTFN newsletter and in the March article in the Yukon News.

Applicant Suggestions: Ongoing monitoring is necessary in order to discourage poaching, and encourage communication with the public. Our game guardians are able to report back what changes they see on the land. This information can be crucial, especially with respect to climate change.

CTFN will be looking for ongoing funding in order to continue to carry out this responsibility.

The Enhancement Trust's staff has been friendly, courteous and helpful. Thank you.

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EXPENDITURE CATEGORIES	ITEM	ACTUAL COST	
Capital Expenses	equipment	200	
Wages	1464 hours \$23.28 per hour	34090	
Administration	120 hours PM	3840	
Travel	gas	3500	
TOTAL		41630	