

Kenia Pike  
Inuglak School in Whale Cove, Nunavut.  
P.O. Box 169, Whale Cove, Nunavut X0C0J0.

## **Respectful Caribou Hunting**

**By: Kenia Pike**

Caribou have been one of the main staples in the Inuit culture for thousands of years, and still is today. It has played a major role in the social, political, economical, and some might argue the religious life of the Inuit culture. Since the Europeans came to Nunavut, they have introduced the Inuit to a newer way of living. These changes have not only threatened the importance of the caribou in the life of the Inuit, but also its very existence in the Arctic. So why has the caribou population dwindled so much?

The coming of the Europeans not only brought a new life style for the Inuit, but also attracted miners to the once quiet land. With miners digging up the land, the caribou's habitat has been interrupted. The caribou have changed their migratory path, hence hunters have had to travel much further out for a successful hunt. If mining is necessary, then we have to use methods that have the least impact on the ecological system. After all, the caribou is a necessary staple in the Inuit culture especially with food being so expensive.

Mining isn't the only threat to the caribou's habitat. Global warming has caused a major threat to population of caribou. With all the snow melting faster, caribou are walking in cold, muddy water for days. This can cause sores on the caribou's legs. Untreated sores can lead to deadly diseases, which has even more of an impact on the population of caribou. With this in mind, we all have a responsibility to our planet to take care of it and hopefully stop global warming.

For centuries Inuit have hunted with respect for the animal that they hunted, but that tradition has seemed to be lost. Today humans seem to be driven by greed, which has not only affected the population of humans, but of caribou too. Inuit ancestors never complained about their catch. They were grateful for what they caught. They never took more than they needed and they shared what they had. Today's youth are sometimes impatient as they sometimes chase caribou on snowmobile. This practice is wrong because it can also cause them to go further away. Our elders also believe that this practice affects the quality of the meat. We hunt caribou and we should also care about them.

As discussed earlier, the respectful practice of hunting the caribou has preserved the entire Inuit people and their culture for centuries. The lack of respect for the caribou itself, and the value of respectful hunting practices has threatened the

caribou population. This situation is all man-made. Unfortunately, like most other human made ills to our environment and world, this comes out of greed and envy, and needs major social and political changes to reverse. However, the fortunate part of this dilemma, is that the respectful practice of hunting the caribou exercised by the Inuit for centuries can be revived. This will take strong, and effective legal and political will and practices in order to protect the caribou and their environment.