



Vuntut

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

2010



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June 2010

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Vuntut National Park of Canada
Management Plan

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Top left: LEILA SUMI LEADS A BEAR-AWARE ACTIVITY WITH OLD CROW STUDENTS. Parks Canada/J. Peter

Top centre: VAN TAT/OLD CROW FLATS. Parks Canada/J. Peter

Top right: Parks Canada/J. Peter

Foreword



Canada's national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas offer Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast unique opportunities to experience and understand our wonderful country. They are places of learning, recreation and inspiration where Canadians can connect with our past and appreciate the natural, cultural and social forces that shaped Canada.

From our smallest national park to our most visited national historic site to our largest national marine conservation area, each of these places offers Canadians and visitors several experiential opportunities to enjoy Canada's historic and natural heritage. These places of beauty, wonder and learning are valued by Canadians - they are part of our past, our present and our future.

Our Government's goal is to ensure that Canadians form a lasting connection to this heritage and that our protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations.

We see a future in which these special places will further Canadians' appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of Canada, the economic well-being of communities, and the vitality of our society.

Our Government's vision is to build a culture of heritage conservation in Canada by offering Canadians exceptional opportunities to experience our natural and cultural heritage.

These values form the foundation of the new management plan for Vuntut National Park of Canada. I offer my appreciation to the many thoughtful Canadians who helped to develop this plan, particularly to our dedicated team from Parks Canada, our cooperative management partners the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, and to all those local organizations and individuals who have demonstrated their good will, hard work, spirit of co-operation and extraordinary sense of stewardship.

In this same spirit of partnership and responsibility, I am pleased to approve the Vuntut National Park of Canada Management Plan.

Jim Prentice
Minister of the Environment

Recommendations

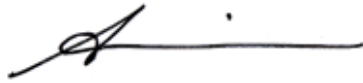
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Executive Summary

Parks Canada is responsible for administering a world-renowned system of national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas. Parks Canada's goal is to ensure that Canadians have a strong sense of connection through meaningful experiences to these protected places and that these places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations. This management plan provides strategic direction for achieving that goal for Vuntut National Park of Canada.

Vuntut National Park was established in 1995 as part of the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*, to conserve, protect and present to Canadians a portion of the North Yukon Natural Region, to recognize Vuntut Gwitchin history and culture and to protect the traditional and current use of the park by the Vuntut Gwitchin. Together, Parks Canada, the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council cooperatively manage the park. The park's values for protection and celebration include: the northern third of Old Crow Flats, a wetland of international significance; portions of the Porcupine Caribou Herd's spring and fall migration range; the ongoing interdependence of the Vuntut Gwitchin and the land; caribou fences and other archaeological sites; and internationally significant palaeontological sites along the Old Crow River.

The management plan was developed by staff and cooperative management partners, with stakeholder and public involvement. It integrates the three elements of Parks Canada's mandate – the protection of heritage resources, the facilitation of visitor experiences and the provision of public outreach education – into a new park vision

and four key strategies. The eleven objectives and fifty-three actions identified in this management plan were developed to improve and monitor the state of Vuntut National Park, achieve the park vision and contribute to Parks Canada's corporate performance expectations.

The following summarizes the four key strategies of this management plan. These strategies address the needs and opportunities of the park and focus efforts and resources towards achieving the park vision.

Experiencing Vuntut Gwitchin Country focuses on providing opportunities to learn about and experience Vuntut National Park, Vuntut Gwitchin history and Vuntut Gwitchin culture. Tourism capacity in the community of Old Crow will be increased through the Vuntut Gwitchin Government's leadership and Parks Canada's assistance, ultimately supporting a range of visitor experiences in the park. The newly developed John Tizya Centre is a focal point for interpretive and outreach efforts for the park and functions as a gateway to Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory, including Vuntut National Park. Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government will work together to expand the interpretive offer at the John Tizya Centre and ensure that it remains a vibrant place of learning for both Old Crow visitors and locals. Increasing Canadian's awareness of Vuntut National Park well beyond its boundaries through public education and outreach is a key part of this strategy.

Looking After the Land and the Animals for the Future focuses on maintaining and improving the ecological integrity of the park. Emphasis will be placed on completing

the ecological integrity monitoring program and improving the incorporation of Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Knowledge. The condition of the park's tundra ecosystem is the highest priority for improvement during this management plan as there was insufficient information to rate this ecosystem in the 2009 State of the Park Report, and the condition and trend of one of the measures, the Porcupine Caribou Herd, were rated as poor and declining. The continuation of established relationships with, for example, the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, Yukon Environment, Canadian Wildlife Service, and various universities, and the building of new ones, are integral to running a comprehensive monitoring program in this remote northern park.

Living and Teaching a Traditional Lifestyle supports the continuance of a strong traditional Vuntut Gwitchin lifestyle, with Elders passing teachings to youth both in the community and out on the land. Vuntut National Park is located within a major cultural and subsistence area of the Vuntut Gwitchin. While the majority of this strategy will be led by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Parks Canada's support is fundamental to its success. Vuntut Gwitchin rights within the park are recognized, protected, understood and supported by park staff, visitors and other Canadians. Parks Canada, with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, will provide land-based experiential learning opportunities such as culture and science camps, for Elders, youth, researchers and staff. These opportunities will bring Traditional Knowledge and science together; assist the Vuntut Gwitchin to carry on traditional activities in their Traditional Territory and foster environmental stewardship.

Your Past Shapes Your Future honours the enduring human presence in Vuntut National Park by protecting and presenting its cultural resources. A Cultural Resource Management Strategy and a Cultural Resource Values Statement will be developed to guide cultural resource management work in the park.

Outreach programs such as a curriculum-linked on-line educational resource based on a caribou fence interactive program will be developed. The Old Crow Basin has the greatest concentration of Pleistocene vertebrate fauna in Canada and possibly North America and Parks Canada will work with the Yukon government and Vuntut Gwitchin Government to develop a strategy for the management of palaeontological resources.

Vuntut National Park depends on the cooperation and support of many partners, stakeholders, the non-profit sector and others to achieve the park vision. Vuntut National Park will continue to work on building and maintaining relationships with these groups and individuals.

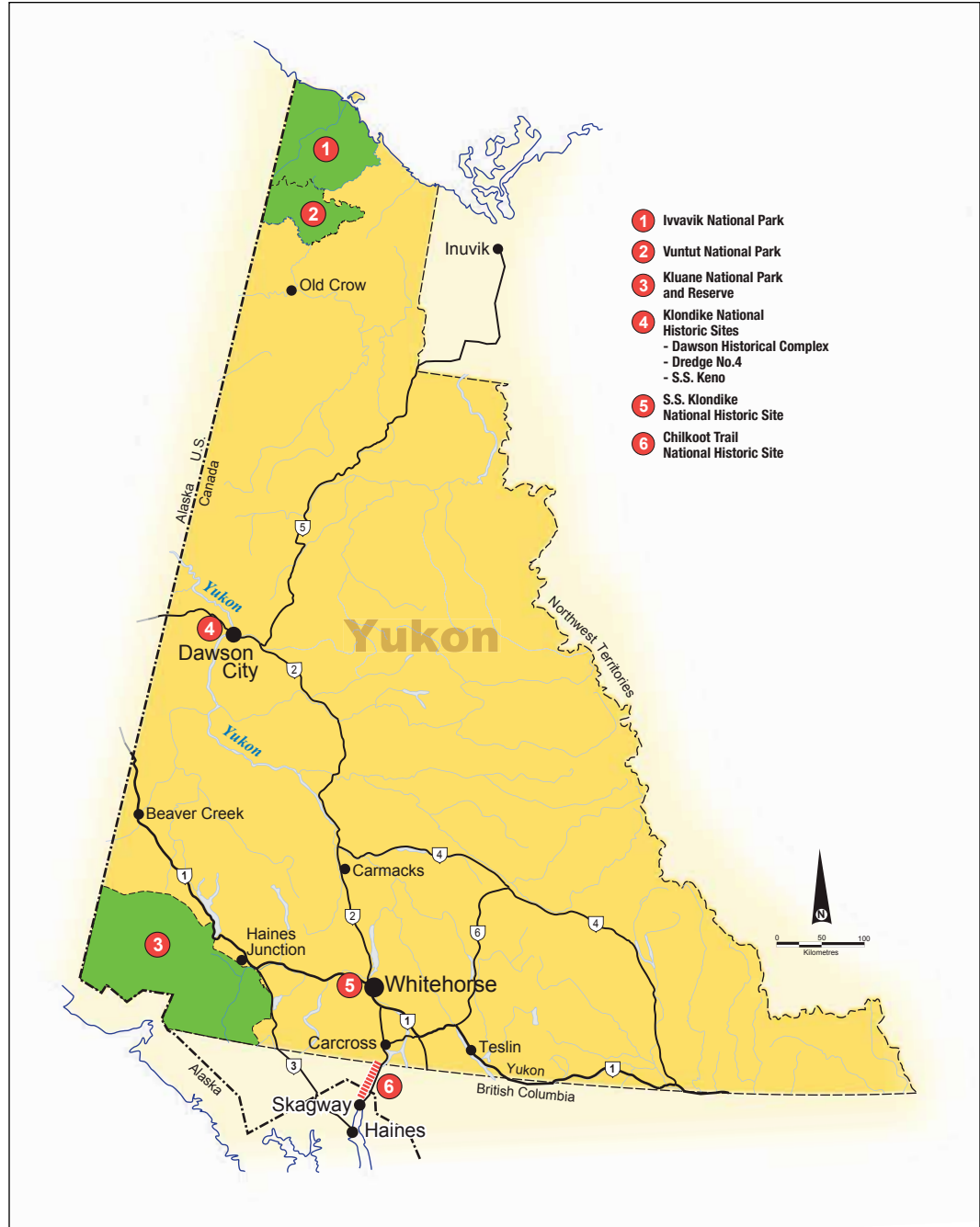
As a whole, this management plan intends to build stronger and more relevant connections between Vuntut National Park and a wider Canadian audience. It will result in a greater variety of interpretive materials and programs, meaningful visitor experiences, further integration of the park into local community life and an increased public sense of personal connection to Vuntut National Park.

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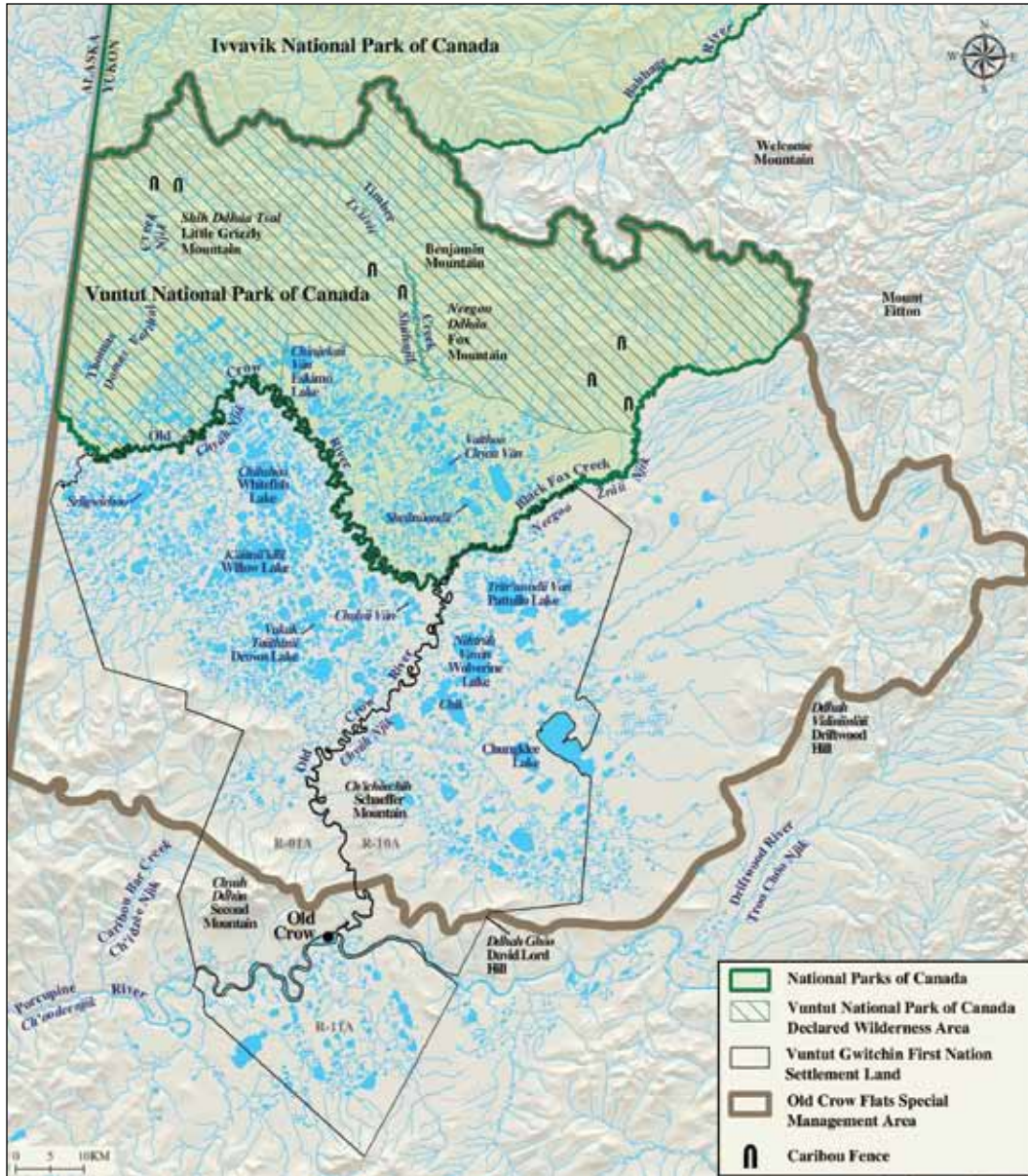
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Parks Canada Heritage Areas in Yukon and northern British Columbia



Map 1 – Vuntut National Park regional setting



Map 2 – Vuntut National Park

1.0 Introduction



Parks Canada/R. Markel

1.1 AN UPDATED MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR VUNTUT NATIONAL PARK

Parks Canada is responsible for administering a national system of protected heritage places, including national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas; special places that help define Canada and Canadians. The Parks Canada mandate has remained essentially unchanged for three quarters of a century:

On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.

The *Canada National Parks Act* requires each national park to have a management plan. These plans reflect the policies and legislation of Parks Canada and comprehensive land claim agreements and are prepared in consultation with Canadians. They are tabled in Parliament and reviewed

every five years. The *Canada National Parks Act*, *Parks Canada Agency Act*, and the Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies set the context for this responsibility. This management plan updates and replaces the 2004 management plan and provides long-term strategic direction for the management of Vuntut National Park of Canada for the next five years.

1.2 MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

A planning team composed of representatives of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and Parks Canada has led the management plan review process.

The first State of the Park Report for Vuntut National Park was written in 2009. The report assessed the state of ecological integrity; cultural and palaeontological resources; external relations – public outreach education and stakeholder and partner engagement; and visitor experience. It also reviewed the results of management actions and identified key issues to be

addressed in the 2010 Vuntut National Park Management Plan. The report identified that the 2004 management plan was, with a few exceptions, being implemented and continued to be largely relevant and effective for guiding park management.

In September 2009 the planning team initiated the five year review of the 2004 management plan. They started conceptualizing changes to the new management plan, developing vision elements and key strategies for the park. Two newsletters (via mail-outs, electronic distribution, and posted on the park website for national reach) were used to contact interested organizations and individuals, to inform them of the process and gather input.

The management planning team also considered Parks Canada's renewal initiative to connect Canadians with their protected heritage areas, with attention to young and urban populations and new Canadians. Two additional face-to-face meetings of the planning team resulted in a refinement of the key strategies, actions and targets. A Vuntut National Park annual general meeting held in Old Crow gave community members an opportunity to review the draft vision statement and key strategies. Open houses, which were advertised in the newsletters, on the Parks Canada website, radio and newspaper, were held in Old Crow and Whitehorse. Completed comment forms were received at the open houses, via fax and by email. The planning team discussed the comments received and revisions to the draft management plan via telephone and email. The management plan was completed considering results from these consultations.

2.0 Importance of the Park – A Place of National Significance

PARK PURPOSE:

To protect for all time a representative natural area of Canadian significance in the Northern Yukon Natural Region and to encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the area in a manner which leaves it unimpaired for future generations; and

To recognize Vuntut Gwitchin history and culture and protect the traditional and current use of the park by the Vuntut Gwitchin.

Vuntut National Park (4345 sq. km) is located in the north-western corner of the Yukon within the Traditional Territory of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Part of the Old Crow Flats Special Management Area, the park also shares borders with Ivvavik National Park to the north and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the west in Alaska. The park was established in 1995 as a result of the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*. Vuntut National Park represents the Northern Yukon Natural Region, recognizes Vuntut Gwitchin history and culture and protects the traditional and current use of the park by the Vuntut Gwitchin.

Vuntut National Park, Ivvavik National Park and Herschel Island Territorial Park (Qikiqtaruk) are jointly on Canada's tentative list for becoming a world heritage site.

The characteristics that help define this part of the Northern Yukon Natural Region and provide values for protection and celebration include:

- The northern third of the Old Crow Flats, the most significant wetlands in the Yukon (designated as having world importance under the Ramsar Convention, an international protocol on wetland conservation);



Van Tat/Old Crow Flats. Parks Canada/J. Peter

- Portions of the Porcupine Caribou Herd's spring and fall migration range;
- The ongoing interdependence of the Vuntut Gwitchin and the land;
- Caribou fences and other significant archaeological sites;
- Internationally significant palaeontological sites along the Old Crow River; and
- The area's significance as a post-Beringian landscape.

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement (Chapter 10, Schedule A, 1.0) states the following objectives for the park:

- To recognize Vuntut Gwitchin history and culture, and the rights provided for in this schedule, in the establishment and operation of the park;
- To recognize and protect the traditional and current use of the park by the Vuntut Gwitchin in the development and management of the park;
- To protect for all time a representative natural area of national significance in the Northern Yukon Natural Region, including representative portions of the Old Crow Flats wetlands and the surrounding foothills which contain important waterfowl habitat, critical parts of the Porcupine Caribou range, and archaeological and palaeontological resources of international significance;
- To encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park in a manner which leaves it unimpaired for future generations;
- To provide economic and employment opportunities and participation for Vuntut Gwitchin in the development, operation and management of the park;
- To recognize that oral history is a valid and relevant form of research for establishing the historical significance of the heritage sites and moveable heritage resources in the park directly related to the history of the Vuntut Gwitchin; and
- To recognize the interest of Vuntut Gwitchin in the interpretation of aboriginal place names and heritage resources in the park directly related to their culture.

Ecological Significance

Vuntut National Park is made up of two contrasting regions. The southern third of the park is comprised of the wetlands and lakes of the Old Crow Flats. This area of low relief (approximately 300 m above sea level) contains mostly polygonal peat plateau bogs. The Old Crow Flats contain the most significant wetlands in the Yukon and are used by up to half a million waterfowl annually. The northern region of the park consists of the concave slopes and rolling hills of the Old Crow Basin, while farther north and west are the foothills and scattered peaks of the British Mountains. Tundra dominates the landscape in this region of the park. Where there are forests, they are typically open stands of white spruce with ground cover of dwarf birch, willow, cotton grass, lichen and moss, or black spruce and tamarack.

Park wildlife includes caribou, grizzly bear, wolverine, wolf, mink, moose, muskrat, gyrfalcon, peregrine falcon, golden eagle and rock and willow ptarmigan. The park also protects a portion of the range of the

Porcupine Caribou Herd. Six wildlife species or populations designated at risk (Table 1) by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) have seasonal or year round homes in the park.

The land that is now Vuntut National Park was once part of Beringia, a huge land mass in the Yukon, Alaska, and northeastern Russia that remained generally ice-free during the time of the last ice age. Many plants and animals of the area are thought to have survived the last ice age; some are found nowhere else in Canada. The area also features one of the world's most abundant deposits of ice-age fossils.

3.0 Planning Context/Current Situation

3.1 RENEWAL WITHIN PARKS CANADA

Parks Canada is beginning to renew its work to better serve the needs of Canadians today and into the future. There are many factors currently influencing Parks Canada – shifts in the cultural make up of our cities, an aging population, Canadians’ changing connection to their environment, increasing threats to natural and cultural heritage, and changes in how Canadians spend their leisure time. In order for Parks Canada programs to continue to be relevant, it is necessary to take a fresh look at the needs and desires of Canadians. Parks Canada is seeking ways to better connect Canadians with Vuntut National Park, increase awareness and visitation and strengthen outreach education.



Parks Canada/I. McDonald

3.2 REGIONAL CONTEXT

Local Community

Old Crow, the Yukon’s northernmost community (population about 300 people), is located 128 km north of the Arctic Circle at the confluence of the Crow and Porcupine rivers (Map 1). The community is located approximately 60 km south of the park. Old Crow is over 200 km from the closest road (the Dempster Highway), adding to its remoteness. Regular scheduled air services facilitate the transport of people and goods between Old Crow, Dawson City, Inuvik and Whitehorse.

Developments in the Region

The recently completed North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (NYRLUP) identifies potential development in the region. The Eagle Plain Basin is considered to have the highest resource potential for oil and gas

development within the Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory. The NYRLUP indicates that the current low levels of activity and existing best management practices, used in combination with the NYRLUP are considered adequate to mitigate potential impacts of oil and gas activity. The Old Crow Flats Van Tat K’atr’anahtii Special Management Area Management Plan recommends that Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Settlement Lands (R-01A, R-10A, S-25A) be permanently protected from all industrial activities that could affect the ecological integrity of the area (Map 2). It also recommends that Yukon government public lands located in the core of the Old Crow wetland complex be permanently withdrawn from all industrial activities and that Yukon government public lands outside the core of the Old Crow wetland complex be withdrawn

from all industrial activities for a period of 20 years.

3.3 FIRST NATION PRESENCE

The Vuntut Gwitchin have a special relationship with Vuntut National Park as a central part of their homeland. Van Tat/Old Crow Flats and the surrounding area, including Vuntut National Park, has long been critical habitat for the resources that the Vuntut Gwitchin rely upon for their economic and cultural activities. For millennia, they have utilized the area annually on a seasonal basis and in times of need. The annual round of activities carried out by the Vuntut Gwitchin during pre-contact times involved spring harvesting of muskrats in Van Tat, spring caribou hunting along the Porcupine River, summer fishing along the Old Crow River and its many tributaries in Van Tat, fall caribou hunting at caribou fences around the northern rim of the Flats and winter settlements in sheltered valleys along the southern rim. This use was in turn part of the ecology of the area, and they actively managed their resources.



Yukon Archives, Father Jean-Marie Mouchet fonds, 91/51R, #112

The land and resources of the Old Crow Flats are used continuously in the traditional activities of the Vuntut Gwitchin. While maintaining permanent homes in Old Crow, Vuntut Gwitchin regularly travel to Van Tat and other parts of their Traditional Territory to hunt for moose, caribou, waterfowl, small animals, and fish. Community members are avid berry pickers and gather a variety of plants, as well as firewood. Most families have access to a cabin or camp outside of town that they visit on a regular basis. A

number of families consider it important to take their children to Van Tat in the spring to experience the centrality of the place and life on the land for Vuntut Gwitchin. This priority is also the basis of school programs that take the students out on the land, usually to Van Tat. Vuntut Gwitchin subsistence and cultural/heritage activities on traditional lands, including Vuntut National Park, are anticipated to continue in the future, along with monitoring the land, plants and animals. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government and Gwich'in individuals remain committed to maintaining the health of the land, and subsistence harvesting and cultural activities are expected to continue in importance and intensity for the foreseeable future.

3.4 COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

Together, Parks Canada, the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council cooperatively manage the park.

The relationship between Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government has evolved from one initially based on obligations from the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement* to one based on collaboration and respect. In the mid-1990s, when the national park was established, both Parks Canada and Vuntut Gwitchin Government staff quickly built good communication protocols. Park staff learned to understand the importance of input from Elders and community members, which was incorporated into the interim management guidelines and the first management plan for Vuntut National Park. Over the years, Vuntut Gwitchin Government and Parks Canada have shared staff positions and supported secondments and Parks Canada has recruited Vuntut Gwitchin members into various park positions. Successful cooperative management was not achieved as a result of signing the management plan; rather, it was the result of establishing cooperative management principles and practices during the planning process and a willingness to build on the good will and trust of each partner.

The *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement* and the *Canada National Parks Act* set out mechanisms for park management and specify the following areas of responsibility and authority:

- Parks Canada is responsible for matters related to planning, development, management and operation of the park;
- The Vuntut Gwitchin Government represents the collective interests of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on matters related to planning, development and management associated with the park and the protection of Vuntut Gwitchin rights in the park; and
- The North Yukon Renewable Resources Council represents the public interests within the Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory and provides strategic direction and advice to Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government on matters related to renewable resources associated with the park.

A revised four-year Cooperation Agreement, entitled *Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures for the Planning and Management of Vuntut National Park*, was signed by the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government in 2008. The agreement establishes clear roles, responsibilities and procedures for the management of the park, giving practical effect to provisions in the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*. The parties meet formally on an annual basis to review progress and determine priorities for the coming year. An annual community meeting is also held in Old Crow, with additional meetings as needed during the year.

As provided for in Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies and the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*, park planning and management will be integrated with land management by other governments and agencies with broad ecosystem responsibilities. An example is the Old Crow Flats Van Tat K'atr'anahtii Special Management Area, where an integrated

approach is essential for ecosystem-based management.

3.5 CURRENT SITUATION

Several significant events have happened since the last management plan in 2004. The two most significant events locally are the collaborative development of the John Tizya Visitor Centre in Old Crow and the proclamation of wilderness declaration for approximately 75% of the park.

3.5.1 Vuntut Ecosystems

The 2009 State of the Park Report for Vuntut National Park indicates that Old Crow Flats wetland complex and freshwater (rivers and streams) indicators have good ecological integrity, while the forests and tundra indicators were not rated due to a lack of information. These results indicate that Vuntut National Park has a high level of ecological integrity, and that there is a need to continue, and in some cases refine, ecological monitoring in the park in order to establish the long-term data records that are needed to assess change.

A key concern that was raised in the 2009 State of the Park Report is the condition and trend of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which is considered to be in poor condition and declining. The Porcupine Caribou Herd has been in decline since 1989, when the herd numbered 178,000 caribou. The last successful photocensus was conducted in 2001, when the herd was determined to be 123,000 caribou. Population modeling estimates that the herd has declined since 2001. Parks Canada is working with cooperative management partners such as the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Yukon government, Environment Canada, Ivvavik National Park and the Porcupine Caribou Management Board to develop and implement measures to address the decline of the herd.

An interesting result noted in the State of the Park Report is that permafrost was determined to be in fair condition. This

assessment was based on Traditional Knowledge and additional work will be conducted to further investigate permafrost condition in the park. There are also concerns that other environmental stressors are affecting park ecosystems. These include the impact of a warming climate on the hydrology, permafrost, soils, vegetation and wildlife of the park and in the region, the potential loss of critically important habitat for the Porcupine Caribou Herd outside the park and the long-range transport of pollutants and their uptake into the food chain.

3.5.2 Species at Risk

Vuntut National Park and adjacent areas provide seasonal or year round homes for six wildlife species or populations designated at risk (Table 1) by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). Two of them, the peregrine falcon and rusty blackbird, are listed in Schedule 1 of the federal *Species at Risk Act*

(SARA). Although all of these species are found in Vuntut National Park, COSEWIC assessments of their populations are conducted at a regional rather than a park-level scale.

3.5.3 Cultural Resources

The cultural resources of Vuntut National Park encompass the history of human occupation and activity from at least 12,000 years ago to the present day and reflect Aboriginal life and other historical activities. Both tangible and intangible resources are considered cultural heritage by the Vuntut Gwitchin and Parks Canada. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government maintains data related to cultural heritage in the park, including an inventory of 200 place names; an indexed oral history database of 535 interviews (including reference to the park); a digital video database; a collection of more than 400 historical and contemporary photos of landscapes, and a bibliography containing 215

Table 1 — Species at Risk in Vuntut National Park

SPECIES	STATUS	
	COSEWIC	SARA (Schedule 1)
Peregrine falcon (<i>anatum/tundrius</i>), <i>Falco peregrinus anatum/tundrius</i>	Special Concern	currently undergoing consultation for addition to Schedule 1 of SARA, Until a decision is made, <i>anatum</i> and <i>tundrius</i> subspecies are listed separately in the Act; <i>anatum</i> as Threatened in Schedule 1 and <i>tundrius</i> as Special Concern in Schedule 3.
Rusty blackbird, <i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	Special Concern	listed
Grizzly bear, <i>Ursus arctos</i> (northwestern population)	Special Concern	not currently listed
Wolverine, <i>Gulo gulo</i> (western population)	Special Concern	not currently listed
Short-eared owl, <i>Asio flammeus</i>	Special Concern	on SARA Schedule 3 - not yet listed under Schedule 1
Horned grebe, <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Special Concern	not currently listed

published and unpublished entries about the Vuntut Gwitchin.

The 127 formally recorded archaeological sites distributed throughout the park, consist of seasonal campsites, game look-outs, caribou fences and stone-tool manufacturing sites. Parks Canada has a small collection of objects collected from the park, and the University of Alberta curates a larger assemblage, collected under permit in 1997.

Seven caribou fences have been identified in Vuntut National Park. The caribou fences have a strong symbolic value for the Vuntut Gwitchin and are invaluable for interpretation of Vuntut Gwitchin history and culture. They were used by specific family groups from Old Crow and are of great significance to the community. They represent an economic pattern and type of technology which was once common throughout the western subarctic but of which few traces now remain. Between 2002 and 2005, five of the seven caribou fences in the park were recorded in detail.



Blackfox caribou fence. Parks Canada/J. Peter

Parks Canada is working with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to prepare a nomination to commemorate the First Nation's long relationship with the Porcupine Caribou and the related cultural landscape as a national historic site.

The State of the Park Report's overall assessment of the state of Vuntut's cultural resources was "fair and improving." Work on the caribou fences and oral history in the park has improved the status since the last evaluation (Canadian Heritage 1998).

The overall assessment for palaeontological resources was fair for resource condition and not rated for management practices. The Yukon government has a well maintained database and sponsors visits to the region to inspect exposures of the deposits and gather specimens. A Cultural Resource Values Statement and Cultural Resource Management Strategy have yet to be developed for the park.



Woolly mammoth. Yukon Government/G. Teichmann

3.5.4 Visitor Experience

Hiking, camping, canoeing, kayaking, ski-touring, dog sledding, wildlife viewing, photography and cultural activities are all possible in Vuntut National Park. That said, very few people have visited the park since its establishment in 1995. Its remote location, high cost of access and undeveloped visitor opportunities are all contributing factors. There have not yet been any applications for outfitting or guiding licenses. Since it is a remote wilderness park, motorized access is by air or guided snowmobile trips. Motor boats can reach the park boundary at high water along the Old Crow River and Black Fox Creek. One major obstacle to summer visitation is the lack of landing sites in the park. Although floatplanes could land on several lakes in the park, the wet, boggy - and buggy - terrain would make for unpleasant hiking. Helicopter access to good hiking areas is extremely expensive. Park staff continue scouting for fixed-wing landing sites in the foothills and northern section of the park to provide access for hikers.

Visitor opportunities are marketed through the Parks Canada web site, Vuntut National Park brochure, Yukon Vacation Planner

and joint Parks Canada/Yukon government tourism marketing sheets. All of these sources emphasize the wilderness nature of the park and the need for self-sufficiency on the part of visitors. Parks Canada and Air North are collaborating on efforts to market national parks and national historic sites in the Yukon through a variety of joint marketing initiatives including information on the Air North website, Parks Canada information being distributed by Air North at tourism trade shows, and Parks Canada articles and information showcased in the Air North in-flight magazine.

One of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government priorities is to assist the community of Old Crow in developing tourism capacity and implementing the 2006 North Yukon Tourism Strategy (Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture 2006). The strategy specifies three goals aligned with Vuntut Gwitchin needs and capabilities:

- Establish local support for tourism;
- Avoid mass tourism and focus on businesses and markets that bring a high rate of return with minimal impact on the land and Vuntut Gwitchin way of life; and
- Measure and monitor tourism benefits and impacts, and adjust as required.

As the number of visitors to the park to date has been extremely low and is expected to remain low, no surveys of visitor satisfaction or connection to place, or visitor experience assessments have been done.

Due to the remoteness of the park and low levels of visitation no on-site park interpretation is offered. The development of the John Tizya Centre was a collaborative effort between Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, with Yukon government involvement. The John Tizya Centre has become the focal point for interpretive and outreach efforts for the park. The centre functions as the gateway to Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory, including Vuntut National Park. It provides orientation and interpretation to Old Crow visitors

through exhibits, audio-visual programs, a park brochure and interaction with staff.

3.5.5 Public Outreach Education

The capacity for outreach education has expanded considerably in recent years. Major outreach education audiences for Vuntut National Park are Old Crow youth and the community in general, plus youth in the Yukon and across Canada. Many outreach efforts are closely tied with Vuntut Gwitchin Government initiatives to promote science education and continuity of Vuntut Gwitchin culture and values. Outreach efforts in Old Crow include exhibits and special events at the John Tizya Centre, lesson plans and three edukits for staff and/or teachers at the school to deliver Earth Day events, posters, assistance with Big Caribou Days, staff support to science and culture camps for youth, and annual community meetings and newsletters. For outside audiences, there is the park web site and the Caribou Case Study, a new educational initiative that fits with the on-line “True to Our Nature” school program. The case study has been marketed to schools in the Yukon and across Canada.

3.5.6 Key Issues and Challenges

The State of the Park Report identifies and describes some of the key issues and challenges facing the park. Parks Canada’s internal discussions and consultations with partners and the public during the management plan review process also identified issues and challenges to be addressed in this plan.

Porcupine Caribou Herd

The small size and declining trend of the Porcupine Caribou Herd is a major issue in the northern Yukon, Northwest Territories and Alaska. The herd is an important source of food for many communities in its range, including Old Crow. The Porcupine Caribou Herd is critically important to the Vuntut Gwitchin, and protecting the herd’s habitat was one of the main reasons that Vuntut National Park was created (Berger 1977, Parks Canada Agency 2004).

That a nomination is being prepared to commemorate the First Nation's long relationship with the Porcupine Caribou Herd and the related cultural landscape as a national historic site indicates the importance of the Porcupine Caribou Herd to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Parks Canada is a key partner in the cooperative management of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and will continue to be part of developing and implementing measures to conserve the herd. Parks Canada will continue to fund Porcupine Caribou Herd research, monitoring and education initiatives and participate in the Porcupine Caribou Herd cooperative management process through membership on the Porcupine Caribou Management Board.

Ecological Integrity Monitoring Program

The park's tundra ecosystem is the highest priority for improvement during this management plan. While there was insufficient information to rate this ecosystem in the 2009 State of the Park Report, there is a need to improve the trend of one of the measures, the Porcupine Caribou Herd, from declining to stable. The development of additional tundra measures and the refinement of the vegetation productivity measure is required to change the status of this indicator from non-rated to rated in the next State of the Park Report.

The park's ecological integrity monitoring program was revised in 2008 with community input. The addition of five years of monitoring data combined with the development of new measures will improve the park's ability to report on indicators in the next State of the Park Report. Research is needed for some measures to refine existing thresholds or develop new ones.

It is important for the park to continue being involved in planning occurring outside the park, as a way of listening to others and having park ecological concerns heard.

Traditional Knowledge

Further incorporating Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Knowledge into the ecological



Parks Canada/I. McDonald

monitoring program remains a priority. The opportunity to use Traditional Knowledge to set thresholds and to assess the condition and trend of measures in the 2009 State of the Park Report was a first step. Future State of the Park Reports should involve an increased level of consultation with the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and Vuntut Gwitchin Government with respect to the application of Traditional Knowledge. Currently it is not always clear if monitoring data and Traditional Knowledge are assessing the same aspects of the environment. Further clarification is required.

The use of Traditional Knowledge goes beyond the ecological integrity monitoring program. The North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, Vuntut Gwitchin Government and citizens are involved with many aspects of park management, helping to ensure that Traditional Knowledge is incorporated into decision-making. While the use of Traditional Knowledge is not perceived as an issue, it is important that these efforts continue and that the use of Traditional Knowledge in park management increases. Another area for continued support is that of bringing Traditional Knowledge and

science together into experiential learning opportunities within the park and region.

Cultural Resource Management

The park contains a broad range of cultural resources reflecting human occupation and activity. There are 127 formally recorded archaeological sites in the park, most of which were recorded prior to park establishment. Only 13 of the 127 sites have been formally evaluated since the creation of Vuntut National Park. Parks Canada's 2007/08 to 2011/12 Corporate Plan states that it will continue to work to improve the condition of cultural resources located in national parks (Parks Canada Agency 2007). Management of archaeological sites requires up-to-date information on their location, condition and potential threats.

Several important management tools are lacking for the park. The completion of a Cultural Resource Values Statement and a Cultural Resource Management Strategy that includes intangible cultural resources and palaeontological resources would lead to more effective management of these resources and is planned for completion in 2012.

Public Outreach Education

Major outreach education audiences for Vuntut National Park are Old Crow youth and the community in general, plus youth in the Yukon and across Canada. Many outreach efforts are closely tied with Vuntut Gwitchin Government initiatives to promote science education and continuity of Vuntut Gwitchin culture and values.

Outreach to local audiences is strong but outside audiences (Yukoners and Canadians) are not well served. A 2009 telephone survey found that only 7% of Yukoners were aware of the park. An outreach plan is required to determine how to address these deficiencies.

Park Visitation

Vuntut is one of the least visited national parks in Canada. It is very remote and

expensive to reach, and tourism opportunities in the park are undeveloped. Suitable fixed-wing landing sites are lacking. Visitation is tracked, but because of extremely low numbers, no surveys of satisfaction or personal connection are proposed. Parks Canada will focus on supporting local initiatives to improve regional and park tourism opportunities in ways that respect and promote the local culture.

4.0 Vision Statement



Parks Canada/A. McDonald

A park vision is meant to convey the special character of Vuntut National Park and paint an inspiring picture of the future desired state of the park over the next 15 to 20 years. This vision builds on the one presented in the 2004 management plan.

Vuntut National Park is a dynamic and diverse landscape where the Vuntut Gwitchin have existed in harmony with the land and animals for thousands of years. It is a place where a strong, progressive Vuntut Gwitchin culture is shared with those who come to visit and explore.

Start your arctic quest in the isolated, traditional village of Old Crow, where a warm welcome awaits you at the John Tizya Centre, and Vuntut Gwitchin guides are ready to support your journey. Take off your heavy boots, throw on some mukluks and snowshoe under a veil of northern lights. Or, jump into a canoe and paddle toward the horizon under the endless midsummer sun. Far from the chaos of city life, immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and smells of this natural haven.

To witness the enduring Porcupine Caribou Herd traversing their ancient routes to and from the calving grounds; to observe the powerful grizzly foraging for food to sustain them through a long winter sleep; to hear the 'swoosh' of the geese or the calls of thousands of waterfowl in Van Tat; to experience the thrill of discovering mammoth teeth or other fossils in these Beringian lands, a refuge from the last ice age; or to be awed by the amazing



Parks Canada/I. McDonald

engineering efforts of the Vuntut Gwitchin caribou fences – is to experience the very essence of the park.

The Vuntut Gwitchin and Vuntut National Park staff understand the responsibility and honour that comes with being stewards of this land. Together, Traditional Knowledge experts and scientists strive to explore and share the priceless information the park has to offer. With this knowledge comes the ability and understanding required to care for this land.

The land continues to sustain the Vuntut Gwitchin. Elders share their values and pass on their skills, with the hope that the youth of today will pass it down to the grandchildren of tomorrow, continuing an adaptive and resilient way of life that has survived for thousands of years.

5.0 Key Strategies



Yukon Archives, George and Margaret Hamilton fonds, 89/38, #57

Key strategies describe an integrated, focused approach of how the park will be managed in the mid- to long-term. The strategies set the path to achieve the park vision while addressing the park's challenges. Each strategy focuses efforts and resources on a clear set of related objectives, needs and opportunities that can influence achieving the vision. Guiding principles set the foundation for all management actions. Key strategies integrate the delivery of the three core mandate elements: protection, visitor experience and education. Four key strategies have been developed:

- *Looking after the Land and the Animals for the Future* which focuses on maintaining and improving the ecological integrity of the park;
 - *Living and Teaching a Traditional Lifestyle*, which focuses on continuing to support a strong traditional Vuntut Gwitchin lifestyle; and
 - *Your Past Shapes Your Future*, which focuses on protecting and presenting cultural resources.
- *Experiencing Vuntut Gwitchin Country*, which focuses on providing visitor experience opportunities, John Tizya Centre programming, outreach beyond park boundaries;

These strategies are neither mutually exclusive, independent paths nor are they ordered by priority. Within each key strategy are objectives, targets, actions and guiding principles for implementation. Many of these highlight on-going activities while others

provide new actions to undertake during the life of the management plan.



Parks Canada/R. Markel

5.1 EXPERIENCING VUNTUT GWITCHIN COUNTRY

The main objective of this strategy is to provide opportunities to learn about and experience Vuntut National Park, Vuntut Gwitchin history and Vuntut Gwitchin culture.

For many Canadians, the dream of hiking along mountain ridges under the midnight sun, watching hundreds of caribou as they stream through the valleys, encountering moose while drifting down the Old Crow River, listening to the howl of wolves or marvelling at the caribou fences, may remain just that, a dream. Few people have the opportunity to visit Vuntut National Park or Old Crow due to their remote location, high cost of access and undeveloped tourism opportunities. Increasing the awareness of Vuntut National Park well beyond its boundaries, in the hearts and minds of Canadians and people around the world is a key part of this strategy. People who connect to Vuntut National Park, whether through innovative outreach programs, the classroom, the website, programming at the John Tizya Centre or in-person, will feel welcomed and will have a greater understanding and appreciation of the unique natural and cultural landscapes of the park.

This strategy focuses on three areas where Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government will work in close cooperation: development of tourism capacity in Old Crow leading towards a range of visitor experiences

in the park and region; strengthening learning experiences at the John Tizya Centre; and defining and implementing an outreach education program for local residents and targeted Canadian audiences.

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government will staff a position to assist the community with developing tourism capacity and with the implementation of the North Yukon Tourism Strategy (whose goals are aligned with those of this key strategy). The North Yukon Tourism Strategy identified two stages for the development of tourism products for Old Crow. The first identifies the need for further infrastructure in the community (such as a campground, restaurant and additional accommodation) to support the growth of tourism. The second focuses on attracting new visitor markets, targeting those markets that bring a high rate of return with minimal impact on the land and Vuntut Gwitchin way of life.

Ways of strengthening the tourism capacity in Old Crow include: the examination of potential visitor opportunities relating to seasonal events such as muskrat harvesting or caribou migration; working closely with the tourism industry, Yukon government, Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council to promote opportunities; and the development of guide standards and training. Marketing activities, such as Parks Canada's recent partnership with Air North, will further improve public awareness of the park, and potentially increase visitation over the long-term. Other marketing efforts include a web site targeting potential visitors, a full-colour brochure, joint Yukon Tourism and Parks Canada brochures, Air North in-flight magazine articles and inclusion in the Yukon Vacation Planner. Interpretation is not offered within the park, but tourists to Old Crow are well served at the John Tizya Centre, which offers both personal and non-personal services.

As of March 2009, wilderness declaration for the area north of Van Tat/Old Crow Flats (Map 3) restricts motorized access by visitors (e.g., snowmobiles) but allows access

by aircraft. Motorized modes of access by visitors will not be permitted in the park with the exception of aircraft access throughout the park, and guided snowmobile trips in the non-wilderness declared portion of the park. Motorized water access and use will not be permitted in the park.

Due to the isolated nature of Vuntut National Park and in consideration of potential economic benefits, limited and controlled guided commercial snowmobile access to the park will be permitted in the non-wilderness declared portion of the Old Crow Flats. Snowmobiles will be used as a means of transporting visitors to a base camp, with visitors riding on or driving the snowmobile. Visitors on snowmobiles must be accompanied at all times, by Vuntut Gwitchin guides or employees thereof. Visitors can explore the area around the base camp on snowshoes or skis but they are not permitted to tour by snowmobile.

Commercial dog sled trips may occur throughout the park. The *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement* states that the Vuntut Gwitchin have the exclusive opportunity to provide commercial dog sled trips in the park. Snowmobiles may be used to support dog sledding trips solely in the non-wilderness declared portion of the park. Visitors participating in dog sled trips may ride on or drive the dog sleds, but not the snowmobiles. Snowmobiles can be used to support the experience by carrying excess gear, food, etc. between camps. Private dog sled trips without snowmobile support may be permitted throughout the park.

To date there have not yet been any applications for outfitting or guide licenses in the park. Parks Canada is currently reviewing its policy on the use of firearms for protection in northern national parks and northern national park reserves, which could allow for designated categories of park users, including guides, to carry and use firearms for self-protection and the protection of others from bears. If adopted, this policy direction will be reflected in the proposed National Parks of

Canada Wild Animals Regulations, which will be subject to national consultations in 2010.

A regulation change will be pursued to allow for sport fishing in the park to enhance visitor experience and tourism opportunities. Recent Yukon government fresh-water fish population estimates, based on a sample of lakes across the Old Crow Flats, did not indicate conservation concerns. A search of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government's Traditional Knowledge database resulted in similar findings. However, as regional salmon populations are declining and it is not known whether any of these populations migrate to the park to spawn, all species of salmon will be exempt from licensed sport fishing.

Future visitor opportunities may include rustic accommodations as part of a commercial guiding operation. A Parks Canada outfitting license and guide license, complete with a business plan and required certification are needed to operate a commercial guiding business in the park. Commercial outfitting and guiding applications will be reviewed by Parks Canada, Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council.

The John Tizya Centre provides visitors to Old Crow with the opportunity to experience the park from afar, to learn about Vuntut Gwitchin culture and other protected areas in the Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory. It is also a focal point for community members. Current offers include guided tours of the exhibits, Vuntut Gwitchin Government programming such as snowshoe making and "Little Caribou Days," an after school program. Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government will work together to expand the interpretive offer at the John Tizya Centre and ensure the centre remains a vibrant place of learning for both Old Crow locals and visitors alike.

EXPERIENCING VUNTUT GWITCHIN COUNTRY: A FIVE-YEAR PLAN
Objective 1:

Tourism capacity in the community of Old Crow is increased through Vuntut Gwitchin Government's leadership and with Parks Canada's assistance; ultimately supporting a range of visitor experience opportunities in Vuntut National Park.

Targets:

- Guide training is offered in Old Crow in 2011.
- Guided trips occur in Vuntut National Park by 2012.
- An aircraft landing sites investigation is completed by 2010/2011.
- A visitor orientation package is developed by 2012.
- Guidelines for assessing commercial outfitting and guiding business applications are developed by 2011.

Actions:

1. Examine the level of interest in a range of various potential visitor opportunities in Vuntut National Park, and where feasible, pursue ways of offering these opportunities with the Vuntut Development Corporation, Vuntut Gwitchin Government and/or the tourism industry.
2. Work with Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council to develop standards of training and required experience to obtain a guide license for Vuntut National Park.
3. Contribute to national consultations relating to the proposed National Parks of Canada Wild Animals Regulations, which would include provisions for the use of firearms for protection.
4. Collaborate with Vuntut Gwitchin Government to train local people to become licensed guides in Vuntut National Park.
5. In collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee, and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, develop guidelines for assessing commercial outfitting and guiding applications for the park.
6. Continue to identify and assess potential fixed wing aircraft landing sites in the park to facilitate hiking opportunities.
7. Develop a visitor orientation package to inform visitors about Vuntut Gwitchin culture, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation rights, "Leave No Trace" ethics and safety while traveling in the park.
8. Pursue a regulation change to allow for sport fishing in the park, with the exception of all species of salmon.
9. Develop and maintain a public safety response consistent with the Hazard Assessment/Public Safety Plan for the park, with a focus on prevention and education.
10. Pursue a continued collaboration with Air North for marketing national parks and national historic sites in the Yukon.

EXPERIENCING VUNTUT GWITCHIN COUNTRY: A FIVE-YEAR PLAN
<p>Objective 2: <i>A variety of memorable experiences are offered at the John Tizya Centre to promote learning and appreciation of the park's natural and cultural resources and its values as a protected area to visitors of Old Crow.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An exhibit renewal plan is developed during the life of this management plan. • The Vuntut National Park map exhibit is upgraded by 2011.
<p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to jointly fund the interpreter/receptionist position at the John Tizya Centre with Vuntut Gwitchin Government. 2. Upgrade the existing Vuntut National Park Map and exhibits as required. 3. Ensure the John Tizya Centre's exhibits and personal interpretive offer remain fresh and dynamic. 4. Pursue the development of an exhibit for the Old Crow airport to promote the John Tizya Centre and increase public awareness of Vuntut National Park.
<p>Objective 3: <i>A public outreach education program aimed at local residents and targeted Canadian audiences is defined and implemented by Parks Canada and Vuntut Gwitchin Government.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outreach strategy for the Yukon Field Unit is developed by 2010/2011. • Updated Vuntut National Park website by 2010/2011. • New offers on the Vuntut National Park website by 2011/2012. • One new program is offered at the John Tizya Centre, developed in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government by 2012.
<p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update and maintain the Vuntut National Park web site: educate Canadians about the significance and management of the park; provide trip planning advice and links to partner websites, develop on-line curriculum. 2. In collaboration with Vuntut Gwitchin Government, develop and deliver Vuntut Gwitchin cultural and park-related programming for local audiences at the John Tizya Centre. 3. Develop an outreach strategy for the field unit to further define and support the development of Vuntut National Park outreach products. 4. Continue to support community learning programs and events such as Big Caribou Days, science and culture camps and Earth Day.

Guiding Principles

- Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government will work together to coordinate tourism development and public outreach initiatives for Vuntut National Park and the John Tizya Centre.
- The use of the Gwich'in language will be actively promoted.
- Outreach programming targeted at youth in the formal education system will be linked to curriculum.
- Ensure marketing efforts accurately present visitor experience expectations and incorporate ecological integrity messages.
- Recreational activities must maintain ecological integrity and be consistent with the direction provided through the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*.
- Activities will be controllable, compatible, and reversible.
- Subsistence activities will take priority over recreational activities.
- Scientific and Traditional Knowledge will be utilized to guide recreational use management decisions.



Ecological monitoring. Parks Canada/I. McDonald

5.2 LOOKING AFTER THE LAND AND THE ANIMALS FOR THE FUTURE

The main objective of this strategy is to work collaboratively with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council to incorporate Traditional Knowledge and science into decision-making to maintain a healthy, resilient park for future generations.

The strategy emphasizes completing the on-going ecological integrity monitoring

program, improving our ability to rate the condition and trend of some of the measures and ecosystems, and striving to change the trend of the Porcupine Caribou Herd from declining to stable (see section 3.5.6). In 2008, a comprehensive monitoring plan was developed collaboratively with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council that identified measures for assessing biodiversity, ecosystem processes and stressors for the major ecosystem types found in the park. Data collected by Parks Canada, other resource management organizations and International Polar Year scientists is used to assess the health of the park.

The continuation of established relationships, e.g., Vuntut Gwitchin Government, North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, Environment Yukon, Canadian Wildlife Service, Porcupine Caribou Management Board, Ivvavik National Park, universities, and the building of new ones, are integral to running a comprehensive monitoring program and determining required research. Some of the projects initiated as part of International Polar Year relevant to the ecological integrity monitoring program will be continued and annual community research meetings to exchange Traditional Knowledge and scientific data are planned.

One measure, the Porcupine Caribou Herd population, was rated poor with a declining trend as models predicted fewer than 100,000 animals in 2008 compared to 123,000 in 2001, the last successful census. Caribou migrate far beyond park boundaries and it is a high priority to work collaboratively to reverse the decline and conserve the population.

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council have expressed concerns about declining salmon populations in the region, and Parks Canada is interested in exploring options to assist the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and others in investigating these populations.

The Vuntut Gwitchin have a long perspective of the health of the park based on generations of observations and on an understanding of species and ecosystems. The continuance of this presence on the land is addressed in Key Strategy 3; however, there is overlap in terms of ensuring that monitoring is supported by Traditional Knowledge. There is great potential for utilizing this in-depth knowledge and to further involve the Vuntut Gwitchin

in monitoring the ecological integrity of the park.

This strategy seeks to foster a culture of stewardship, educating outside audiences about changes occurring on the land that affect the Vuntut Gwitchin way of life, encouraging responsible use and visitation of the park, as well as promoting environmental stewardship in the community and beyond.

LOOKING AFTER THE LAND AND ANIMALS FOR THE FUTURE: A FIVE-YEAR PLAN
<p>Objective 1: <i>The ecological integrity of the park is maintained and the ability to assess the condition and trend of Vuntut National Park ecological integrity indicators is improved.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rating of the condition and trend of the tundra monitoring and vegetation production sites changes will have changed from not-rated to rated by 2014. • The condition and trend of the Porcupine Caribou Herd will have changed from red, declining to red, stable by 2014. • Additional tundra measures will be developed and implemented by 2014.
<p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to implement the Vuntut National Park ecological integrity monitoring program; develop and implement ecological integrity measures for the tundra ecosystem and aquatic health; and continue to develop and refine protocols and thresholds. 2. In cooperation with the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and Vuntut Gwitchin Government, develop ways to further incorporate Traditional Knowledge into the ecological integrity monitoring program, and review these approaches on an ongoing basis. 3. Support International Polar Year legacy projects within the context of the ecological integrity monitoring program. 4. Collaborate with Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council to host an annual community research meeting, to encourage open discussion of Traditional Knowledge and science concepts. 5. Explore options to assist Vuntut Gwitchin Government, the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and others (Yukon Environment, Fisheries and Oceans) to research chinook salmon in the park and region. 6. As priorities and partnerships permit, conduct research on fish ecology and aquatic ecosystems in the park.

LOOKING AFTER THE LAND AND ANIMALS FOR THE FUTURE: A FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Objective 2:

Collaborative planning and management encourages integrated decision-making within the regional ecosystem.

Target:

- Vuntut National Park plans and regional plans will continue to have mutually supported ecological integrity objectives.

Actions:

1. Continue to work with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board to identify and review research and monitoring priorities to support Porcupine Caribou Herd conservation initiatives and subsequent management actions. Develop and implement actions to address the decline of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.
2. In partnership with others, advance the national and territorial Species at Risk Program.
3. Participate in relevant planning processes in the region.
4. Work cooperatively with North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Yukon government and others to implement those sections of the North Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Plan relevant to Vuntut National Park.

Objective 3:

Fostering a culture of shared stewardship.

Targets:

- The ongoing delivery of a Grade 4 Environmental Stewardship Certificate Program in Old Crow will result in an increased understanding of environmental stewardship by students in the community.
- A new outreach program concerning climate change is developed and delivered by 2013.
- Best management practices for traveling on the land and “bear do’s and don’ts” lists for cabins is developed by 2011.
- A bear ecology program is delivered at the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School on an annual basis.

LOOKING AFTER THE LAND AND ANIMALS FOR THE FUTURE: A FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Actions:

1. Complete and deliver the Yukon version of the Grade 4 Environmental Stewardship Certificate Program in Old Crow by 2011.
2. Create outreach products targeted to Canadians about the impact of climate change on the Vuntut Gwitchin way of life and park ecology.
3. Involve community members in ecological integrity monitoring where feasible.
4. Work with the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and Vuntut Gwitchin Government to educate Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation park users and visitors about wildlife safety and ethics for travelling on the land, incorporating both Traditional Knowledge and science.
5. Work with the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council to develop protocols for maintenance of cabins located within Vuntut National Park.
6. Optimize and deliver year-round programming for Old Crow youth.
7. Broadly distribute the results of monitoring and research conducted in the park using a variety of means such as the internet, presentations at public speaker series, workshops, community meetings, scientific journals and newspaper articles.

Guiding Principles

- Management actions are based on the best available Traditional Knowledge and science.
- Ongoing efforts will be made to further incorporate Traditional Knowledge into the monitoring program.
- Monitor and manage park operations and use, in order to minimize impacts on the environment (e.g., reduce, reuse and recycle; minimize emissions, and avoid use of hazardous materials; green procurement); and encourage similar environmental stewardship at the community level.
- Ensure research activities are unobtrusive, avoiding capture, marking or handling wildlife whenever possible.



Science camp. Parks Canada/L. Sumi

5.3 LIVING AND TEACHING A TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE

The main objective of this strategy is to support the continuance of a strong traditional Vuntut Gwitchin lifestyle, with Elders passing teachings to youth both in the community and out on the land.

Vuntut National Park is located within a major cultural and subsistence area of the Vuntut Gwitchin. The park was established in part to protect the land and its associated cultural values and subsistence uses. Vuntut Gwitchin presence in the park is important not only for the continuance of their culture, but also for understanding changes that are occurring on the land and providing guidance for park management. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government's Heritage Branch has been conducting intensive culture-related research projects on the land since 1995 with Elders, youth and other community members travelling by helicopter and boats throughout the Traditional Territory including the park. This has resulted in the recording, compilation and passing on of Traditional Knowledge. Parks Canada has supported these initiatives and continues to provide a high level of support to Vuntut Gwitchin Government youth field trips such as science and culture camps.

Working with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Parks Canada continues to take every reasonable opportunity to support opportunities for Old Crow residents, in particular youth and Elders, to spend time on the land, and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge. While distances are great, efforts will be made to visit the park itself where possible.

While the majority of this strategy will be led by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Parks Canada support is fundamental to its success. This strategy is central to park management as it is linked to all other key strategies in how it strives to strengthen and utilize Vuntut Gwitchin traditional culture in park management: e.g., Key Strategy 1: Vuntut Gwitchin guides will use knowledge learned from Elders on the land to provide a safe and culturally relevant experience for tourists; Key Strategy 2: Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Knowledge will be applied to ecological integrity monitoring; Key Strategy 4: being on the land provides the best context for learning and dialogue around Traditional Knowledge and oral history.

Another component of this strategy is to increase audience awareness and understanding of the rights of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation members as defined in the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*.

Guiding Principles

- The use of the Gwich'in language will be actively promoted.
- Whenever feasible, Parks Canada will contribute to opportunities for Elders and others to teach traditional ecological and historical knowledge and skills, both on the land and as part of educational programs in the community of Old Crow.

LIVING AND TEACHING A TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE: A FIVE-YEAR PLAN
<p>Objective 1: <i>Vuntut Gwitchin rights within the park are recognized, protected, understood and supported by park staff, visitors and other Canadians.</i></p> <p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vuntut National Park website, visitor orientation package and outreach education materials will increase Canadians’ awareness of Vuntut Gwitchin rights.
<p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parks Canada will work collaboratively with the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to implement the provisions of the <i>Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement</i> related to Vuntut National Park. 2. Update the Vuntut National Park website by 2011, and develop a visitor orientation package by 2012 to inform Canadians of Vuntut Gwitchin rights as laid out in the <i>Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement</i>.
<p>Objective 2: <i>Opportunities for Old Crow residents to spend time on the land, in order to facilitate the passing and sharing of knowledge between residents themselves, and with Parks Canada staff, are supported.</i></p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One camp will be held in Vuntut National Park during the life of this management plan. • Assist with Vuntut Gwitchin Government led science and culture camps on an annual basis.
<p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Vuntut Gwitchin Government Heritage Branch and the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School to support culture and science camps taking place within Vuntut National Park. 2. With the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, provide land-based experiential learning opportunities, such as culture and science camps, for Elders, youth, researchers and staff. These opportunities will bring Traditional Knowledge and science together, assist the Vuntut Gwitchin to carry on traditional activities in their Traditional Territory, and foster environmental stewardship.



Yukon Archives, Father Jean-Marie Mouchet fonds, 91/51R, #22

5.4 YOUR PAST SHAPES YOUR FUTURE

The objective of this strategy is to honour the enduring human presence in Vuntut National Park, by protecting and presenting its cultural resources. It also addresses the wealth of Pleistocene fossils in the park.

Because of their significance, the Vuntut National Park caribou fences have been the focus of cultural resource management activities during the past five years. Between 2002 and 2005, five of the seven caribou fence sites in the park were mapped and recorded in detail. This activity was facilitated and enhanced by the community Oral History Project, which articulated the values of the fences. Many of the remaining 120 known cultural sites in the park have not been revisited in more than fifteen years. There may be difficulties in locating some of these sites as they were recorded on 1:250,000 scale maps and some have since been located at distances greater than 1.5km from the original recorded location. Non-tangible cultural resources like place names and traditional technologies continue to be documented through Vuntut Gwitchin Government heritage projects. The John Tizya Centre exhibits and programming present knowledge gained through these activities.

The State of the Park Report identified the need for a Cultural Resource Values Statement and a Cultural Resource Management Strategy to assist with the identification and implementation of priority actions for the park. A Cultural Resource Management workshop will be offered to the staff of both Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government. Continuing archaeological field work will ensure previously identified cultural sites are re-evaluated, and newly discovered cultural sites are input into the databases adding to our knowledge and understanding of Vuntut National Park's human history.

The Old Crow Basin has the greatest concentration of Pleistocene vertebrate fauna in Canada and possibly North America. Parks Canada does not have a palaeontologist on staff, and there is currently no strategy in place for the management of these fossils.

The Pleistocene fossils of mammoths, horses, muskoxen and other mammals that sometimes appear through the erosion of riverbanks in the park need to be addressed, both in terms of determining how best to manage them, and reaching out to Canadians to make them aware of these magical and little-known resources. Working with the Yukon government palaeontologist, and partnering with museums such as the Beringia Centre will be key to understanding and presenting these resources. Moreover, the Old Crow Arctic Research Facility, which will be constructed in the near future, will provide a specialized storage environment for fossils and cultural artifacts.

Visitor guidelines will be jointly developed by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee, Parks Canada and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council. Until appropriate visitor guidelines are developed, access by visitors to the caribou fences and associated structures, as well as other culturally sensitive sites, will require the permission of both the park superintendent and Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

YOUR PAST SHAPES YOUR FUTURE: A FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Objective 1:

Cultural and palaeontological resources found in the park are protected and managed.

Target:

- The rating of cultural and palaeontological resources will be improved by 2014.

Actions:

1. A Cultural Resource Management workshop is delivered to staff in 2010 to familiarize them with Parks Canada's responsibilities for cultural resource management in Vuntut National Park.
2. Work with the community and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to develop a Cultural Resource Values Statement by 2011.
3. Work with the community and Vuntut Gwitchin Government to develop a Cultural Resource Management Strategy by 2012.
4. With the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, develop appropriate visitor guidelines for visiting the caribou fences and other culturally sensitive sites.
5. During the life of this plan, attempt to revisit previously recorded archaeological sites to evaluate the resource and document the location.
6. Continue to record new cultural sites and maintain an up-to-date database.
7. Harmonize existing federal and Vuntut Gwitchin data bases.
8. In collaboration with the Yukon government and Vuntut Gwitchin Government Heritage Branch develop a strategy for the management of palaeontological resources by 2012.
9. In collaboration with the Yukon government and others, facilitate proposed palaeontological research in the park.
10. Maximize Parks Canada's use of the Old Crow Arctic Research Facility (e.g., explore the possibility of storing stone artifacts collected in Vuntut National Park in the facility)

Objective 2:

The understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the cultural landscapes, resources and values of the park are promoted.

Target:

- A curriculum-linked on-line educational resource on the caribou fences will be completed by 2012.

YOUR PAST SHAPES YOUR FUTURE: A FIVE-YEAR PLAN
<p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a curriculum-linked on-line educational resource based on the existing caribou fence interactive for distribution to Canadian schools. 2. Continue to assist the Vuntut Gwitchin Government with the commemoration of the First Nation's long relationship with the Porcupine Caribou Herd and the related landscape as a national historic site. 3. Support Vuntut Gwitchin Government-led oral history research projects; work with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to incorporate Vuntut Gwitchin oral history material in park management and public outreach.
<p>Objective 3: <i>The understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the palaeontological resources of the park are promoted.</i></p> <p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One outreach program is developed during the life of this plan.
<p>Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore partnerships to develop an outreach program on fossils found in Vuntut National Park to make palaeontology come alive for Canadians.

Guiding Principles

- Use Gwich'in place names in all communications about the park, so that they become comfortable, everyday language.
- Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government will collaborate on developing the Cultural Resource Values Statement and Cultural Resource Management Strategy.

6.0 Area Management Approach



Parks Canada/R. Markei

No area concepts are being proposed for this plan review. There is potential for dividing the park into two management areas based on access. As a result of the proclamation of wilderness declaration (see section 8.3), aircraft access is the sole type of motorized access allowed in the wilderness declared portion of Vuntut National Park. Vuntut Gwitchin guided snowmobile trips are allowed in the non-wilderness declared portion of the park (see section 8.2.2). As current levels of visitation are very low, area management concepts will not be considered until the next plan review.

7.0 Partnership and Public Engagement



Open house, Old Crow. Parks Canada/A. Morin

Vuntut National Park depends on the cooperation and support of many partners, stakeholders and the non-profit sector and others to achieve the park vision. Vuntut National Park will continue to work on building and maintaining relationships with these groups and individuals.

Parks Canada's primary partners in managing Vuntut National Park are the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council. The cooperative management relationship with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council is strong and respectful (see section 3.4 above).

A wide range of collaborative efforts demonstrate the close working relationship between Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, with the 2008 completion of the John Tizya Centre in Old Crow being the best example. Parks Canada is also partnering with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government on the Old Crow Arctic Research Facility which is scheduled for completion by March 2010.

The region's remoteness and high cost of travel both support the need for a cooperative approach. There is a high degree of cooperation among the various conservation groups and agencies in northern Yukon and Alaska such as: Yukon Environment, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ivvavik National Park, Environment Canada, Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Cooperative, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the

Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Vuntut National Park staff have collaborated with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and other project partners regarding a significant, multidisciplinary, seven-year scientific research initiative related to the International Polar Year known as Yeendoo Nanh Nakhweenjit K'atr'ahanatyaa ("looking after the land for the future"), or Environmental Change and Traditional Use of the Old Crow Flats in Northern Canada.

Efforts will now be focused on moving forward with building key relationships with respect to tourism and marketing that will help facilitate visitor experiences. Parks Canada has entered a partnering arrangement with Air North to market the national parks and national historic sites in Yukon and is also working with Yukon Tourism, the Vuntut Development Corporation and regional tourism associations (Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon) in this area to promote this amazing natural and cultural area to Canadian and overseas markets.

Partnering and stakeholder engagement guidelines have recently been developed nationally, and will be used in the Yukon to guide existing and future partnering initiatives.

8.0 Zoning and Wilderness Declaration

8.1 NATIONAL PARK ZONING SYSTEM

Parks Canada’s zoning system comprises five categories, which are based on the need for protection. The suitability of areas for visitor activities is also a consideration in zoning decisions. The zoning system does not preclude resource harvesting activities and subsistence use by the Vuntut Gwitchin. The five categories are as follows:

Zone I – Special Preservation is a zone where public use may be controlled to protect especially important or fragile resources. No motorized access is permitted, including visitor air access.

Zone II – Wilderness covers large areas that are good representations of the ecosystems of the park and will be maintained in a wilderness state. Motorized use is not permitted, except for strictly controlled air access in remote northern areas.

Zone III – Natural Environment is an area that is maintained in a natural state, although with more use than is allowed in Zone II. Zone III allows for limited motorized access, usually by public transport.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation is an area capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for education, outdoor recreation and related facilities for visitor enjoyment, in ways that respect the natural landscape and the park environment. Motorized access is permitted.

Zone V – Park Service is for a park community such as Banff and Jasper or a major service or park administration centre.

8.2 VUNTUT NATIONAL PARK ZONES

8.2.1 Zone I – Special Preservation

Zone I areas deserve special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of the features that represent a natural region. Preservation is the key consideration. The seven caribou fence complexes within the park are identified as Zone I areas. Spot zoning will ensure that the caribou fences and associated structures are included in Zone I, while enabling aircraft landings

nearby in Zone II areas. Aircraft landings will be controlled to ensure the protection of the cultural resources.

8.2.2 Zone II – Wilderness

Zone II contains extensive areas that are good representations of a natural region and are conserved in a wilderness state. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration. Zone II areas offer opportunities for visitors to experience first-hand the park's ecosystems and they require few, if any, services and facilities. Motorized access is not permitted except for strictly controlled air access in remote areas. This plan identifies the entire park, outside the Zone I areas, as Zone II.

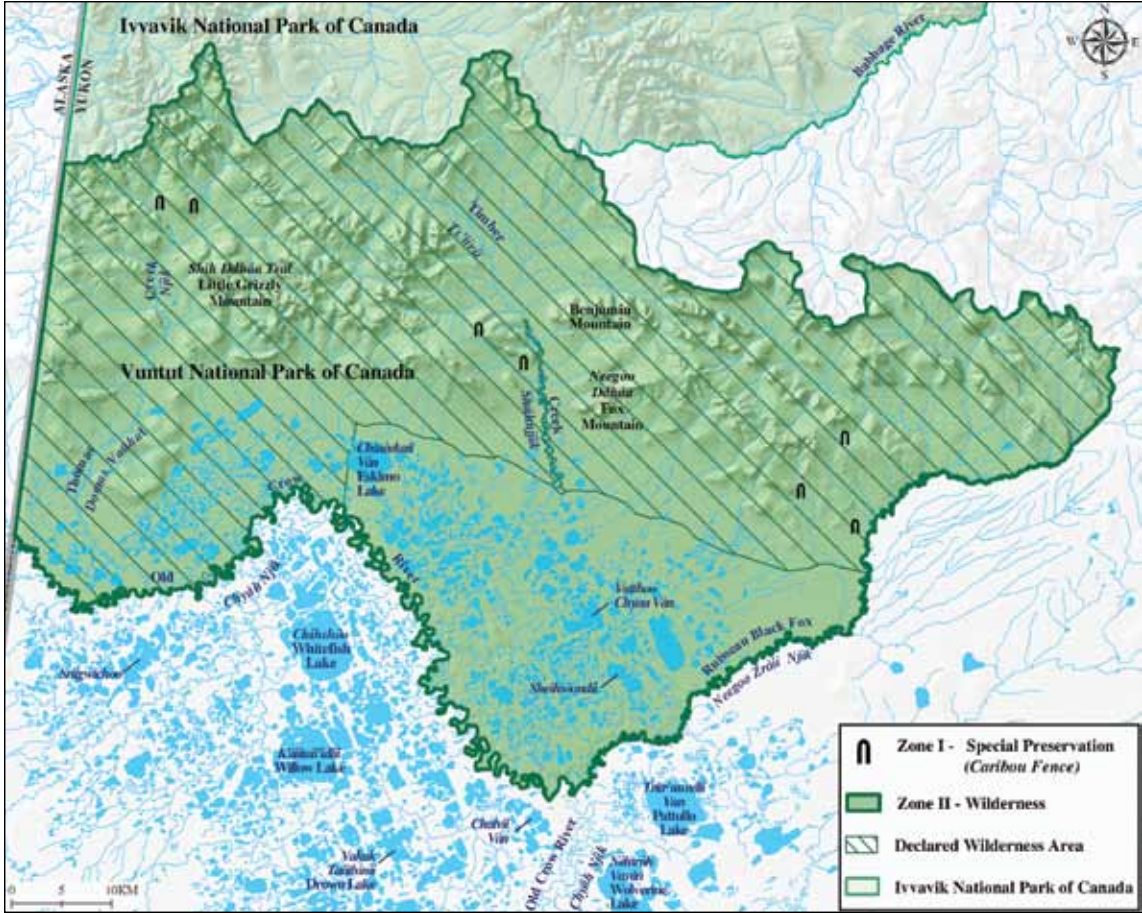
During the winter months when the lakes in Old Crow Flats are frozen and waterfowl are absent, the southeast portion of the park (Map 3) will be a temporal Zone III and guided commercial snowmobile trips and snowmobile-supported commercial dog sled trips (see section 5.1 above) will be permitted. This part of the park was not declared wilderness (see section 8.3 below). These are the only motorized activities that will be permitted.

8.3 WILDERNESS DECLARATION

The *Canada National Parks Act* provides for the designation, by regulation, of wilderness areas of the park. The intent of wilderness declaration is to assist in ensuring a high level of ecological integrity by preventing activities likely to impair wilderness character. Only those facilities and activities required for essential services and the protection of park resources will be permitted in declared wilderness areas. The major difference between park zoning and wilderness declaration is as follows:

- Park zoning is a planning tool—with ecological integrity as its primary consideration; it determines areas and sets limits on what and where uses can occur in a park. It can be amended every five years through the management plan review process.
- Wilderness declaration regulations are a legislative tool; they guarantee the public will have the highest degree of assurance that development and uses inconsistent with wilderness character will not occur. Consequently, they provide long-term natural-state protection for the park. Boundaries of a declared wilderness area can be changed only through the formal process of regulation amendment (which requires an Order in Council).

The proclamation of wilderness declaration for approximately 75% of the national park, (the area north of Old Crow Flats) occurred in March 2009. (Map 3).



Map 3 – Vuntut National Park zoning

9.0 Administration and Operations

At present, there are no park facilities or visitor infrastructure within the park. The base of operations is located in Old Crow, Yukon. The John Tizya Centre, which houses interpretive exhibits, a meeting area and offices for Vuntut National Park staff, Vuntut Gwitchin Government Heritage staff and Vuntut Development Corporation staff, serves as the park operation centre. The Old Crow Arctic Research Facility (to be completed in 2010) is a shared facility that will provide storage for the park's equipment. Operational communication in the park is provided via satellite phones.

There are no aircraft charter companies based in Old Crow. Aircraft charters fly to the park from Dawson and Inuvik. As Vuntut is a wilderness park, there will not be any established hiking trails or designated campsites. Wilderness area visitor facilities such as outhouses and bear poles may be provided as required.

Visitors are required to register before traveling in the park. Landing permits are required for aircraft landings by visitors or researchers in the park and requests for permits will be assessed on a case by case basis.

The *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement* provides direction with respect to the issuance of contracts for the provision of goods and services in the Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory for the development, operation and management of the park and the provision of employment opportunities. The objective is to have at least 50% of the public service employment positions in the park filled by qualified Vuntut Gwitchin citizens.



John Tizya Centre. Parks Canada/A. Morin



Parks Canada/K. Alexander

9.1 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Environmental stewardship reduces the impact of our daily activities on the environment. The idea of stewardship includes a range of issues from water quality and energy consumption to chemical use and contaminated sites. It also includes a wide variety of activities from recycling and reducing consumption to restoring disturbed landscapes.

High-priority areas for Vuntut National Park are hazardous materials management, waste management, air emissions and green procurement (the use of environmentally friendly products). Since much of the travel in the park is by park staff, it will be important to monitor park operations and mitigate as necessary.

10.0 Monitoring

With the approval of new national Guide to Management Planning (2008), a State of the Park Report is now required for all national parks every five years. The first State of the Park Report for Vuntut National Park was completed in 2009. The report is integral to Parks Canada's management process as it provides a measured understanding of the park's condition and trends in terms of its ecological integrity and heritage resources protection, public outreach education, facilitation of visitor experiences and people's connection to place. It also documents the implementation and effectiveness of the park's management plan and identifies issues and challenges to be considered in the management plan review done every five years. The State of the Park Report also contributes to the State of the Protected Heritage Areas Report, a biennial national report, which documents the state of all national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas administered by Parks Canada.

The information in the State of the Park Report is the best available description of the current state and trends of various aspects and activities of the park. The information comes primarily from monitoring and research undertaken by Parks Canada, other government agencies, partner organizations and universities. An ecological monitoring program was completed for the park in 2008. While the park has an active monitoring program, this databank is relatively limited due to the short period in which monitoring has been undertaken. As a result, many measures may have insufficient data to determine the condition or trends. Continued implementation of the monitoring program complimented by the addition of several measures, the refinement of existing



Parks Canada/I. McDonald

thresholds and the development of new thresholds will facilitate improved reporting capability for the next State of the Park Report.

Old Crow River dynamics and aquatic health are two measures that were to be used in assessing the condition and trend of the Freshwater (rivers and streams) indicator. However, as these measures are being conducted in the Old Crow Flats it makes more sense to report on them as part of the Old Crow Flats Wetland complex. As a result the freshwater indicator has been removed from the monitoring program but the two measures have been included under the Old Crow Flats Wetland complex. Table 3 in the Appendix describes the existing and future measures for the Vuntut National Park ecological monitoring program.

11.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment



Parks Canada

11.1 INTRODUCTION

This strategic environmental assessment briefly documents the approach used to identify and assess key issues and critical decision-making factors associated with the 2010 Vuntut National Park of Canada management plan. Consistent with guidance in The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plans and Program Proposals (2004), the focus of the strategic environmental assessment was to identify strategic considerations at a broad, conceptual level, rather than by assessing individual actions in detail. Parks Canada recognises that strategic environmental assessments are part of a tiered approach to assessing impacts. Detailed impact assessment analysis of individual projects and activities will take place after the management plan has been approved and initiatives are considered for implementation.

11.2 ASSESSMENT APPROACH AND FINDINGS

Management planning is a strategic planning exercise which fulfills many key principles of good strategic environmental assessment practice. Both processes use strategic analysis in support of informed decision-making. Both typically define a vision, objectives, targets, and means to follow-up or measure success and then apply these findings to make necessary refinements. This degree of fulfilment of strategic environmental assessment requirements during the planning process is acknowledged and was taken into consideration when deciding on the degree of effort required for the management plan strategic environmental assessment.

The 2010 Vuntut National Park management plan builds upon direction established in the 2004 management plan and the 2000 interim management guidelines. A comparison of

the 2004 and 2010 management plans was made to identify key differences. A detailed strategic environmental assessment analysis of each key action was undertaken for the 2004 management plan. The findings of that assessment predicted positive outcomes for heritage resources, enhanced relations with the Vuntut Gwitchin, and increased levels of public understanding and enjoyment. A simpler approach was used to assess the 2010 plan. It was assessed by confirming the impact analysis undertaken in the 2004 strategic environmental assessment remains valid, and then focusing on the key differences between the 2004 and 2010 management plans. Please consult the Screening Report for Vuntut National Park Management Plan (Parks Canada), for full documentation of the strategic environmental assessment approach used to assess the 2004 management plan. The likely impacts and outcomes associated with management plan key strategies are briefly assessed in the following sections of the strategic environmental assessment.

FOUR KEY STRATEGIES

The management plan has four key strategies. They focus on: providing visitor experience opportunities including outreach for those outside the park; maintenance and improvement of ecological integrity; continuing and strengthening traditional Gwitchin lifestyles inside the park and out; and protecting and presenting cultural resources including palaeontological resources. All strategies are clearly directed at Parks Canada realising its vision for Vuntut National Park.

Experiencing Vuntut Gwitchin Country

Present levels of visitor use are extremely low. No facilities are available and park visitors must be fully equipped and self reliant. The management plan suggests development of an outreach plan to reach audiences beyond Vuntut National Park, and the visitor gateway community of Old Crow. Efforts directed at increasing the service offer (commercial guiding, small scale facility development,

enhanced education and outreach, improved Old Crow service offer), focus on broadening the range of visitor activities available, increasing visitation, and educating the public on the role of Vuntut National Park in Parks Canada's system of protected areas. Realising significant visitor increases may be hampered by high travel costs. The plan prescribes means to ensure continued maintenance of ecological integrity while providing high quality wilderness experiences. Enhanced visitor experiences, and increased knowledge and support for Vuntut National Park, are anticipated outcomes.

Looking After the Land and the Animals for the Future

The population decline of the Porcupine Caribou Herd is a key ecological issue for Vuntut National Park. Many of the factors affecting the population occur outside the park boundary and are beyond Parks Canada's direct control. Parks Canada will continue to be an active member in the cooperative management of the caribou herd. This will be accomplished by research, education, and population monitoring. The plan contains provisions to improve monitoring undertaken to determine the state of the tundra ecosystem in the park. Results will be reported in the next Vuntut State of the Park Report and used to design any needed interventions to address the state of the resource.

The management plan proposes continued use of a comprehensive, interagency approach for addressing resource management issues. Use of a greater ecosystem management approach increases the probability for realising targets and goals. Enhanced levels of understanding, collaboration, and cooperation between neighbouring agencies and individuals involved in land management activities are anticipated. Present high levels of ecological integrity in the park are expected to persist. Provisions to further integrate Traditional Knowledge into the ecological monitoring program are described.

Living and Teaching a Traditional Lifestyle

The plan specifies roles for the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, Vuntut Gwitchin Government, and Parks Canada in the management of Vuntut National Park. These roles are consistent with those defined in the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*. Vuntut Gwitchin seasonal use of the land has continued uninterrupted for generations. Traditional uses include berry-picking, fishing, hunting, furbearer trapping and spiritual rejuvenation on the land. The management plan makes provision for these activities to continue. Evidence to date suggests traditional use and recreational use of the park appear to be within the ecological and social carrying capacity of the ecosystem. A stronger connection between Gwitchin people, the land, and their cultural heritage is expected.

Your Past Shapes Your Future

The 2009 Vuntut National Park State of the Park Report rated cultural resource condition as fair and improving. The cultural resource management program is expected to benefit from development of a Cultural Resources Values Statement, and a Cultural Resources Management Strategy. Increased knowledge, and more effective management of resources, is anticipated within the life of this park management plan.

Wilderness Declaration

Declaration of the northern three quarters of the park in 2009 helped ensure high levels of ecological integrity. No development or activities that may impair the wilderness character of the park are permitted in this area. Vuntut is a remote, wilderness national park so no designated campsites, or trail systems will be developed. The management plan states minimal public health and safety facilities such as bear poles for safe temporary storage of foodstuffs, and outhouses, may be provided if required. In the southern quarter of the park, simple, rustic accommodation may be developed as part of a commercial guiding enterprise. The scale of these facilities will be simple and rustic in keeping with the

wilderness character of the park. Impact assessments will be conducted prior to Parks Canada making a decision to proceed, modify, or abandon these undertakings.

Sport Fishing

A regulated sport fishery will be established in the park. There will be no fishing for salmon species as regional populations are declining. No significant impacts are expected to local or regional fish populations as the number of anglers is expected to be very low, and Parks Canada has the necessary expertise to manage sport fishing activities. Enhanced visitor satisfaction levels may result.

Public Engagement

The management planning process offered considerable opportunity for input from the general public, the Vuntut Gwitchin, and stakeholders. This review process resulted in a strengthened management plan clearly focused on delivery of Parks Canada’s integrated mandate. The plan recognizes effective public education is essential to Canadians understanding why the site is of national significance, and the importance of Parks Canada’s work as mandated steward of these heritage resources. Increased levels of public knowledge, understanding and support for Parks Canada, and Vuntut National Park, are expected.

11.3 CONCLUSIONS

Management plan objectives support the enhanced delivery of Parks Canada’s integrated mandate: heritage resource protection; facilitation of visitor experience opportunities; and enhanced public outreach and education. Actions focus on reducing or eliminating stressors acting on heritage resources, or on capitalizing on available opportunities for improved program delivery. Management plan implementation is likely to result in positive effects for the state of heritage resources, levels of visitor satisfaction, and result in stronger working relationships between Parks Canada and the Vuntut Gwitchin.

This management plan is largely a confirmation of existing direction from the 2004 management plan. It responds to the need to restructure management plans to meet new guidelines, to focus on integrated mandate delivery, and to address emerging issues identified through monitoring and reporting. Key issues identified in the 2009 State of the Park Report were incorporated into the management planning process. Existing Parks Canada monitoring and reporting mechanisms will be used to measure and report on the degree of success obtaining these goals.

The management planning process is a participatory, iterative, and risk averse approach focused on continuous improvement. This is achieved by periodic review and updates of management plans, monitoring and reporting on progress in attaining goals, development of other supportive plans as needed following approval of the site management plan (e.g., Cultural Resources Management Strategy), and opportunities for additional assessment of likely impacts from program implementation (e.g., assessment of project proposals under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* subsequent to plan approval). This iterative approach provides a solid foundation for Parks Canada making informed decisions and realising its goals at Vuntut National Park of Canada. Impact analysis and management decision-making related to management plan implementation should be based in the initial analysis completed during management plan development and its associated strategic environmental assessment review, and a more thorough analysis via detailing planning or project planning once essential details are developed. The intent is for the strategic environmental assessment to inform the subsequent review stages of individual undertakings as they are planned and implemented. This iterative approach provides the necessary checks and balances to minimise the chance of overlooking key issues when managing and making decisions. In conclusion, the 2010 management plan is expected to achieve the desired results for

ecological integrity, cultural resources, visitor experience, and public outreach/education in Vuntut National Park. The management plan is not expected to result in any significant adverse cumulative effects.

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Glossary

Area management approaches: involve describing objectives and integrated set of actions for resource protection, visitor experience opportunities, and public education to be achieved over time in a distinctive area of the protected heritage place.

Connection to place: reflects the relevance and importance of protected heritage places to Canadians. The concept expresses the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual attachment Canadians and visitors feel toward our natural and cultural heritage places.

Cultural resource: is a human work, or a place that gives evidence of human activity or has spiritual or cultural meaning, and that has been determined to be of historic value. Cultural resources are distinguished from other resources in a park by virtue of their assigned historic value. This value derives from an association with an aspect or aspects of human history. Parks Canada may apply the term cultural resource to a wide range of resources in its custody, including, but not limited to, cultural landscapes and landscape features, archaeological sites, structures, engineering works, artifacts and associated records.

Cultural Resource Management: applies to all activities that affect cultural resources administered by Parks Canada, whether those activities pertain primarily to the care of cultural resources or to the promotion of public understanding, enjoyment and appropriate use of them.

Cultural Resource Values Statement: is a strategic document that identifies cultural resources and their values for heritage places located outside national historic sites and managed by the Parks Canada Agency, and sets out objectives to protect cultural resources and present their values.

Ecological integrity: with respect to a national park, is a condition that is determined to be characteristic of its natural region and likely to persist, including abiotic components, the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change, and processes. National parks are managed so as to protect ecological integrity, ensuring that all plant and animal species native to the area can continue to live in their natural habitats over their natural ranges, without threats to their long-term survival.

Intangible Cultural Resource: applies to place names, long-ago stories, songs, personal stories, knowledge of the land and associated social values.

Public Outreach Education: is reaching Canadians at home, at leisure, at school and in their communities through effective and relevant learning opportunities designed to increase understanding and appreciation of the natural and historical heritage places, and to encourage individuals and communities to support and become engaged in their protection and presentation.

State of Protected Heritage Areas Report: is a public report that documents progress in achieving Parks Canada's mandate. The report is required by legislation and is presented to the minister every two years.

Temporal Zoning: is one of the tools used in Parks Canada's zoning system. It is used in circumstances when seasonal changes can justify a temporal change in the zoning, e.g., Zone II to Zone III, as long as the prevailing management objectives implied by the original zone designation are not compromised.

Visitor Experience: The sum total of a visitor's personal interaction with heritage places and/or people that awakens their senses, affects their emotions, stimulates their mind and leaves them with a sense of attachment to these places.

Vuntut Gwitchin Government: The government for the people of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Summary of Planned Actions

Table 2 — Summary of Actions for the 2010 Vuntut National Park Management Plan

<p>KEY STRATEGY 1: EXPERIENCING VUNTUT GWITCHIN COUNTRY</p>
<p>Develop tourism capacity to support visitor experience opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine level of interest in a range of potential visitor experience opportunities in the park, and where feasible, pursue ways of offering these opportunities with the Vuntut Development Corporation, Vuntut Gwitchin Government and/or the tourism industry. • Identify and assess fixed wing and helicopter landing sites (with potential for hiking, cultural sites). • Explore potential of Ivvavik/Vuntut hikes. • Develop standards of training and experience required to obtain Parks Canada guide license. • Collaborate with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to train local people as guides. • Develop guidelines for assessing commercial outfitting and guiding applications in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee, and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council. • Develop a visitor orientation package. • Contribute to national consultations relating to the proposed National Parks of Canada Wild Animals Regulations, which would include provisions for the use of firearms for protection. • Pursue a regulation change to allow for sport fishing in the park, with the exception of all species of salmon. • Pursue a long term collaboration with Air North for marketing. <p>Memorable visitor experience opportunities offered at the John Tizya Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade the existing Vuntut National Park exhibits. • Continue to jointly fund the interpreter/receptionist position at the John Tizya Centre with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government. • Ensure the exhibits and personal interpretive offer remain fresh and dynamic (focus on programming). • Pursue the development of an exhibit at the Old Crow Airport. • Develop an exhibit renewal plan.
<p>Public Outreach Program aimed at local residents and targeted Canadian audiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update website with new offers. • Develop a Field Unit Outreach Strategy. • Collaboratively develop and deliver local programming at the John Tizya Centre . • Optimize and deliver school programming for Old Crow youth. • Continued support of community learning programs and events.

**KEY STRATEGY 2:
 LOOKING AFTER THE LAND AND THE ANIMALS FOR THE FUTURE**

Management actions are based on the best traditional and scientific knowledge available.

- Continue to implement the Vuntut National Park ecological integrity monitoring program; develop and implement ecological integrity measures for the tundra ecosystem and continue to develop and refine protocols and thresholds.
- Further incorporate Traditional Knowledge into the ecological integrity monitoring program in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council.
- Support International Polar Year legacy projects within the context of the ecological integrity monitoring program.
- Hold annual community research meetings (in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council).
- Explore options to assist Vuntut Gwitchin Government, the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and others (Yukon Environment , Fisheries and Oceans) to research chinook salmon in the park and region.

Integrated decision-making within the regional ecosystem.

- Participate in relevant planning processes in the region.
- Continue to work with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board to identify and review research and monitoring priorities to support Porcupine Caribou Herd conservation initiatives and subsequent management actions. Develop and implement actions to address the decline of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.
- Advance the national Species at Risk Program in partnership with others.
- Work cooperatively with North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Yukon government and others to implement those sections of the North Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Plan relevant to Vuntut National Park.

Fostering a culture of stewardship.

- Complete and implement the Grade 4 Environmental Stewardship Program for Yukon schools.
- Develop outreach products targeted to Canadians that illustrate the impact of climate change on the Vuntut Gwitchin way of life and the ecology of the park.
- Involve community members in ecological integrity monitoring where feasible.
- Work with the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and Vuntut Gwitchin Government to educate Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation park users and visitors about wildlife safety and ethics for travelling on the land, incorporating both Traditional Knowledge and science.
- Work with the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council to develop protocols for maintenance of cabins located within Vuntut National Park.

**KEY STRATEGY 3:
LIVING AND TEACHING A TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE**

Vuntut Gwitchin rights within the park are recognized, protected, understood and supported by park staff, visitors and other Canadians.

- Develop website and orientation material for visitors that informs them of Vuntut Gwitchin rights.
- Work collaboratively with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council to implement the provisions of the *Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement*.

Opportunities for Old Crow residents to spend time on the land, in order to facilitate the passing and sharing of knowledge between residents themselves, and with Parks Canada staff, are supported.

- Work with Vuntut Gwitchin Government Heritage Branch, North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School to support science and culture camps in Vuntut National Park.
- With the Vuntut Gwitchin Government provide land- based experiential learning opportunities such as youth science and culture camps.

**KEY STRATEGY 4:
YOUR PAST SHAPES YOUR FUTURE**

Cultural and palaeontological resources found in the park are protected and managed.

- Ensure delivery of Cultural Resource Management training to staff.
- Develop a Cultural Resource Values Statement together with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and community.
- Develop a Cultural Resource Management Strategy together with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and community.
- Develop appropriate visitor guidelines for visiting the caribou fences and other culturally sensitive sites in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage committee and North Yukon Renewable Resources Council.
- Attempt to revisit cultural sites recorded in the 1970s and 1980s and document changes.
- Harmonize existing federal and Vuntut Gwitchin data bases.
- Develop a strategy for the management of paleontological resources in collaboration with the Yukon government and Vuntut Gwitchin Government.
- In collaboration with the Yukon government and others facilitate proposed palaeontological research in the park.
- Engage in the benefits offered by Old Crow Arctic Research Facility.
- Continue to record new cultural sites and maintain an up-to-date database.

The understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the cultural landscapes, resources and values of the park are promoted.

- Develop a curriculum-linked on-line educational resource, based on the existing caribou fence interactive, for distribution to Canadian schools.
- Continue to assist the Vuntut Gwitchin Government with the commemoration of the First Nation's long relationship with the Porcupine Caribou Herd and the related landscape as a national historic site.
- Support Vuntut Gwitchin Government-led oral history research projects; work with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to incorporate Vuntut Gwitchin oral history material in park management and public outreach.

The understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the palaeontological resources of the park are promoted.

- Explore partnerships to develop an outreach program on fossils found in Vuntut National Park to make palaeontology come alive for Canadians.

Appendix

Table 3 — Existing and potential future measures for the Vuntut National Park ecological monitoring program

ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT	ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY INDICATOR		
	Old Crow Flats wetland complex	Tundra	Forests
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White-winged, black and surf scoters • Peregrine falcons • Aquatic health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porcupine Caribou Herd • Vegetation composition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest songbirds
Ecosystem Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permafrost • Vegetation productivity • Old Crow River dynamics • Snow on/off dates • Lake ice break-up date • Shrubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation productivity • Snow on/off dates • Shrubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest structure and vegetation composition • Snow on/off dates
Stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permafrost • Vegetation productivity • Snow on/off dates • Old Crow River dynamics • Lake ice break-up date • Shrubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation productivity • Shrubs 	

Note: Measures in bold are currently being implemented; other measures will be tested and implemented where feasible.