

Caribou / Munroes Provincial Park

Located along the Northumberland Strait, northwest of the town of Pictou, is a community known as Caribou. Woodland Caribou lived in this region of Nova Scotia until European settlers hunted the herds to extinction in the 19th century. Nearby locations using the name include Caribou Harbour, Caribou Island, Caribou Marsh, Central Caribou and Caribou River. Those place names speak volumes of the population of Caribou that used to roam there. The Mi'kmaq people have hunted and fished the woods and waters of these shores long before the European explorers visited the area.

Everyone knows what a Caribou is, it's that animal that we see on the 25 cent piece, or the animal that pulls Santa's Sleigh! Caribou originated in the Mi'kmaq language as Qualipu, pronounced "Kull-ee-boo" which means "shoveller" and comes from the Mi'kmaq word Qualipi, meaning "to shovel snow" Caribou shovel snow to get to the grasses and they shovel the lichens and mosses off the trees and stones to feed.

The Caribou was one animal the Mi'kmaq made great use of. The hide was used for shelter and clothing, the meat was eaten, the organs used to tan hides, the dried internals and tendons to tie things together and the antlers and bones for tools like hooks and needles.

The bladder of two Caribou was used to make water proof foot wear. True to Mi'kmaq protocol the animals are honored by performing a dance called "the dance for your new shoes".

