

# 16

## Central Tundra

*Not represented:* Lands are reserved for a national park on Wager Bay



Region 16

### WHERE TIME AND LIGHT STAND STILL

Glorious it is to see,  
The caribou flocking down from the forests,  
Spreading out over plains of white,  
...Glorious it is to see,  
The great musk oxen,  
Gathering in herds...Glorious to see...

*Traditional Inuit song recorded in the Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition, 1921-24*

### THE LAND:

Tundra superimposed on the Canadian Shield is the characteristic that makes this region stand out. The landscape is remarkably uniform - an endless series of low ridges, broken by a myriad of jigsaw-puzzle lakes and broad rivers. Evidence of surging Pleistocene glaciers is found throughout the region. Eskers wind across the land. Old beaches and deposits of marine clay over 200 metres above present sea level show that the entire region must have been awash in gigantic lakes and rivers at the melting of the last great ice sheets.

This region is wilderness unbroken, save for a few communities. However, evidence of human use is found throughout the region - inukshuks (stone markers), food caches, and hunters' blinds, pits and campsites that have been used for centuries.

### VEGETATION:

The entire region is characterized by an



Muskox

almost continuous cover of low tundra vegetation consisting of dwarf birch, willow, Labrador tea, mountain avens and other tundra flowers, and various species of the blueberry clan. A broken fringe of boreal forest clings to sheltered river valleys.

### WILDLIFE:

Here is the world of the Pleistocene, or as close as one can get to it today - a world where the wildlife remains in its primeval state. Here you can watch white wolves hunting among vast herds of caribou, barren-ground grizzlies patrolling their river-

bank domains and polar bears cruising the coast of Hudson Bay hunting for seals. Inland from the Hudson Bay coast, muskox bulls stare, stiff-legged, at human intruders. Along the Arctic coast, untold numbers of Canada geese, snow geese, tundra swans and other waterfowl nest and moult. Overhead, golden eagles, bald eagles, gyrfalcons, peregrine falcons, rough-legged hawks and other birds of prey soar.



Abandoned Hudson's Bay Post, Wager Bay

rolling tundra give this area its special appeal. A reversing falls and two polynyas (areas of the sea that never freeze) - one at the falls and the other at the mouth of Wager Bay - are features of special interest.

The wildlife that has attracted hunters to this area since ancient times still abounds. Polar bears congregate here in summer and can regularly be seen along the shore; peregrine falcons and gyrfalcons nest on the cliffs; caribou roam the tundra hills. Tent rings and meat caches are found along the shoreline, indicating that the area has long been a favoured hunting ground. Residents from Repulse Bay and other Keewatin communities still travel to the area to hunt for seals and caribou and to fish for arctic char.

### STATUS OF NATIONAL PARKS:

While no national parks have yet been established in this natural region, in 1996 lands were reserved under the Territorial Lands Act for a national park in the Wager Bay area. This area has been proposed for a national park since 1978. Wager Bay, a veritable inland sea, extends more than 150 kilometres inland from Hudson Bay. Glacier-polished islands and shorelines, colourful cliffs and tidal flats backed by

Wager Bay remains almost completely untouched. There are no permanent inhabitants, although a commercial lodge was built in 1987 that caters primarily to natu-



Caribou, Thelon Game Sanctuary

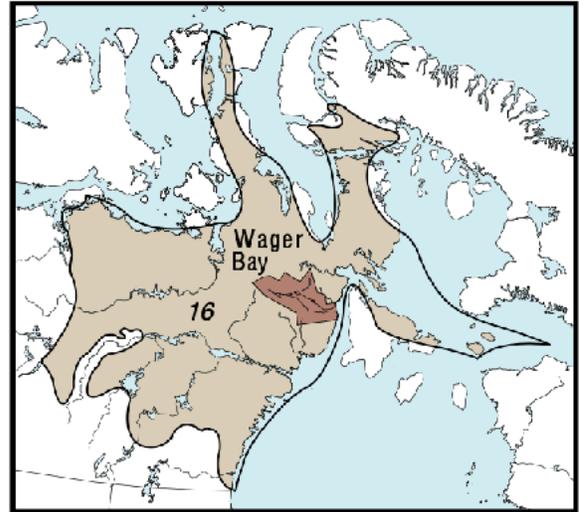
## Natural Region 16

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ralists. The entire natural region lies within the Nunavut Settlement Area, as defined in the Nunavut Land Claim Final Agreement. Under the terms of the claim, Inuit own lands on Wager Bay that may be exchanged for lands outside a national park, should a park be established.

A national park could only be established here with the consent of the Inuit of Kivalliq and the Government of the Northwest Territories. All technical studies have been completed and consultations with local residents in five communities and with representatives of the Kivalliq Inuit Association (KIA) are concluded. Parks Canada and KIA have initiated Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement negotiations towards a national park, as stipulated through the land claim agreement.

There are unresolved concerns about a small area of high mineral potential within the proposed park in the headwaters of the Brown River. The mining industry would like to see this area excluded from a park. Positive findings in the area by the industry may also result in requests for transportation access through Wager Bay in the future.



Wager Bay is now referred to as Ukkusiksalik National Park.



Hanbury River

**Settlements**

Taloyoak  
Baker Lake  
Rankin Inlet

**Land Uses**

Traditional Livelihood

**Aboriginal Peoples**

Inuit (Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut)

**Parks and Natural Areas**

Ukkusiksalik (Wager Bay) National Park

**Further Information**



Caribou grazing on the tundra near Takoyoak, with the Arctic Ocean in the background.

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