



Zehdzo Got'Inę Gots'ę Nákedı

Sahtú Ragóza (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting



November 9, 2020

Backgrounder: Report on the Colville 2020 Public Listening (Hearing) Session and Reasons for Decision

Overview

In April 2019, in response to conservation concerns about the three caribou ecotypes that inhabit or travel through the Sahtú region, the Zehdzo Got'Inę Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB) decided to undertake a series of public listening (hearing) sessions to address the question, “What are the most effective ways to conserve caribou?”

Colville Lake (“Colville”) offered to host the first public listening session, since the topic is of particular importance to that community. The SRRB accepted the offer, taking into consideration which of the five topics planned for the five public listening sessions was best suited for each of the five Sahtú communities.

Colville submitted their *Dehlá Got'Inę ɣədə (Caribou) Plan* and companion *Dehlá Got'Inę Ts'jduweh ɣədə ɣeza (Ancient Caribou Law)* for SRRB approval on October 21, 2019. The public listening session was held on January 21-23, 2020, following two regional community conservation planning workshops, two pre-session teleconferences, and two rounds of information requests.

The resulting report, *Sahtú Ragóza (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting*, contains the SRRB's assessment of the evidence from the Colville proceeding and provides eight decisions and 18 recommendations on ten key issues related to caribou harvest regulation in the Sahtú region.

The Decisions

The SRRB's decisions and recommendations are based on a holistic and biocultural approach to caribou conservation.

- The SRRB determines that harvest regulation for all caribou populations must be subject to community conservation planning (CCP) measures;
- The SRRB will remove the total allowable harvest in Sahtú Barren-Ground Caribou Hunting Area S/BC/01 once Colville's community conservation plan has been completed and approved. The SRRB will regularly review the conservation outcomes under the community conservation planning approach. The SRRB reserves the right to re-apply the total allowable harvest if required for effective conservation;
- Conditions are identified for the approval of Colville's community conservation plan and Délı̨ne's revised 2019-2021 *Belare Wíle Gots'ę ęekwę (Caribou for All Time)* plan;
- The plan specifically defines a system for planning based on recognized community responsibilities for individual barren-ground caribou herds (*see Table 1, D1.2*);
- Youth will be invited to play meaningful roles in the entire process for future public listening sessions;
- The 2021 public listening session will include a full discussion of the role that residency requirements and hunter education play in fostering or inhibiting respect for Dene protocols in the Sahtú region;
- The SRRB identifies the need for capacity support and program funding for the CCP system, and commits to working with co-management partners to develop a feasible means of implementing the Sahtú CCP approach;
- In addition, 18 recommendations provide guidance for consideration by other co-management partners, including recommendations supporting interim measures to immediately implement the Colville and Délı̨ne plans.

For more information on the SRRB's decisions and recommendations, see *Table 1: Key Issues, Decisions, and Recommendations* in the report.

The Process

Given evidence regarding the threatened status of ɬekwé (Bluenose East barren-ground caribou), Colville Lake's expressed concerns about ɬadə (barren-ground caribou) in their traditional territory, the threatened status of todzi (boreal caribou), and the consideration of shúhta goɬepé (mountain caribou) as a species of special concern in the NWT, the SRRB concluded there was sufficient conservation concern to trigger a hearing. Under section 13.8.21 of the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (SDMCLCA), a hearing can be called when harvest restrictions are being considered or when the SRRB is satisfied that a hearing is desirable.

The SRRB recognizes that this is the first time that a wildlife co-management board in the NWT has convened a hearing focused on a single "hot topic" and encompassing multiple herds and ecotypes. The SRRB carefully considered both Indigenous knowledge evidence and science-based evidence in making the decisions and recommendations included in this report. In addition to receiving Colville's community conservation plan, the SRRB also received a submission from ENR and convened community conservation planning sessions that resulted in Sahtú community submissions. Moreover, the SRRB encouraged neighbouring wildlife management authorities, nations, and communities to register as parties and contribute submissions.

All five Sahtú communities contributed to the public listening session, in addition to nine other registered parties. In addition, elders, Colville community members, and the broader public were encouraged to participate. The questions and presentation by the Sahtú Youth Network were a special highlight of the proceeding.

Language

Many Dene concepts do not directly correspond to English terms. A glossary of Dene Kədə terminology important to understanding *Sahtú Ragóɬa* (Hunting Law) and Dene approaches to wildlife harvesting is provided in the report.

We ask that journalists respect this use of Dene terms and orthography, while also keeping in mind the potential for copy and paste errors. Free Dene unicode keyboards and an online tool are available at denefont.com.

Audio of speakers talking in their language at the 2020 Colville Listening Sessions is available on the SRRB's public registry at www.srrb.nt.ca. An index of speakers can be found on page 91 of the report.

About the Ɂehdzo Got'Inę Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)

The Ɂehdzo Got'Inę Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) is the co-management board established by the *Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement* of 1993 (*SDMCLCA*) as the main instrument of wildlife and wildlife habitat management in the Sahtú region of the Northwest Territories.

Our Dene name means “Helpers of the Ɂehdzo Got'Inę, the Trap People.” We work together with Ɂehdzo got'Inę (renewable resources councils) in the five communities of the Sahtú region to maintain Dene and Métis harvesting traditions and keep the land and animals healthy for future generations.

Interview Subjects Available

Given the complexity and importance of caribou management and conservation in the Sahtú, the SRRB is working to coordinate media access to a range of experts.

George Barnaby, past advisor to the SRRB and chair of the Colville Lake listening sessions. George has lived on the land as a hunter and trapper near his home community of Fort Good Hope and is knowledgeable in community conservation planning as a wildlife management strategy.

Samuel Haché, alternate board member on the SRRB and biologist for the Canadian Wildlife Service. Samuel can speak to the SRRB's decision-making process, and how indigenous knowledge and science were considered as evidence in the decision to set aside total allowable harvest.

Deborah Simmons, executive director of the SRRB. Deborah is available to answer technical background questions and discuss the details of the report.

Walter Bezha, past advisor to the SRRB and current Chair of the Délıne Ɂohda K'áowə Kə (Elder's Council). Walter has been actively involved in a caribou traditional knowledge study in the Sahtu Region since 2006. He can also speak to Délıne's revised 2019-2021 *Belare Wíle Gots'ę Ɂekwé* (*Caribou for All Time*) plan.

Behdzi Ahda" First Nation in Colville Lake will be sending out their own press release with information for media.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Laura Busch, SRRB Media Liaison

media@srrb.nt.ca

(867) 688-4449