

# Dehlá Got'ıne ʔədə Plan

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**Prepared by the Colville Lake  
Renewable Resources Council**

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# Table of Contents

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SUMMARY.....	1
BACKGROUND: WHY A DEHLÁ GOT’JNE ʔƏDƏ PLAN .....	2
PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE ʔƏDƏ CONSERVATION.....	5
APPLICATION OF THE DEHLÁ GOT’JNE PLAN .....	6
GOAL 1: REVITALIZING DEHLÁ GOT’JNE ʔEʔÁ .....	9
1.2 IMPORTANT DEHLÁ GOT’JNE ʔEʔÁ TO CONSIDER .....	9
1.3 HOW TO REVITALIZE DEHLÁ GOT’JNE ʔEʔÁ? .....	9
GOAL 2. DEHLÁ GOT’JNE CONSERVATION APPROACH.....	11
2.1 WHY FORMALIZING THE DEHLÁ GOT’JNE CONSERVATION APPROACH IS REQUIRED .....	11
2.2 COMMUNITY BASED CONSERVATION PROCESS.....	12
2.2.1 ADOPT A SET OF CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES.....	12
2.2.2 DEHLÁ GOT’JNE ʔƏDƏ PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT .....	12
2.2.3 PROPOSED ROLES OF THE CONSERVATION PARTNERS .....	13
GOAL 3: LOCAL HARVEST .....	15
3.1 IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL HARVEST .....	15
3.2 HARVEST REPORTING .....	15
3.3 HOW DO WE MONITOR THE ʔƏDƏ HARVEST IN THE DEHLÁ GOT’JNE AREA? .....	16
3.4 AUTHORIZING THE HARVEST OF NON-DEHLÁ GOT’JNE.....	16
GOAL 4: PROVIDE WRITTEN RECORDS OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE .....	17
4.1 THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE .....	17
4.2 WHAT KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE SHOULD WE CONSIDER? .....	18
GOAL 5: EDUCATE DEHLÁ GOT’JNE YOUTH.....	23
5.1 WHAT CAN WE DO TO EDUCATE OUR YOUTH? .....	23
GOAL 6: COMMUNICATIONS.....	24
6.1 WHAT COMMUNICATION TOOLS SHOULD WE CONSIDER?.....	24
APPENDIX A: DEHLÁ GOT’JNE ʔEʔA & SUMMARY PRESENTATION .....	25
APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF NWT CUMULATIVE IMPACT MONITORING PROGRAMS.....	26
APPENDIX C: REFERENCES .....	28

# Glossary

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"Arake Tue" means Horton Lake

"Dehlá Got'ine" means means the most northerly people who are members of the Behdzi Ahda"  
First Nation and members of the Ayoni Keh Land Corporation

"ʔeʔá means law

"Ts'jduweh" means ancient

SDMCLCA - Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement

SRRB – the ʔehdzo Got'ine ʔots'é Nákedı (Sahtu Renewable Resources Board)

TAH – Total Allowable Harvest

# Summary

The Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (SDMCLCA) was intended to recognize the self determination of Sahtu Dene and Metis and support the Dehlá Got'íne to exercise their authorities to protect wildlife directly through the Colville Lake RRC and through co-management arrangements with other governments and institutions.

This Dehlá Got'íne ʔədə Plan is developed to protect Dehlá Got'íne ʔədə by following Dehlá Got'íne ʔeʔá. The SDMCLCA and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples support the need for Indigenous knowledge, customs and practices to achieve conservation. In 2016, the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) held a hearing on Bluenose East (BNE) ʔədə, and adopted a community conservation planning approach as the best option for achieving conservation outcomes in the Sahtu region. This approach was accepted by the GNWT Minister in February 2017.

The Dehlá Got'íne have developed this ʔədə Plan to build on the objectives set out in our ʔədə Declaration:

1. We are the Dehlá Got'íne. Dehlá Got'íne were placed on Dehlá Got'íne traditional territory by Newehsíne. We have governed Dehlá Got'íne land for centuries, since time immemorial.
2. The ʔədə were placed on Dehlá Got'íne traditional territory by Newehsíne. Newehsíne gave us the gift of the ʔədə for us to take.
3. It is the Dehlá Got'íne responsibility to take care of the ʔədə and it is the responsibility of the ʔədə to take care of us.
4. We carry the history of Dehlá Got'íne grandfathers and grandmothers who carried the history of their grandfathers and grandmothers over an immense expanse of time and space.
5. Dehlá Got'íne ancestors taught the Dehlá Got'íne how to maintain our relationship with the ʔədə so that the ʔədə will take care of Dehlá Got'íne through all Dehlá Got'íne hardships.
6. If Dehlá Got'íne abandon Dehlá Got'íne responsibilities with the ʔədə, then Dehlá Got'íne will lose the gift of the ʔədə.
7. The ʔədə are the Dehlá Got'íne connection to Dehlá Got'íne land and Dehlá Got'íne are part of the natural cycle of the ʔədə.
8. Dehlá Got'íne ʔədə are to be respected according to Dehlá Got'íne ʔeʔá.

## Background: Why a Dehlá Got'íne ʔədə Plan

The Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claims Agreement (SDMCLCA) was intended to prevent a colonial system of wildlife management, where the Government of the Northwest Territories made all of the decisions, and support a co-management system where decision-making responsibilities are shared among Indigenous authorities and public governments and institutions.

The SDMCLCA mandated the creation of a jointly appointed co-management body—the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (SRRB)—as a new institution of public government, and recognized the ongoing role of local Indigenous authorities operating as Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs) as the main instruments of wildlife management in the region. It also recognized the Sahtu Dene and Metis right to participate in data collection and decision-making about wildlife management, and promised to respect the Sahtu Dene way of life and harvesting customs.

However, the management of ʔədə in the Sahtu region has not fulfilled the objectives of the SDMCLCA. Instead of prioritizing traditional knowledge and pre-existing traditional conservation systems of the Sahtu Dene and Metis, decisions about ʔədə have been informed and directed mostly by the territorial government wildlife managers.

As a consequence, the current system has created an unprecedented colonial system of control and criminalization of Indigenous hunting. Until recently, harvesting quotas and other restrictions on Sahtu Dene and Metis harvesting have been considered to be the primary tools of management. While the importance of traditional knowledge and traditional conservation systems are recognized in the SDMCLCA and endorsed by government biologists, most of the actual involvement of Sahtu Dene and Metis in wildlife conservation has been limited to harvest reporting. The focus on harvest reporting sidelines a vast body of knowledge and expert advice, and creates significant controversy and divisiveness between the Sahtu communities and the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Environment and Renewable Resources (ENR).

In response to the continued marginalization of Sahtu Dene and Metis in wildlife conservation, the Sahtu RRCs passed a Research Resolution in September of 2012, calling for:

1. the SRRB to adopt Traditional Knowledge and Dene law as the leading edge of ʔədə and harvesting knowledge and law that will guide all efforts to protect the animals.
2. the SRRB and RRCs to jointly support ʔədə Traditional Knowledge and harvesting research, as well as appropriate scientific research that does not disrespect the animals or harm them in any way, benefits both the ʔədə and the communities, and helps to maintain and strengthen our relationship with ʔədə.
3. the SRRB, ENR, and RRCs to develop a joint memorandum of understanding about our collaborative role in designing, implementing and interpreting ʔədə and harvesting research.
4. ʔədə and harvesting research activities to involve our youth.

The Bluenose East ʔekwé (Caribou) Hearing in 2016 further exposed the weaknesses of the conventional management process, the alienation of Sahtu Dene and Metis, and the general disregard for the Sahtu Dene and Metis customs and way of life on the part of wildlife managers. As a consequence of Sahtu participation in the 2016 Hearing, which included strong interventions from Colville Lake, the SRRB made findings and recommendations that supported Colville Lake's positions that a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) is not required and that requirements for hunting tags and bull-only harvests were unjustified.

With respect to harvesting quotas, the SRRB concluded that:

*Based on a review of the Dene náowerá [Dene knowledge] and scientific evidence provided at the Sahtú Hearing, the SRRB has determined that conditions do not exist to invoke the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) provisions of the land claim agreement. The SRRB has determined that a TAH should be a conservation mechanism of last resort and, moreover, is a conservation mechanism that has less potential of successfully achieving conservation goals, based on the evidence provided in the hearing. For these reasons, the SRRB in its Report instead decided to adopt a community conservation planning approach.<sup>1</sup>*

The SRRB also determined that community-based ʔədə plans are a more effective mechanism for conservation of ʔədə than ENR's top-down, quota-driven approach:

*The conservation approach defined in Délı̨ne's Belare wı̨le Gots'é ʔekwé plan, and accepted by the SRRB based on the hearing evidence, offers a suite of conservation measures drawing upon community governance processes, and including sustainable máhsı ts'ı̨ı̨we (ceremonial) harvest management practices.<sup>2</sup>*

The SRRB also endorsed the self-regulation by Sahtu Dene and Metis in accordance with community conservation plans as being a more effective means of conservation than *Wildlife Act* regulations and enforcement. The SRRB recommended that the RRCs develop and implement community-based ʔədə plans as the primary mechanism for ʔədə harvesting, and for meeting obligations under the SDMCLCA. The SRRB also recommended that there be more research, based on science and Traditional Knowledge, on climate change and its impact on habitat and wildfires, and on other ecological changes (e.g. moose, muskoxen, wolves).

The Colville Lake RRC, based on the 2012 resolutions of the Sahtu RRCs, the *Final Decisions and Recommendations* of the SRRB from the 2016 Bluenose East ʔekwé (Caribou) Hearing, and the Dehlá Got'ı̨ne desire to continue to exercise Dehlá Got'ı̨ne inherent rights as land stewards to care for ʔədə, has committed to reflecting Dehlá Got'ı̨ne ancient ʔədə ɤɤá in a written form, and to developing this Dehlá Got'ı̨ne ʔədə Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> *Final Decisions and Recommendations* of the ʔehdzo Got'ı̨ne Gots'é Nákedı̨ (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) Regarding the Response of Hon. Robert McLeod (Minister of Environment and Natural Resources) to the SRRB Bluenose East ʔekwé (Caribou) Hearing Report ʔekwé hé Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ - Sustaining Relationships, October 26, 2016 ("SRRB Final Decisions and Recommendations 2016") at page 3.

<sup>2</sup> SRRB *Final Decisions and Recommendations 2016* at page 2.

This Dehlá Got'jne ʔədə Plan is consistent with the SDMCLCA “to provide the Sahtu Dene and Metis with the right to participate in decision-making concerning wildlife management, and in the collection of data respecting wildlife and wildlife habitat”, and with the NWT *Wildlife Act* “to develop policies and programs that promote cooperative and coordinated approaches to wildlife management”.

# Principles to Guide ʔədə Conservation

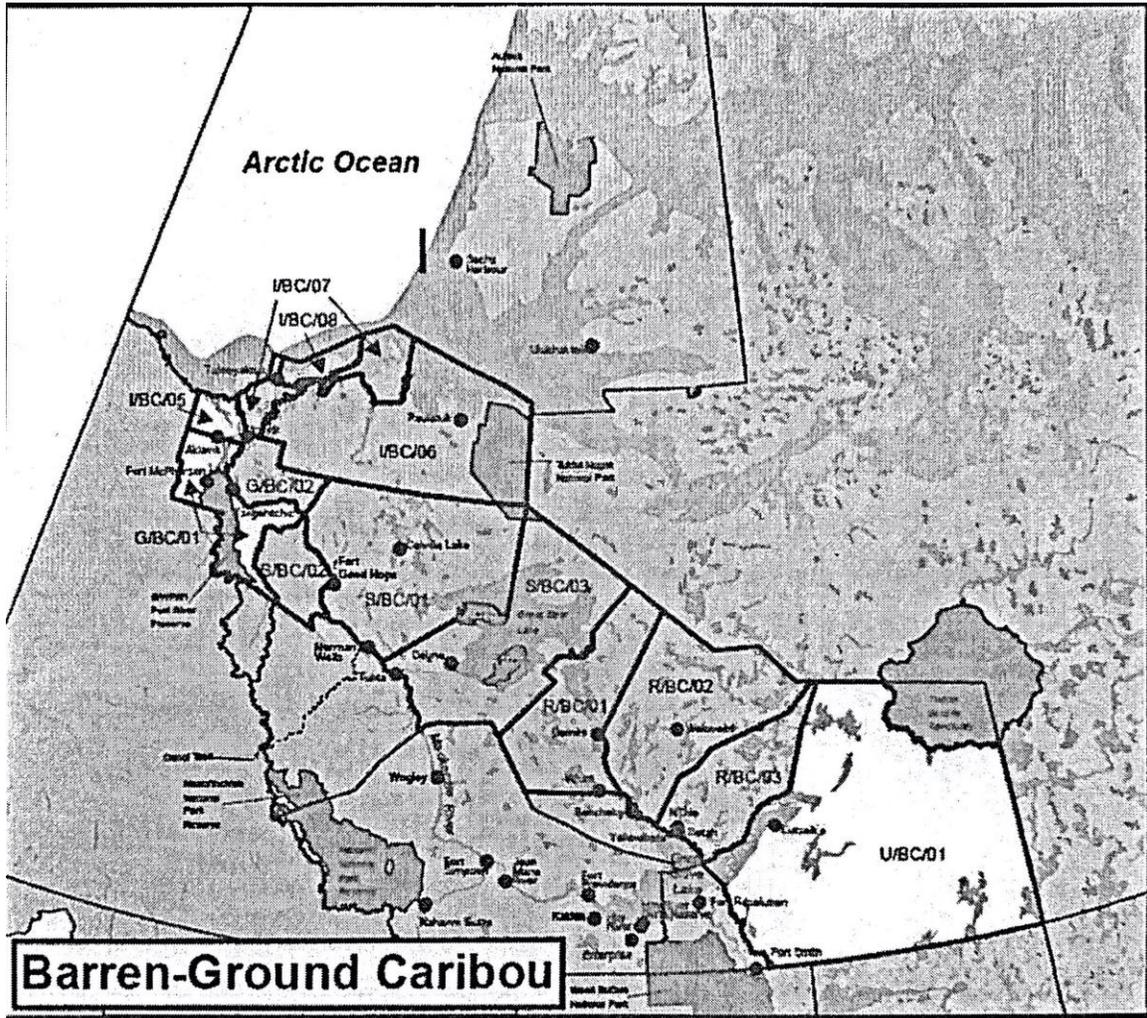
This Dehlá Got'íne ʔədə Plan is based on principles, which reflect the fundamental beliefs that guide the Dehlá Got'íne approach to ʔədə conservation:

1. The Dehlá Got'íne have a deep and profound relationship with ʔədə, and hold the inherent right to protect wildlife and the land according to Dehlá Got'íne ʔeʔá and customs.
2. Traditional Knowledge is the baseline knowledge that is required as the “leading edge” to guide all efforts toward ʔədə conservation, including harvesting.
3. Conservation decisions are to be guided by Dehlá Got'íne knowledge, and the advice of Dehlá Got'íne elders and land stewards.
4. Research, will be undertaken only if in compliance with ethical standards of research, and in accordance with Dehlá Got'íne ʔeʔá.
5. Harvesting practices that are contrary to Dehlá Got'íne ʔeʔá are prohibited.
6. Local harvest will be self-regulated, according to local conservation plans, as prescribed by the SRRB in 2016, and entrenched in the draft *Dehlá Got'íne ʔədə ʔeʔá, 2019*.
7. Policies, programs and decisions in regards to ʔədə conservation will be developed and acted upon collaboratively, recognizing that sharing responsibility for the conservation and management of ʔədə is mutually beneficial.
8. Conservation partners will address all potential impacts on ʔədə, including the effects of climate change and industrial activities.
9. Conservation must adopt a balanced approach that accommodates Dehlá Got'íne traditional customs and practices, including Dehlá Got'íne harvesting ʔeʔá.

These principles are reflected in our Plan. To ensure implementation and accountability, we are proposing that an **ʔədə Plan Implementation Agreement** be signed by the three management partners – Colville Lake RRC, SRRB and ENR – to signify formal acceptance of these conservation principles and to set out the responsibilities of each partner for implementing them.

# Application of the Dehlá Got'íne Plan

The Plan applies to the traditional harvesting territory of the Dehlá Got'íne, inclusive of S/BC/01 as defined by the GNWT.



# Goals of the Dehlá Got'jne Plan

Building on the Dehlá Got'jne ʔədə principles, the Dehlá Got'jne Plan also sets out specific goals. Our goals build on the objectives set out in the SDMCLCA to:

- recognize the Sahtu Dene and Metis wildlife harvesting rights;
- ensure the right to participate in decision-making concerning wildlife harvesting and management; and
- respect the harvesting and wildlife management customs and practices of the participants and provide for their ongoing needs for wildlife.

As set out in the “Brief on Inuit Hunting Rights” prepared by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in 1973:

During the debate on the [1917 Northwest Game] Act in the House of Commons, the Hon. W.J. Roche, Minister of the Interior and the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs noted:

One of the essential things in connection with this Act is to protect the game of the Northwest Territories for the inhabitants of that country. It is their main source of food supply, and if any person is allowed to go in there and indiscriminately slaughter whatever he thinks fit the Indians and the inhabitants of that enormous territory will be deprived of their food supply and will become pensioners of the Government, which would entail large appropriations by this Parliament for supplying them with food.

...it cannot be too often remarked that the Indian, when unspoiled by white men, is traditionally a conserver of wildlife, that is, he uses it but does not exterminate it. The Indians and the Eskimos knew what the results would be if they conducted a policy of extermination and they took common-sense precautions accordingly.

The original colonial system supported Indigenous hunting rights and exempted Indigenous people from legislative restrictions.

The Goals of the Dehlá Got'jne Plan are to:

1. Revitalize Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá, and cultural traditions as they relate to wildlife conservation, including Dehlá Got'jne way of life, Dehlá Got'jne *Ts'jduweh* relationship with the land and with ʔədə, and Dehlá Got'jne harvesting customs and practices.
2. Formalize our existing community-based conservation approach that recognizes the Dehlá Got'jne and Colville RRC right to meaningfully participate in the conservation of ʔədə. This includes direct involvement in collecting and assessment of information and knowledge, and being a key participant in the decision-making process, consistent with the SDMCLCA.

3. Monitor and assess the local harvest of ʔədə, in accordance with the draft Dehlá Got'jne *Ts'jduweh ʔədə ʔeʔá*, 2019.
4. Document Dehlá Got'jne traditional knowledge about ʔədə and their habitat, and other parts of the ecosystem, using local knowledge, and appropriate science as agreed to by the Colville Lake RRC. Obtain information from Dehlá Got'jne conservation partners about the impact of industrial activities on ʔədə and use all of this information to help Dehlá Got'jne make decisions to protect ʔədə.
5. Educate Dehlá Got'jne youth about the old ways and the new ways, and involve Dehlá Got'jne youth in conservation of ʔədə.
6. Adopt a communication strategy to share knowledge, involve the community, and keep the community apprised of deliberations and decisions about ʔədə conservation.

## GOAL 1: Revitalizing Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá

Implementing this Plan will involve the recording of Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá and codes of conduct, and support for family-based systems of harvesting. These ʔeʔá, codes and practices are, to the extent possible, embedded into the Dehlá Got'jne conservation approach and recommendations.

The Dehlá Got'jne will continue to be guided by Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá in the implementation of this Plan. We will also undertake to educate Dehlá Got'jne youth about these ʔeʔá and the traditional customs of harvesting and respecting ʔədə.

### 1.2 Important Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá to Consider

Dehlá Got'jne have been guided since time immemorial by the Dehla Go'tine *Ts'jduweh ʔədə ʔeʔá*. The key obligations of Dehla Go'tine ʔeʔá are to:

1. be directly involved in decisions that affect ʔədə and the land, and the Dehlá Got'jne relationship with the land;
2. ensure that respect is paramount - for ʔədə, the land and each other. It is not right to talk about ʔədə in a disrespectful manner. Dehlá Got'jne will continue to use everything the ʔədə provides, and to return to Dehlá Got'jne codes of conduct when harvesting and being around ʔədə;
3. maintain Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá and codes of conduct as the basis for maintaining our relationship to the land and to ʔədə;
4. support of Dehlá Got'jne belief that all things have a spirit and are inter-connected, we must take a holistic approach to conservation;
5. encourage the important principle of sharing among the Dehlá Got'jne;
6. respect Dehlá Got'jne elders, and seek their traditional knowledge and advice to help our community achieve conservation as custodians of the land;
7. pass on knowledge to Dehlá Got'jne youth, so they can become the leaders that protect Dehlá Got'jne culture and Dehlá Got'jne land; and
8. make decisions through consensus after an informed consideration of the issues.

### 1.3 How to revitalize Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá?

Dehlá Got'jne will take steps under this Plan to revitalize ʔeʔá, cultural practices and customs in accordance with the Dehla Go'tine *Ts'jduweh ʔədə ʔeʔá*, including steps to:

1. record Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá and Codes of Conduct;
2. develop appropriate legislation, to implement Dehlá Got'jne traditional practices related to harvesting. This has been initiated through the proposed draft legislation, Dehlá Got'jne *Ts'jduweh ʔədə ʔeʔá 2019*;
3. document Dehlá Got'jne harvesting customs – in the past and today;

4. build upon, as necessary, ethical standards of research such as those adopted by Universities, Aurora College, Wildlife Society of NA, and ENR, and work with SRRB and ENR to revise ethical standards so that they are in compliance with Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá;
5. produce educational material about Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá, practices and customs so that this information can be passed on to Dehlá Got'jne youth, as well as Dehlá Got'jne conservation partners, according to data sharing protocols; and
6. conduct community surveys to record the impacts of harvest restrictions and fewer ʔədə on Dehlá Got'jne health and wellbeing.

When I was a child we used to go play out in the cold, and when we used to count things, they would tell us what you are doing is taboo that's, you can't do that and that was what we were told. And you are talking about counting caribou. For me that's just like a really big taboo that you are doing. And because of that we wonder how long the caribou with us. And you're talking about how the caribou numbers are decreasing and it's true. And if you play with things too much and then the-- it'll go down -- the numbers.

And sometimes they fly around them with the helicopters and it'll move away from those noises. And with the skidoos too -- they travel after the caribou with skidoos and it moves away from this areas. And whenever they start hunting in an area with skidoos, the animals tend to move away from that area. That's how they are.

You have to look after it and if you don't, it'll move away from people. And if you look after it respectfully, it'll come back.

- Elder Alexis Blancho

## GOAL 2. Dehlá Got'ıne Conservation Approach

The aim of this Goal is to move away from a “top-down” institutional management system in favour of a “bottom-up” collaborative conservation approach driven by Dehlá Got'ıne. In particular, our approach does not rely on a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) or a tag-based quota system as employed by ENR. The collaborative conservation approach is endorsed by the SRRB, which clarified in a written response to ENR on July 31, 2019 that:

...the SRRB does not accept the use of the TAH and related tag system, since this is contradictory to the current evidence that community conservation plans provide the best conservation outcomes. The TAH contradicts the past three years of efforts by the SRRB to support Sahtú communities (including BAFN) to develop their community conservation plans.<sup>3</sup>

In this community-based approach, Dehlá Got'ıne are involved in the collection of knowledge and advice. Dehlá Got'ıne are the key players in the assessment of issues and concerns, and together with the SRRB and the GNWT, part of the shared decision-making team that acts upon the best available knowledge and advice. We believe that this will result in the best conservation outcomes for the Sahtu region.

### 2.1 Why Formalizing the Dehlá Got'ıne Conservation Approach is Required

The conventional “top down” institutional approach to ʔədə conservation does not work. It has six major weaknesses it:

- (1) has ignored a vast body of knowledge acquired over many centuries, and has marginalized the advice of Dehlá Got'ıne knowledge-holders;
- (2) attempts to extinguish or invalidate the inherent responsibilities of the Dehlá Got'ıne over the land;
- (3) threatens Dehlá Got'ıne survival, as Dehlá Got'ıne are clearly the most adversely effected by decisions made elsewhere. Bad decisions directly effect the Dehlá Got'ıne way of life and undermine Dehlá Got'ıne inter-dependence with ʔədə;
- (4) has been almost entirely reliant on Western science and baseline knowledge, which is very limited and responds slowly to conservation issues because it typically requires many years of scientific study to draw conclusions with any statistical certainty;
- (5) relies extensively on methods that are contrary to Dehlá Got'ıne ʔeʔá respecting ʔədə; and

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<sup>3</sup> SRRB to B. Elkin, July 31, 2019

- (6) only has limited conservation options, because the colonial governments organize by departments and mandates in which authorities are “siloeed” in respect to specific subject matters and legislation. For example, under the NWT *Wildlife Act*, the Minister has a mandate for collaborative wildlife management, but only has limited authorities to regulate land use activities that affect wildlife. The regulation of land and water activities and authorizations are undertaken by other departments and boards. As a consequence, little can be done by ENR to protect ʔadə habitat or minimize disturbances related to industrial activities. The authorities that ENR can exercise are largely in the form of quota and harvest restrictions which do little to conserve ʔadə but significantly infringe on the Dehlá Got’jne way of life.

In contrast, the Dehlá Got’jne conservation approach is a more inclusive system that is not confined to specific departmental authorities and regulations, or solely reliant on Western science and baseline knowledge. It brings together community and scientific experts and draws on all available knowledge and advice. Our objective is to discuss concerns and arrive at conservation decisions together.

The Dehlá Got’jne collaborative approach is consistent with our traditional approach of bringing knowledge holders (elders, hunters, and leaders) together to exchange ideas and observations and seek solutions. It also puts more emphasis on wisdom, founded on facts, experience and knowledge acquired over centuries. Science and Western-trained technicians can provide an important contribution to wildlife conservation, but they should not dominate the process or its outcomes.

This shift toward community knowledge is what was intended in the land claim and specifically endorsed by the SRRB in the 2016 Hearings.

## 2.2 Community Based Conservation Process

### 2.2.1 Adopt a set of conservation principles

Our principles embody the community-based approach to conservation, and the importance of preserving Dehlá Got’jne practices and customs, including Dehlá Got’jne ɔɔá, and the need to respect ʔadə. We intend to ensure that the conservation Principles set out in the Dehlá Got’jne ʔadə Plan are implemented through a **Dehlá Got’jne ʔadə Plan Implementation Agreement** (Implementation Agreement) between Colville Lake RRC, SRRB, and ENR.

### 2.2.2 Dehlá Got’jne ʔadə Plan Implementation Agreement

The Implementation Agreement will provide a formal mechanism through which each of the conservation partners under the Dehlá Got’jne ʔadə Plan (Colville RRC, ENR and SRRB) is committed to working together to share responsibility for the conservation and management of ʔadə, and to protect and maintain ʔadə for present and future generations.

The Implementation Agreement will set out the roles of each partner and provide for regular in-person meetings to collaborate in the conservation of ʔadə. It will provide for regular exchanges of information as required for the conservation of ʔadə.

### 2.2.3 Proposed Roles of the Conservation Partners

Each of the Partners will have roles for the implementation of the Plan as follows:

#### The Colville RRC will

- (a) establish guidelines concerning harvest of ʔədə within the traditional territory of the Dehlá Got'ıne, in accordance with section 13.9.4 of the *Sahtu Dene Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*, and in accordance with Dehlá Got'ıne ʔeʔá;
- (b) will collect local harvest data and other relevant observations in relation to ʔədə conservation, and share with GNWT in accordance with the SDMCLCA and a Data Sharing Agreement, and
- (c) develop local land-based monitoring programs, as appropriate, to further understand ʔədə in the context of climate-related changes to the environment and ongoing exploration activities.

#### Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) will

- (a) support the Colville RRC in the conservation and management of ʔədə in accordance with the Interim Measures Agreement, and the principles set out in the Implementation Agreement;
- (b) will share data and information as it relates to ʔədə conservation in accordance with a Data Sharing Agreement;
- (c) consult with the Colville RRC prior to permitting any proposed mineral and petroleum exploration on the range of ʔədə, and will immediately inform Colville RRC of any applications to carry out such activities.

#### The Partners will

- (a) address conservation issues;
- (b) share information as required;
- (a) review the effectiveness of conservation measures;
- (d) seek agreement on measures for the conservation of ʔədə;
- (e) seek to restrict or prohibit disturbances (including aerial population surveys, mineral and petroleum exploration and development activities) on the calving grounds and calving migration routes during the calving season.

The SRRB will be invited to

- (a) participate in discussions on conservation issues that cannot be resolved by the Partners,
- (b) join the Partners in seeking agreement on measures to resolve such conservation issue(s);
- (c) assist in the implementation of the Interim Agreement, in accordance with the intention under the SDMCLCA “that the SRRB and government departments and agencies work in close collaboration and exchange full information on their policies, programs and research” (13.8.37).

... it's dangerous to make a decision on something that you don't know because a lot of people talk -- listen to rumours and say things they don't see. All they hear is something and then they think it's -- they should be out there themselves and see for themselves on the land.

A lot of people say, well this person said this. Well, why don't you go out there and see for yourself with your own eyes and experience what we experience on the land, what we feel on the land.

- Wilbert Kochon

## GOAL 3: Local Harvest

### 3.1 Importance of Local Harvest

The purpose of this goal is to assess the ʔədə harvesting in the Dehlá Got'ıne territory, so as to avoid intervention by ENR to regulate Dehlá Got'ıne harvests through tags or quota system. This will require the Colville RRC to communicate traditional harvest guidelines, promote self-reporting of Dehlá Got'ıne, to regulate other harvesters wishing to harvest in the Colville Lake area, and collect, record and report harvest information and observations.

### 3.2 Harvest Reporting

Harvest reporting is a requirement under the SDMCLCA. In the past, this information has solely been used to justify the imposition of a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH). However, in the 2016 Hearings, the SRRB determined that “The SRRB has determined that a TAH should be a conservation mechanism of last resort and, moreover, is a conservation mechanism that has less potential of successfully achieving conservation goals, based on the evidence provided in the hearing.”<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, harvest reporting must be viewed in a different light. It remains an important aspect of the information required for conservation, but it must be understood in context of the Dene way of life, and respect the harvesting and wildlife management customs and practices of the Dene. Although reporting harvest numbers may be alien to the customs of the Dene, it provides evidence and support for self-regulation, and may serve to prevent the imposition of unacceptable harvest restrictions.

It is important for Dehlá Got'ıne conservation partners to understand that the Dehlá Got'ıne ʔədə harvest has a limited impact on ʔədə, that restrictions are not necessary to achieve conservation, and the Dehlá Got'ıne harvest is essential to the Dehlá Got'ıne way of life.

Harvest data also allows a comparison with harvest estimates from the past – presumably fewer ʔədə are harvested today as compared to a time when families with dog teams travelled with the ʔədə, to feed themselves and their dogs, as well as provide clothing and tools. Harvest data also allows comparisons with future harvests. It is a way to satisfy all conservation partners that the Dehlá Got'ıne harvest is sustainable and consistent with Dehlá Got'ıne traditional ways of conservation.

The duty to share harvest information is a requirement under the SDMCLCA. Under the SDMCLCA, the RRCs are required to participate in the collection of harvest data and provide that information to the ENR and the SRRB.

Under the Plan, the Colville RRC would collect, manage and retain harvest data, and share that information in ways that are appropriate and in accordance with a Data Sharing Protocol with the SRRB and GNWT. This approach is consistent with the SRRB endorsement of self-regulation

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<sup>4</sup> *Final Decisions and Recommendations 2016*, p. 3

of harvesting practices by Sahtu communities in accordance with their own plans, as a more effective means of conservation rather than Wildlife Act regulations and enforcement.

### 3.3 How do we monitor the ʔədə harvest in the Dehlá Got'jne area?

1. Encourage volunteer reporting. We will encourage all harvesters to report their harvest to the RRC.
2. Colville RRC will continue to hire Dehlá Got'jne monitors from each of the 4 Dehlá Got'jnes to monitor harvesting in the Dehlá Got'jne traditional territory, and for any Dehlá Got'jne harvester if they see someone violating the law, to inform the RRC, so the RRC can address the matter in a manner that follows the Dehlá Got'jne ʔədə ʔeʔá, 2019.
3. RRC to collect harvest data during the *Arake Tue* harvest expedition.
4. Request the harvesters and trappers to record their ʔədə observations and share their information with the RRC.
5. Require supervised harvesting of Sahtu beneficiaries who are not Colville Lake members, as prescribed in the Dehlá Got'jne *Ts'jduweh ʔədə ʔeʔá*.
6. The RRC will maintain harvest data, and share such information in accordance with the Implementation Agreement and the associated Data Sharing Agreement.

These provisions will help assure harvesters that this is their ʔədə plan and that they will have representatives making recommendations and decisions on their behalf, that sensitive information will be protected, and that harvesting of ʔədə is being carried out in a respectful manner in accordance with the Dehla Go'tine *Ts'jduweh ʔədə ʔeʔá*.

### 3.4 Authorizing the Harvest of non-Dehlá Got'jne

The harvest of ʔədə be authorized by Colville Lake RRC in accordance with this Plan and the Dehla Go'tine *Ts'jduweh ʔədə ʔeʔá* – which we have put into written form. The RRC will be responsible for all matters related to the harvest of ʔədə in the Dehla Go'tine traditional territory. The RRC may establish policies and procedures and set conditions related to harvest of ʔədə by Dehla Go'tine, other Sahtu Beneficiaries, and other Indigenous persons authorized by the Colville Lake RRC.

Dehla Go'tine are authorized to harvest ʔədə for personal and family needs and for sharing, using traditional hunting methods.

Other Sahtu Beneficiaries, and other Indigenous persons authorized by the Colville Lake RRC may hunt under direct supervision of Dehla Go'tine. These outside harvesters are required to hunt respectfully and may be subject to additional conditions or limits imposed by the RRC.

Under the Implementation Agreement, ENR and Colville Lake will develop protocols for working together to regulate the harvest in accordance with this Plan.

## GOAL 4: Provide Written Records of Traditional Knowledge

### 4.1 The value of knowledge

The relationship between people, ʔədə and the environment is complex. ʔədə use a vast area and require many different habitats, and appear to cycle in abundance. In the past, elders understood the relationship between people, ʔədə and the land through the passing of knowledge across many, many generations. Today, Dehlá Got'ıne continue to depend on the instructions from our elders and leaders, and to regulate our own harvesting activities based on their knowledge, instructions and in accordance with ancient Dehlá Got'ıne ʔeʔá.

The main threat to caribou has been and remains industrial development and human disturbance of caribou habitat from roads. Greater protection for Dehlá Got'ıne ʔədə habitat, especially the calving grounds, must be a priority for all levels of government, Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments, and industry.

As a consequence of western civilizations greed for profit through industrial activities, land and animals in the Arctic are changing dramatically because of global climate change. Some of the climate events are new to the Dehlá Got'ıne, and are impacting ʔədə in ways we have never previously observed. As we manage the land and care for ʔədə, it is important to use Dehlá Got'ıne extensive traditional knowledge of ʔədə, but also to work with our partners to understand the changes that are occurring on the land, and how those changes may be impacting ʔədə.

Dehlá Got'ıne understand that climate change is a major factor that is directly affecting ʔədə range conditions through drying and the melting of permafrost, the amount of snow, the amount of water-flow during the spring breakup, the frequency, extent and severity of wildfires, insect abundance, and the distribution of wolves and other animals. Dehlá Got'ıne believe that such changes impact ʔədə by reducing the quality of habitat and altering ʔədə habitat use, influencing the timing and direction of migrations, and affecting their physical health and reproductive success. These environmental changes are also altering the ʔədə cycle, changing it in ways that are different from what we previously observed. We note that science-based studies sponsored by ENR also support some of our own observations. For example, studies have found a trend in the July drought index, and have found that plant-growing days are correlated with ʔədə pregnancy rates and calf survival.

Dehlá Got'ıne also understand that certain forms of industrial development are extremely detrimental to ʔədə. Exploration, and other activities, such as mining and roads, approved by the Government of the Northwest Territories, on ʔədə range displaces them from key habitats and migration routes, and brings them into contact with roads and elevated levels of hunting and disturbance.

Unfortunately, although we all understand that there are significant negative impacts and changes caused by industrial development activities, there has been little agreement between Dehlá Got'íne and ENR about the best ways to address these activities and changes. There has been a major reluctance for ENR and all conservation partners to discuss or acknowledge these activities. Recently, ENR has sought to impose harvest restrictions on Dehlá Got'íne in response to what they say is a declining population. This is an example of a management response (reduced harvest) that does not line up with what Dehlá Got'íne are seeing on the land or what the scientific evidence is indicating. As noted by the SRRB, the imposition of a harvest limitation unjustly targets Dehlá Got'íne in an ineffectual attempt to solve a problem the Dehlá Got'íne did not create:

*The evidence in the hearing clearly supported the SRRB's decision that herd recovery plans must include provisions to address these additional impacts (such as ʔehdanagokwí and industrial development) that are driving ʔekwé health and population changes. Both science and Dene náowerá evidence demonstrated that management of Aboriginal harvest is only a small piece of the conservation picture.<sup>5</sup>*

To avoid future management errors and unconscious biases that directly impact on Dehlá Got'íne rights and way of life without addressing the underlying causes, all of our conservation partners need to learn more about the industrial activities, environment and how industry is impacting ʔэдә, and work together to identify appropriate solutions.

## 4.2 What kinds of knowledge should we consider?

The colonial approach to ʔэдә management relies on population size as the primary input. This approach is reactive, and has proven ineffective in conserving ʔэдә. Population size may indicate that ʔэдә are becoming less abundant, but it provides no indication in itself as to what is causing the population to decline. It may lead to many speculations as to the cause of the “population change”, but it provides no details to about the underlying causes to help us understand and respond appropriately. ENR's own studies have speculated that an impact on the population of barren-ground ʔэдә are caused by a complex relationship between ʔэдә, climatic variation and forage. ENR also acknowledges that ʔэдә pregnancy rates, calf recruitment and cow survival are the three “vitals rates” required for management. Harvesting is a factor, but not the most significant factor in what is a complex set of variables and relationships.

Dehlá Got'íne propose a more holistic and traditional approach to conservation that seeks to understand more about ʔэдә and their population dynamics, and their relationship with the environment, and the Dehlá Got'íne. The Dehlá Got'íne emphasis is on local and ground-based knowledge and advice, with the inclusion of science to fill gaps as deemed helpful in Dehlá Got'íne understanding of ʔэдә and the environment. We note that SRRB and ENR are involved in many research projects through the NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (CIMP) (Appendix B) that support an ecosystem approach to ʔэдә management that may be consistent with Dehlá Got'íne knowledge and values.

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<sup>5</sup> *Final Decisions and Recommendations*, at Page 15.

## 4.2.1 Dehlá Got'jne Knowledge

Further research and management decisions under this Plan must rely on Dehlá Got'jne Knowledge as an essential as baseline information. It is a vast body of knowledge that can tell us how ʔədə interact with their environment and with other animals, and how the Dehlá Got'jne interacted with ʔədə, as well as historic patterns of environmental changes. Dehlá Got'jne Knowledge provides the necessary starting point to compare what we see today with what is known from centuries of observation and experiences. Without Dehlá Got'jne Knowledge, there would be very little evidence, and a very narrow and limited perspective on the complex social and ecological relationships between people, the land and ʔədə.

Dehlá Got'jne Knowledge can also reveal traditional patterns of harvesting, traditional ʔeʔá and codes of conduct, and traditional conservation practices, in relation to ʔədə.

This Plan does not propose to have answers to all of the research questions below, but we understand that Dehlá Got'jne Knowledge will be useful in understanding and explaining what we are seeing today, and to help guide our conservation actions.

1. How do ʔədə typically use their range? Where are their key foraging areas, rutting areas, migration routes, and what is the timing of their movements. Are patterns of movement and habitat-use different between bulls and cows?
2. In the past have wildfires been common and how do ʔədə respond to wildfires?
3. What does group size and population composition (ratio of calves, cows, bulls) tell us about the health of the ʔədə population.
4. Do ʔədə populations cycle (periodically become less available)? What are the indicators of changes in the ʔədə population? What is the length of the cycle?
5. Do ʔədə avoid muskoxen and moose?
6. When moose become more common, are there more wolves?
7. What is the relationship between ʔədə and wolves?

In order to contextualize these questions and guide management actions, it will also be essential to consider Dehlá Got'jne harvesting customs and practices:

8. What were the typical harvest patterns when dogs were used?
9. How many ʔədə would feed the family?
10. When did most of the harvest take place?
11. How frequently did the Dehlá Got'jne hunt ʔədə?
12. How did harvest patterns change when ʔədə became less available?
13. How far did the Dehlá Got'jne go to find ʔədə?

### **What do we need to do to undertake the collection, recording, interpretation, and sharing of traditional knowledge?**

The following actions are also essential to accomplishing the knowledge objectives of this Plan:

1. Develop a protocol for Data Sharing, and in particular the sharing of traditional knowledge, to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information, establish an

understanding as to the ownership of traditional knowledge, and to set appropriate terms and conditions for the use of traditional knowledge.

2. Adopt methods to collect and record traditional knowledge, which respects the traditional customs of learning from Dehlá Got'íne elders.
3. Collect and record traditional knowledge and advice from elders, through interview/workshops, and the interpretation of Dehlá Got'íne stories, so as to learn from them.
4. Map ʔədə range use patterns and seasonal distribution, and harvesting patterns, similar to the work undertaken by the Tlicho (Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program, project 94).

#### 4.2.2 Dehlá Got'íne Ground Based Monitoring

Under this Plan, the Colville RRC will undertake local monitoring projects to record observations of ʔədə and the environment. Actions to advance knowledge through monitoring will include:

Harvesters to report their observations. The Colville RRC will coordinate the recording and reporting of observations, which may include the location the harvester travelled to, the number of ʔədə they counted, the group size and the composition of the group, and any indication of ʔədə tracks to estimate the number of ʔədə not counted directly, as well as other observations of moose, muskoxen, wolves, and their tracks, and any observed wolf kill-sites.

Arake Tue observations. Since 1990, Colville RRC has been traveling to *Arake Tue* (Horton Lake) in September to monitor the traditional harvest, teach youth and others how to harvest ʔədə according to traditional Dehlá Got'íne ʔeʔá, count ʔədə and assess condition of harvested ʔədə to determine the health of the herd, and record other observations.

Wildlife monitors. Colville RRC will request trappers to participate in the reporting of their observations, from October to December. Trappers will be asked to record information from their different trapping areas, as well as areas where ʔədə typically pass. The RRC will work with the trappers to gather and interpret their observations with respect to ʔədə conservation, and may seek the involvement of the ENR and SRRB in order to support this work.

#### 4.2.3 Establish research protocols and develop a data management system.

Any new research proposed in the Dehlá Got'íne area will require permits from the Colville Lake RRC, and must comply with terms and conditions, including respect for Dehlá Got'íne ʔeʔá, annual reporting of study methods and results, and data sharing arrangements.

The RRC will take steps to ensure that the data is secure, and that information can be accessed easily by authorized persons. The Dehlá Got'íne intend to further develop their capability to digitize information (including mapping capabilities) to facilitate easy access and sharing as required, and to institute appropriate firewalls so that information is protected. Colville Lake

RRC will engage experts in data management systems, and web-based delivery systems to help develop this system as capacity and funding allows.

Dehlá Got'íne also propose to retrieve existing data (tapes, maps, documents) and format this information so it can be entered into our digital database.

In all cases, the data will be controlled by the Colville Lake RRC. Where studies are ongoing, the principal investigators will be asked to come to Colville Lake at the end of the research season to present their findings, and to provide the data to the Colville Lake RRC. Researchers and partners will also be required to observe a Data Sharing Protocol to secure the information and to enable appropriate levels of protection and use.

#### 4.2.4 Science-based studies

The Plan recognizes that there are a number of indicators that can provide important information about the health and condition of ʔədə and their populations, including population composition (calf:cow ratios, bull:cow ratios, the proportion of different age classes), group size, body condition indices (appearances of ʔədə in the field, body size, glucocorticoid levels in hair and feces, water retention based on muscle samples, fecal cortisol stress indicators, fecal assessment for pregnancy, presence of bacteria and parasites), and unusual ʔədə behaviour. A number of related studies are described in Appendix B.

Dehlá Got'íne support the continuation of some ongoing research programs, subject to research permitting requirements, the Data Sharing Protocol and compliance with Dehlá Got'íne ethical practices. The results of ongoing research elsewhere in the Sahtu Region and in the NWT may also provide useful insights into ʔədə ecology as it relates to climate change.

##### **ʔədə composition surveys (ongoing ENR project)**

Composition surveys can tell us much about the well-being of the ʔədə population. These surveys are conducted to differentiate the proportion of calves, cows and bulls in a group, as well as provide an assessment of body condition and pregnancy rate. They also can provide an indication of relative age cohorts. These surveys are very useful as a way to estimate ʔədə productivity (the ratio of calves to cows), the ratio of bulls to cows, pregnancy rates, and a general age structure, and so contribute to our understanding of vital rates. It can be achieved through aerial techniques established by ENR with Colville Lake participants. We will encourage ENR to continue these surveys, with our involvement and in compliance with ethical standards.

##### **Body Condition study (ongoing ENR program with Susan Katz, U. of Calgary)**

We continue to support a ʔədə body condition study, by recording carcass measures, and collecting specimens. This work can build on two ongoing body condition studies in the Sahtu Region undertaken by Susan Katz (CIMP 160) and Alessandro Massolo (CIMP 113). These studies provide baseline data on body condition, body size, pathogen diversity, exposure and intensity, and stress levels in ʔədə and moose, and evaluate the use of hair cortisol and fecal cortisol as bio-indicators of health, to establish baseline health indices of individuals and populations, and determine the prevalence of new parasites in the Sahtu region. We hope to participate in these

studies by providing measures and specimens, according to proper collection techniques and recording, and with the provision of health sample field kits.

**Genetic study (extension of Jean Polfus study)**

Trappers and hunters, involved in the ongoing ground-based monitoring project, may be able to collect fecal samples, in support of an ongoing Genetic study with Jean Polfus (CIMP 165). This work can be blended with Dehlá Got'ine names of ʔədə types and other Traditional Knowledge, to distinguish ʔədə herds and determine their range use patterns.

## GOAL 5: Educate Dehlá Got'jne Youth

The Plan recognizes that education is essential to return Dehlá Got'jne youth to their cultural practices, to ground them in traditional ways and traditional knowledge, and to teach them modern conservation techniques. The youth are the next generation of land managers. By implementing this Plan with our partners, we intend to connect youth to the old ways, while helping them to develop modern skills to participate in ʔədə conservation.

### 5.1 What can we do to educate our youth?

Dehlá Got'jne will take steps under this Plan to involve youth in:

1. Direct participation in field studies, Arake Tue harvest and monitoring expeditions, and other outdoor programs.
2. Direct participation in the collection of Traditional Knowledge.
3. Training in data management and web-based information sharing tools, as well as software, such as Cyber-Tracker, that can be used to digitally record field observations.
4. Develop educational materials: DVD's, pamphlets, web-based information, books.
5. Establish a Youth Council, that would participate in the Dehlá Got'jne ʔədə Plan.
6. Send delegates to the SRRB Sahtu Youth Network and Cross-Cultural Research Camp.

## GOAL 6: Communications

Communication is very important to the success of this Plan. It will be vital to communicate effectively to maintain the trust and support of the community. An effective communications program can support community members and the Colville RRC who are working on behalf of its members as ʔədə custodians. It will also help reassure Dehlá Got'jne community members that the information they provide to the Colville RRC will be respected and protected through data sharing agreements that protect sensitive information. We need the community to help us develop and participate in the Plan.

We want the community to understand the conservation process and the importance of their contributions, to keep informed of recommendations and decisions, and to remind them of the Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔá and the SDMCLCA, and their responsibilities under these arrangements.

Also, we want to inform non- Dehlá Got'jne of our protocols and ʔeʔá for the respectful use of the land, and the importance of consulting us regarding activities within our traditional use area, as a matter of respect and safety.

We also want to establish a communications protocol with other users of the ʔədə to (a) work together to achieve conservation of ʔədə by understanding our shared responsibilities for ʔədə management, (b) formalize protocols for sharing and protecting information about ʔədə and harvesting, and (c) formalize traditional knowledge protocols for sharing and protecting this knowledge.

### 6.1 What communication tools should we consider?

Dehlá Got'jne will take steps under this Plan to improve communications, including:

1. Develop a web-site.
2. Hold periodic community meetings.
3. Use social media.
4. Report at least annually to the community, of deliberations and actions taken in relation to ʔədə conservation, and the respective roles of the RRC, the SRRB, and ENR.
5. Require annual reporting to the community by the colonial government and exploration companies as to what they are doing on the land.
6. Require annual reporting to the community to describe research projects – methods, outcomes, and possible application of the results.
7. Produce written materials.

## APPENDIX A: Dehlá Got'jne ʔeʔa & Summary Presentation

## APPENDIX B: Summary of NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Programs

**CIMP 113. Moose and Caribou health: monitoring the emergence and impacts of winter tick in the Sahtu Settlement Area.** Determined the occurrence of some parasites on moose and Caribou in the Sahtu region, and created a mode of tick habitat suitability in the NWT, to evaluate the potential risks of winter tick and other parasite infestations on Barren-ground Caribou populations.

**CIMP 158. Dene mapping project repatriation and analysis: understanding valued places at the intersection of Caribou ecology and harvesting.** Collect historical socio-ecological and wildlife baseline data, to understand Caribou-harvester relationships in the Sahtu region and trends in wildlife range and distribution.

**CIMP 160. Community-based monitoring of wildlife health phase 2: stress and pathogens in a changing landscape.** Using a hunter-based monitoring approach, provide baseline data on body condition body size, pathogen diversity, exposure and intensity, and stress levels in Caribou and moose, and evaluate the use of hair cortisol and fecal cortisol as bio-indicators of health, to establish baseline health indices of individual and populations.

**CIMP 162. Multi-species monitoring using winter track surveys in the Sahtu Settlement Area.** Develop a wildlife tracking method that can be used by resource managers to indicate the relative abundance and trends in wildlife populations.

**CIMP 165. Evaluating the diversity and spatial organization of Caribou in the Sahtu region for management and environmental impact assessment.** Bring together traditional knowledge and population genetics to understand patterns of Caribou genetic variation, and hormonal indicators of stress, with possible application of assessing stress due to industrial activities.

**CIMP 50. Spatial distribution of wolves on Bathurst Caribou summer range.** Determine the spatial distribution of wolf den sites and pup survival in response to changing distribution and abundance of barren ground Caribou, to help understand the role of wolves in population dynamics of migratory Caribou.

**CIMP 94. Tlicho Ekwo Naowo: TK based monitoring of the Bathurst Caribou herd.** Applying a combination of story telling, photo documentation and GIS mapping to acquire a detailed understanding of trends in Caribou herd health and migration routes, as likely effects of mining, outfitting, and improper human behaviour toward Caribou.

**CIMP 133. Snow pack accumulation: influence on Caribou distribution, surface water chemistry and lake productivity.** Relate changes in snowpack to changes in the distribution of the Bathurst herd, to contribute to a broader understanding of potential drivers influencing Caribou populations.

**CIMP 150. Tlicho community-based monitoring of the Bathurst and Bluenose East Caribou.** Caribou body condition determined from samples and measurements of hunted Caribou, to

better understand Caribou productivity, survival and population trends. As well a Field Guide for Caribou Sample Collections was produced.

**CIMP 153. CircumArctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment Network (CARMA) knowledge to action: developing and testing thresholds and monitoring for cumulative impacts on Caribou.**

This project developed an analytical model based on predicted energy and protein costs on Caribou, of environmental variation (notably climate change) and industrial activity, to predict effects on Caribou pregnancy rates, calf survival and population size. The model is promoted as a way to assess the vulnerability of Caribou and the risks imposed by landscape changes, and as a possible tool to assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures and management actions.

**CIMP 141. Baseline monitoring of Arctic vegetation and snow changes over the Bathurst Caribou habitat using satellite remote sensing and community-based field observations.**

Examined Caribou forage availability and quality on the summer range, using remote sensing and field plots, and correlated these observations with late winter calf:cow ratios, as a way to anticipate likely population responses to habitat changes.

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