



For Immediate Release

Déljñę applauds SRRB final decisions supporting community conservation planning for Bluenose East ɶekwé in the Sahtú region

November 10, 2016, Déljñę, NWT — As primary traditional harvester and steward of Bluenose East ɶekwé in the Sahtú region, the community of Déljñę is pleased to see reaffirmed support for community conservation planning in the final decisions of the ɶehdzo Got'jñę Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtu Renewable Resources Board, or SRRB) sent to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) on October 26, 2016.

“It is encouraging to see the ɶehdzo Got'jñę Gots'ę Nákedı supporting the traditional laws and values at the heart of Déljñę's carefully designed conservation plan for Bluenose East ɶekwé,” says Walter Bezha of the Déljñę ɶekwé (Caribou) Working Group.

“The community of Déljñę understands that, as people, we are part of the ecosystem. We have always managed our harvesting by taking only what the land and water makes available to us, and our plan to conserve caribou is based on this tradition of hunting like our grandfathers,” Bezha says.

“We know there are many factors leading to reduced availability of ɶekwé in our traditional harvesting area, and our plan aims to address this in a variety of ways rather than focusing only on harvest management.”

In August, the SRRB released its final report from the Bluenose East ɶekwé hearings in Déljñę, offering groundbreaking support for the community conservation planning approach presented in Déljñę's proposed *Belare wile Gots'ę ekwé – Caribou for All Time* plan.

On September 26, 2016, ENR Minister Robert C. McLeod also expressed his support, in principle, for community conservation planning. However, he also requested a Total Allowable Harvest limit of 129 along with a five-animal limit on tsída gha máhsı ts'jñıwe (ceremonial harvest of females) for the entire Sahtú. Those changes mark a reduction in the thresholds for overall harvest and tsída harvest established in Déljñę's plan, which identified 150 animals with a 20 percent tsída harvest, and are based on the Wek'èezhıı Renewable Resources Board's Hearing Report rather than evidence presented at the Sahtú hearings.

“Our community was not consulted on these requested changes,” Bezha says. “Our concern is that conservation decisions are being made for us rather than in cooperation with us and without respect for the evidence that we have based our plan on.”

In its final decisions sent to Minister McLeod last week, the SRRB rejected the Minister's request for a Total Allowable Harvest and five tsída ceremonial harvest limit, reiterating that evidence presented at the public hearing supports community conservation planning as the best option for successfully addressing conservation concerns with respect to ɶekwé harvesting in the Sahtú Region.

“Déljñę's conservation plan is nothing new; it is based on the teachings of Elders and ensures the same Dene stewardship values that have survived for centuries are kept strong for generations to come,” says Bezha, who notes that Déljñę successfully established its own harvesting threshold, stopping BNE harvest in early 2016.

Bezha says the community of Délı̨ne wants to continue a cross-regional dialogue with its Tłı̨chǫ neighbours, and that allowing communities to make conservation decisions about the land and animals they depend on is an important exercise in the ongoing reconciliation process between Indigenous peoples and the rest of Canada.

“Dene people have a long-standing tradition of working respectfully across regions, and a community-based approach that allows for diverse plans for taking care of caribou will be the strong foundation that we can build consensus upon,” Bezha says.

“As a community, we believe that Délı̨ne should be able to make decisions about the issues that are so important to Délı̨ne. This is part of reconciliation.”

For more information, please contact:

Walter Bezha
(867) 589-8100