

CLOSING REMARKS

MICHAEL NEYELLE, ʔEHDZO GOT'INE ʔOTS'É NÁKEDI CHAIR
BLUENOSE EAST ʔEKWÉ PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 1 – 3, 2016 DÉLİNE, NWT



As Chair of the ʔehdzo Got'ine ʔots'É Nákedı, I would like to thank all the participants for your contributions to this hearing. Over the past three days, there has been a lot of respect shown by the people in this room – respect for ʔekwé, respect among the people, communities and regions, respect across cultures, and respect for the collaborative management processes outlined in the land claim agreement. I thank you all for the respectful discussions.

This hearing has been difficult at times, because the situation we all find ourselves in is difficult. It involves several cultures, languages and dialects, several regions, several communities, two kinds of knowledge – traditional knowledge and science – and a lot of questions arising from changing environmental and social conditions for ʔekwé conservation. But the Parties have maintained their commitment to a collaborative approach in addressing the current challenges. This is a strong foundation supporting the Board in the decisions that it must make.

This has been a unique hearing in several ways:

- For the first time two proposals have been presented to the Board.
- As well, this hearing is part of a larger collaborative process with the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board – this kind of collaborative approach is also a first.
- A third first is the addition of the Sahtú Youth Connection to the hearing as a Party. Although the youth delegate noted that there are not enough youth involved, it is important to recognize the value of the contribution made by the formal contributions of youth at this hearing.
- The formal hearing structure can be frustrating at times. It's a legal structure arising from the land claim agreement that is not the approach that Dene and Métis are used to for working on issues together. In order to address this, the Board has taken a much more flexible approach than is normal for this kind of proceedings. In this way we have tried to bridge the legal culture invoked by the land claim agreement with Dene and Métis culture.

- We have made special efforts to support the use of Dene language at this hearing, along with English. For the first time, we are making the Dene language audio recordings of the hearing available on our public registry, and to community radio stations, so that people who were not able to attend can hear what has taken place.
- We have been grateful to be able to hear from traditional knowledge experts, elders from Colville, Tulít'a, Délıne, and Fort Good Hope, whose advice and guidance will be taken very seriously.
- Our Board members and Special Advisors have worked hard to develop guidelines for a fair proceeding to avoid conflict of interest related to the two proposals and the presentations by the other Parties. Our land claim sets up a special type of decision making structure meant to bring together different perspectives to come together, keep open minds, and act as one voice. It has been important to be especially careful to have a process that is fair and unbiased, and we designed the agenda and chairing with this in mind.
- Our Board members and Special Advisors that are Sahtú beneficiaries have shown their commitment to a fair process, but they also remain committed to being who they are as community members and leaders. They have all been listening carefully to what everyone has to say with their Board hats on, out of respect for the legal basis of the hearing. But sometimes they have taken off their Board hats and put on their community hats on, and in speaking as community members they have shown the variety of perspectives that exists on the Board. As Chair, I am confident that the decision of the Board will not be dominated by one perspective. The decision will be the outcome of taking seriously all the different knowledges and perspectives expressed in this room.

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We thank people for having been patient with this process and for having been supportive of the process even when it's been difficult.

Delegates from four of the five community panels have participated in the hearing, and representatives of the Tłı̨chǫ Government and Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board have been present and listening throughout the hearing.

We have heard presentations of proposals from two proponents, ENR and Délıne, and all the Parties have made presentations.

There have been some strong ideas, strong themes over the last few days. ENR, Deline, Colville Lake -- everybody -- is really trying hard to understand how a Délı̨ne or Colville Lake plan for caribou management fits with the ENR's plan. We heard strong messages from all the Sahtú communities that people want an alternative to radio collaring. We heard strong messages from people in the communities that they do not accept the idea of a quota imposed on them from the outside. We heard lots of questions about what is happening on the land that is affecting the caribou - wildfires, changes in the other species showing up out there, changes in where animals are moving, climate change, changing land conditions, Tundra Copper and other projects that could affect the calving grounds and other caribou habitat. We heard evidence from ENR about what they were seeing in their airplane surveys and about their understanding that the Bluenose East caribou herd is declining and their suggestions for what to do about that with harvesting restrictions and a predator control program.

There was also a strong message throughout the hearing about the role of communities and ʔehdzo Got'ı̨ne in ʔekwé conservation and the need to support their roles as defined in the land claim. There've been a lot of questions about the role of the Board and the role of ENR. It will be a priority to address the issue of governance as it has been discussed.

The Board will think about how to deal with those messages and questions in our final report. We are committed to tracking our responses to the messages on the key issues that we have already listed before the hearing, and to the additional issues that have come up during the meeting, or that may come up after the hearing.

I want to clarify and emphasize one thing about the scope of this hearing. The trigger for this hearing was the land claim requirement to hold a hearing if the Board is considering establishing a Total Allowable Harvest. However, the Board is aware that the scope of caribou conservation must account for the full spectrum of issues that have been discussed and that affect the caribou. The Board is committed to considering all the factors and options for caribou conservation.

The *List of Key Emerging Issues* was shared with the Parties before the hearing, posted on the public registry, and discussed at the pre-hearing conference. We have distributed print copies of this list that was distributed to the Parties, posted to the public registry and discussed at the Pre-Hearing Conference on February 19. We welcome input on this list and any other issues that we may have missed. Although a lot has already been said, we want everyone to know that there

are more opportunities to provide input over the coming month. The record for this hearing has not yet been closed.

We want to be sure that everyone, even people who could not be at the hearing because they were working or travelling on the winter road or couldn't get to Délı̄ne from their home communities, has a chance to be heard. If anyone wants assistance, our staff are there to help record submissions in any format that people wish, oral or written.

The deadline for final submissions by the two proponents, ENR and Délı̄ne, is April 1. The deadline for final submissions by the other Parties or members of the public is March 29. The reason this deadline is sooner is so that ENR and Délı̄ne have a chance to review all the information before they make their final submissions.

The Board Members will take away all the information we heard over the past three days, and all the written materials given to us. We will also have the opportunity to sit in and listen to the Tłı̄chǝ people, on April 6-8 in Behchoko, to hear what they have to say.

Though this is a collaborative hearing with the WRRB, when we make our decision it will be a decision of the ʔehdzo Got'ı̄ne Gots'ę Nákedı̄ about the Sahtú region. The deadline that we have set for our decision is May 16.

The Board will be meeting tomorrow to review the discussions at the hearing. We'll also be looking at the timelines, and will inform all the parties if there's a change in the schedule.

I have thanked all the participants in the hearing – my Board, the Parties, community members, but I also have a long list of people to thank for all their work to make this hearing a success. I know that the most popular people are the ones really in the background who have been working hard to support this big group with logistics, and meals – all the essentials to keep us all going for three long days and nights.

I want to name each of these people individually, for the record, so everyone is aware of who has been on the support team that has helped us be able to work together.

First I'd like to thank our staff, Joe Hanlon, Lori Ann Lennie, and Daniel T'seleie. Joe and Lori Ann have become expert event organizers over the past few years, and

were key to making everything run smoothly. Daniel has joined the Board team for a short while, living in Fort Good Hope, and coordinated the youth caribou workshop here over the weekend. A big hand for them.

Thanks to our legal counsel Lorraine Land, who has worked tirelessly to prepare the Board for this hearing, and to advise us during the hearing and I have a feeling that we'll be keeping her hard at work for a long time to come.

Joanne Stassen has been our communications specialist for this hearing, helping us to ensure we are communicating well about the hearing process. Sadly she couldn't be here with us.

We owe huge thanks to the interpreters that have worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone understands each other – Tłıchǝ interpreters James Rabesca and Violet Mackenzie, and Déłıneǵ Got'ıneǵ'ə Gokedé interpreters Laura Tutcho and Fibbie Tatti. They deserve special recognition for their role in supporting Dene and Métis collaborative resource management during this Aboriginal Languages month.

Norbert Poitras with Pido Productions was our sound guy, and made sure that people could be heard – he also recorded the proceedings in both languages so that people can listen to the hearing in the future.

Bob Keelaghan and his colleagues, the court reporters at Digi-Tran in Calgary have been working extremely hard to put what people are saying in writing. The great news is that they've agreed to work with us in including the Dene writing system so that our language is accurately captured – though this will take some time.

We owe all of these people special thanks for being willing to work over two evenings of this proceeding.

A big thanks is owed to the small army of cooks that kept us fed and watered:

- Maureen Mackeinzo and Nikila Mackeinzo were our breakfast and supper cooks – give them a big hand.
- Bertha Kenny and Barbara Yukon were lunch cooks (applause)
- Snacks were by Ashley Modeste (applause)

The Board decided that if we're going to be talking about environmental conservation, we shouldn't be contributing more waste with disposable dishes and water bottles at this hearing. So we must give thanks to our dishwashers and

cleaners, Kari Ferdinand and Jody Doctor, who made it possible for us to use real dishes and kept our meeting space pleasant to be in.

Thanks to Paul Modeste who agreed to pitch in as driver at the last minute. We knew he'd do a great job as the George Jones of Délıne - everyone likes Paul!

A huge thanks to the people who agreed to host billets, or provide their homes for people to stay in. This was crucial for us to be able to hold the hearing in Délıne, in Bluenose East əkwe territory.

And finally, I'd like to say máhsı cho to one of our Board members who has had a difficult job, wearing two hats. And now I'd like to address him in his role as Chief of Délıne - Chief Leonard Kenny. The Board thanks Chief Kenny and the Délıne of community for their hospitality.

So máhsı to everyone.

I'd like for us to close this formal proceeding properly, with a closing prayer, drumming and a handshake all around.