



## Dene National / Assembly of First Nations Office (NWT)

5120- 49<sup>th</sup> Street  
P.O. Box 2338  
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2P7  
Website: [www.denenation.ca](http://www.denenation.ca)

Phone: (867) 873-4081  
Fax: (867) 920-2254  
Toll Free: 1-866-511-4081



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The Dene Nation response to the Information Request (IR) 1.1 is focused on t̄q̄dzi (Boreal caribou). Dene Nation has entered into a contribution agreement (DN/ECCC 2020-2021) with Environment Canada Climate Change (ECCC) to collaborate with the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) through the Western Boreal Initiative (WBI) to protect the Boreal caribou (t̄q̄dzi) and its critical habitat by using Dene Knowledge. Dene Nation will play a coordination role between the Dene regions to determine how/when/what and if Dene Knowledge can be used to help protect t̄q̄dzi and its critical habitat. The Dene knowledge that is shared will contribute to the range plans that ENR must develop on the species as required by the federal *Species At Risk Act (SARA)*.

The contribution agreement (DN/ECCC 2020-2021) was developed for a team from Dene Nation to visit the Dene leadership from the Gwich'in, Sahtu and Akaitcho regions before March 31, 2021. These leadership meetings are to update the Chiefs on the WBI and to explain to them a current proposal Dene Nation has submitted to extend participation in the WBI for an additional two years, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 inclusive. The Dene leadership from each region will be asked to support a workshop, designate a community to host the workshop, (subject to approval of the proposal) that will include 2 Elders, 2 youth and the Chief from each community and the Grand Chief and a technician from the regional government. It is anticipated that the workshops will contribute how each region feels its knowledge on t̄q̄dzi may be used to contribute to the future ENR boreal caribou range plans.

The DN/ECCC 2021-2022 proposal includes a request for funds to have the Dene Nation team visit the Dehcho and Tlicho leadership very early in the new fiscal year for the same purpose of the 3 regional visits approved for 2020-2021. In year 2022-2023, the proposal recommends that the Dene leadership and 2 Elders and 2 Youth from each region gather in a summary conference to review the results of the regional workshops and the anticipated input to the GNWT boreal caribou range plans.

Dene Nation will be meeting with Dene leadership to determine, by region, the how/when/if the CWS and ENR will participate in the proposed workshops. The Dene Nation responses to the Information request below is subject to change based on the results of the proposal submitted for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

The Dene Nation responses to the Information request are below. Each response is in red and follows a question.

Trevor Teed  
Director of Lands and Environment  
Dene Nation

## Information Request (IR) 1.1:

### *Tıch'ádı́ he Gots'edı́ – Caribou, Predators and Competitors*

#### A. The Conservation Picture: Caribou, People and Planning

##### *SRRB IRs to all interested parties*

1. How are the caribou doing? Have you noticed any changes over the past year?
2. How are the people doing? Have you noticed any changes over the past year?
3. How is the community conservation planning approach progressing?

1. In the NWT, the tǫdzı́ populations are stable as is its critical habitat. Dene Nation has not been involved in observations of the species but unofficial comments from the communities indicate that with the drastic reduction of barren-ground caribou populations and associated hunting restrictions to protect them, there has been increased hunting pressure on Boreal caribou.
2. Dene Nation is not in position to respond to this query.
3. Dene Nation is not in position to respond to this query.

#### B. Predators

##### *SRRB IRs to all interested parties*

1. What stories or knowledge would you like to share about the past and present relationships between caribou, díga (wolf) and Dene/Métis?
2. Should people play a role in controlling díga populations to help caribou now? If so, what should this look like?
3. Are there any concerns that you have about other predators and their impacts on caribou?
  1. Dene Nation cannot respond to this question prior to engaging the Dene regions in the proposed workshops. Even then, as a coordinator, Dene Nation would require approval from the regions before responding. Stories and Knowledge are the properties of the communities and regions.
  2. This question must be addressed by the communities and regions. Dene Nation could coordinate the responses from the community and from the regions but the information should come from the communities and regions.
  3. Recently, as I understand, there have been observations in Nunavut that indicate that eagles have been preying on new-born caribou calves. In addition, grizzly bear predation has been reported and people noticing that they are seeing more grizzly bears (especially mother bears with triplets). This change in predation may be worth studying.

#### C. Competitors

##### *SRRB IRs to all interested parties*

1. What stories or knowledge would you like to share about the relationships between caribou, ʔejı́re (muskoxen) and Dene/Métis?
2. Should there be more encouragement to harvest ʔejı́re for food security and commercial harvest, and to help caribou? If so, what should this look like?
3. Are there any other concerns that you have about other competitors and their impacts on caribou?
  1. This question must be addressed by the communities and regions.
  2. This is an interesting question. Not all Dene regions appear to traditionally harvest muskoxen for food.

*“Upholding and Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Dene Nation”*

3. During regional workshops on Dene Knowledge during 2019-2020, there were comments that muskoxen and caribou do not get along. There were also questions on whether the increasing muskox populations are contributing to decreasing barren-ground caribou populations.

### Information Request 1.2:

#### *Sahtú Ragóza (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting*

*The following IRs arise from SRRB decisions and recommendations from the Colville 2020 Public Listening Session.*

#### *SRRB IRs to all interested parties*

1. The SRRB made five recommendations related to barren-ground caribou hunting areas in the Sahtú region (Recommendations 7.1-7.5). Further evidence is needed to address area boundaries appropriately with respect to community jurisdictions. How should the Sahtú region define jurisdictions for barren-ground caribou harvest regulation?
2. Oral submissions to the Colville 2020 Public Listening Session indicate that *Wildlife Act* residency provisions and hunter education remain a “hot topic” within the Sahtú region. The SRRB wishes to consider this topic at the 2021 Public Listening Session. What roles do residency requirements and hunter education play in fostering or inhibiting respect for Dene harvesting protocols?
  1. Although this question is better answered by the Chiefs, I believe the defining of the boundaries for community jurisdictions must be a collaborative endeavour. The goal should be to develop community/regional authorities between the communities and within in the region and then with regions and communities with common boundaries. Once agreement is achieved at this level, ENR should be informed of the agreements and develop its work plans accordingly. I do not believe there will be a “one model for all” result. Each community and each region will likely have its own slightly different concept and plan.
  2. The response to this question is very political and better suited for the Chiefs. It would be great to see resident hunters be required to take an educational-type course when it comes to obtaining NWT hunting licences for species critical to Dene culture.