

Responses to Round 1 Information Requests

Caribou Working Group
Norman Renewable Resources Council
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Overview

This document was developed during a workshop of the Caribou Working Group of the Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council on January 14, 2021. The document includes responses to Round 1 Information Requests related to the Délı̄ne 2021 Public Listening Session.

The Caribou Working Group

The ʔədə Working Group is coordinated by the Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council, and includes a representative of the Norman Wells Land Corporation. Delegates to the January 14 workshop are listed below.

Workshop Participants

Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council

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Information Request (IR) 1.1: Tłch'ádíi he Gots'edı – Caribou, Predators and Competitors

A. The Conservation Picture: Caribou, People and Planning

1. *How are the caribou doing? Have you noticed any changes over the past year?*

- We can't say there have been changes. We have noticed that there seem to be lots of tōdzı, more than usual. This might be because there's been less disturbance than usual because less industrial activity than usual. Up until 20 years ago it would be a big deal if someone were to harvest tōdzı – it was a lot rarer.
- There was less outfitter activity in the mountains due to the pandemic so there has been less disturbance and harvesting in the mountains.
- Fewer people were going to Mile 222 area because they couldn't travel through the Yukon, so they to do a more expensive fly-in hunt – and fewer people were comfortable travelling in the NWT.
- We were not seeing many caribou tracks on Begáadə (Keele River). Not like there used to be. People weren't getting much caribou. But we did see lots of moose.
- Because of the pandemic, people are travelling more on the land instead of travelling outside the region, which means we have more eyes and ears on the land.
- It's a silver lining with the pandemic that the wildlife was given a break.
- The environment is changing, and wildlife distribution is changing. We're seeing more and more moose; however, we have seen an increase of moose infected with ticks (ghost moose), which in turn effects the hide and depending upon the infection of ticks, the hide may not be salvageable for use. So, with the supposed decline of caribou and the tick infested moosehides, this plays a huge role in our Aboriginal people not being able to practice our traditional teaching of tanning hides and sewing practices etc.

2. *How are the people doing? Have you noticed any changes over the past year?*

- The people are well however those with the means (boat, skidoo, flying etc.) of getting out on the land and being able to harvest are well but we have noticed that families with no means of getting out, and/or families that depend on the Outfitter's for meat were affected because of no hunting or meat being brought in.
- The Guardian training program at Drum Lake in August 2020 was awesome. On-the-Land training programs are vital and a high priority and should be continued and the training be upkept.
- People that were able to get out on the land were happy however the pandemic rules such as social distancing have played a role in alot of people not going out or participating in on-the-land harvesting or programs.
- The pandemic brings the importance of food security and wellness to light now. We're working towards supporting training and creating programs to support more country food security. This should be a high priority as well. It plays into the WLA and how the guidelines and regulations do not always support our way of life.

3. *How is the community conservation planning approach progressing?*

- We look forward to continuing to develop the Nío Nę P'ęńę plan, learning from other planning process. We have more confidence in the process now that we've been able to see how planning can inform decisions through the Public Listening proceedings.
- We still need capacity support and multi-year funding to develop a professional plan, especially funding contributions from Canada and the GNWT. There is a lot of funding avenues that are available but they are not announced or promoted (put out there in plain English). It is hard for not for profit organizations to do work because of very limited funding that we receive every year and the amount of responsibility that is placed on the organizations because of obligations set out in our SDMCLCA. Multi-year funding is a very high priority.
- We very much like the graphic recording approach to representing our work, since it is more impactful and has more meaning for people due to the type of learners we are. We'd like to see local people trained to do graphic recording and other media, computer training as well.
- We would like the opportunity to see how scientific information used for wise decisions can be collaborated, used and understood with Dene and Metis (traditional) knowledge. There is a great opportunity to try and start learning how we can collaborate and communicate in a sound way so that both sides can be on the same page and also be proud of the work and the outcome of that work and possibly continue for future use and reference.

B. Predators

1. *What stories or knowledge would you like to share about the past and present relationships between caribou, díga (wolf) and Dene/Métis?*

- I've noticed that there's a relationship between the wolves, the muskox and tǫdzı between Bandy Lake and Canyon Creek. The wolf pack keeps the muskox in check.
- There seems to be a high population of wolves but they seem to be in balance with other wildlife. The emphasis should not be on wolves as we don't have all the proper scientific and traditional knowledge to make sound decisions as to how to come up with a solution for the "supposed issue".
- Wolves in the Norman Wells area seem to be abit more habituated to people. A couple of years ago there were a lot more wolves in the community. Lately there seem to be less.
- Wolves have their own areas. If you clean them out another group will move in.
- We have had a couple of packs of wolves in and around Norman Wells for most of my life and I know the cycle of when they will possibly be appearing around town. Harm does come to pet dogs however I have not seen or heard of any dangerous run-ins with a wolf pack or just a lone wolf. I have seen a wolf kicked out of the pack be abit more abrasive but I do believe that was because it was being predatory but because it was hungry as it was very skinny.

2. *Should people play a role in controlling dı́ga populations to help caribou now? If so, what should this look like?*
 - No. Mother nature looks out for the balance among wildlife. There are cycles, and that's the way it's always been. The problems start when people start interfering and trying to fix something that's not even broken. Leave them alone.
3. *Are there any concerns that you have about other predators and their impacts on caribou?*
 - Everything seems to be looking after themselves. We don't have concerns about other predators. Nature and animals have their own cycles. The impact comes when humans interfere with that process. E.g.: culling wolves etc.
 - Non-indigenous people going out into traditional areas to just to use their tags. It is disrespectful to my family and other families who have been using these areas for generations. Our community is small enough and we know the people, so again, I find it disrespectful and it should be given more attention.

C. Competitors

1. *What stories or knowledge would you like to share about the relationships between caribou, ɔ́jire muskoxen) and Dene/Métis?*
 - There sure are a lot of muskox here these days.
 - They are more aggressive than bears. Even the calves, cows, or the whole herd will charge you full-on.
 - There's more to learn about muskox. They were around in the late 1800s but they retreated to the high arctic. But with climate change these guys are coming back.
 - People spend a lot of time on the Franklin Range and we see both todzi and muskoxen up there regularly. The muskoxen are a bigger population, but both seem to be coexisting well.
 - I was told by an Elder from Sachs Harbour in 2003 that if we didn't either pen or kill of the muskox that they would populate so fast and eat the caribou food and as a result of that, the caribou migrations would change because of the food shortage. Today, you see more muskox than moose and caribou put together. This might be a cycle but I just wanted to pass on the story. I can't imagine not having moose or caribou to eat. I can't imagine muskox being my main source of wild meat.
2. *Should there be more encouragement to harvest ɔ́jire for food security and commercial harvest, and to help caribou? If so, what should this look like?*
 - We are not very interested in harvesting muskoxen, and don't feel there's a reason to increase the harvest.
 - We do like eating it once in a while for a change.
 - We are not used to muskox in our diet so it would be hard to make a decision as to how to harvest etc. If it was introduced slowly and cooked for people to try, people might change their mind. Some sort of aboriginal food night for example. Just a thought.

3. *Are there any other concerns that you have about other competitors and their impacts on caribou?*
 - Just humans are the problems.
 - They interfere where they should not. That is where the biggest problem arises. I don't understand how decisions can be made when all the information has not been gathered in a proper way.

Information Request 1.2: Sahtú Ragóᑦa (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting

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?*
 - Barren-ground caribou came into our area in the 1980s, so it is a possibility that we could have some responsibility for stewardship.
 - We agree with the approach of using district boundaries to define barren-ground caribou harvesting areas, matching community jurisdictions for stewardship of the land and wildlife.
 - This means we need to be ready to exercise our jurisdiction if barren-ground caribou do come back to our area.
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?*
 - We are concerned that the residency was reduced to one year in the new Wildlife Act, against our wishes.
 - There are people who are transients that have opportunities to hunt, and this is a bigger impact on our wildlife. We'd like people who are hunters in our region to have some level of commitment to the region. These transients don't understand our systems of subsistence hunting and just hunt anywhere. We feel like our hunting areas are being invaded and disrespected. People leave a lot of garbage behind.
 - People are taking the hunter education program online, and there's no engagement with the region. We should be able to take our driver's licence or PAL/FAC online just as easy as the hunter education program and get our certificate or licence. If you look at it in this light, maybe the rule makers will change the guidelines or regulations so that the process would be fair and more respect and understanding would be given to our Aboriginal people and our traditional hunting areas and culture.

- A good example of educating harvesters about respectful protocols is the Ross River authorization system.
- Hunter education should be part of the school curriculum as a requirement and;
- It should be mandatory for all residents and non-residents, transient workers and others, before any tags etc. are given out. The program needs to be revamped to include different areas and it should include important information that is part of our SDMCLCA.