

Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council Plan Submission

Déjineq 2021 Public Listening Session

Submitted by Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council

Drafted by Lisa McDonald and Jasmine McDonald, Technical Team

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Outline

- Setting the Context
 - Scope of planning
- Predator Plan
- Competitor Plan

Setting the Context: Proposed Plan Components

The NWRCC is submitting two plan components for consideration by the SRRB and the Parties at the Délineq 2021 Public Listening Session (PLS). These components address two of the main topics of the 2021 PLS, namely:

- Living With Wildlife: Predators
- Living With Wildlife: Competitor

The NWRRC has a strong interest in taking more responsibility for harvest regulation. We plan to develop our own harvest regulation plan for presentation at one of the Public Listening Sessions planned for 2022-2024.

Setting the Context: What are these plan components trying to achieve?

These components add to planning work that was already done through Níó Nę P'ęńę planning process by addressing key hot topics in mountain caribou conservation. For predators and competitors, the plan components are also relevant for tǫdzı conservation.

Setting the Context: Mountain Caribou and Todzi

General comments on status;

- 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 affects 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.

Setting the Context: Mountain Caribou Status

- 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.

Setting the Context: Todzi Status

- We can't say there have been changes. We have noticed that there seem to be lots of tɔdzɪ, 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 tɔdzɪ – it was a lot rarer.

Setting the Context: How were these plan components developed?

- Lisa McDonald and Jasmine Plummer worked together as a Technical Team to review existing materials, participate in the Regional Preparation Workshop, and prepare draft materials for NWRRC review.
- Legal counsel reviewed materials to ensure they support NWRRC interests and priorities.
- NWRRC reviewed and approved submissions to the SRRB. These have been adapted the current plan component submissions.

Setting the Context: Community Engagement

The Norman Wells caribou working group proposes to hold workshop(s) and meetings, either in person or Via Zoom. In Norman Wells for the NWRRC members/youth to gather information and to have a better understanding of the CPP process in regards to Caribou Stewardship conservation issues and the community conservation planning processes. Other engagement ideas will be through local Radio Station advertisement, information pamphlets, social media and posters. Engagement information will be in simple terms in plain language.

Engagement will also be shared with all community members for a better understanding of the big picture. The Information should also be shared with organizations, companies, Industry, etc., that have a stake in the process. This will include the NWLC, as they have title to settlement lands and should be included in the planning process.

Furthermore, the TDLC should be included as well. As they are responsible for ownership and management of private lands.

Vision and Goals

The Nío Nę P'ęné plan includes a two-part vision that the NWRRC considers to be relevant for both mountain caribou and tǫdzı. The vision is as follows:

- Shúhtaot'ıneę, Métis, and Tu ıidlini Dena continue to peacefully co-exist with shúhta goǰepé in an ecologically diverse and healthy mountain landscape as they have for thousands of years
- Shúhtaot'ıneę, Métis and Tu ıidlini Dena are travelling, harvesting, sharing and gathering throughout their territory, keeping Dene kədə (language), Dene ts'ııı (ways of life), and Dene ǰeǰa (law / respect) strong.

Díga Plan: What changes are happening with respect to caribou relationships with díga?

- Wolf numbers have noticeably increased along with pack sizes.
- Noticing larger groups, more pronounced around our traditional hunting area (Three (3) Day Lake)
- Díga do take part in herding caribou and wean out the sick, old and injured. (mountain caribou)
- More people hunting (Mile 50 on the Canol Trail) from Tulita, Norman Wells & Ft. Good Hope
- Seeing a lot more of lone wolves coming into camp areas and Town of Norman Wells as opposed to seeing packs.
- Wolves seen in the foot hills, tracks following moose but not as noticeable in the valleys, where there were more caribou. Actually couldn't tell due to amount of Caribou tracks.
- Heard wolves calling when doing caribou scat collection and seen a few in the foothills but never heard them when doing work in the valleys. The caribou would scatter and run when landing in a chopper but would eventually come back to where they were eating when the chopper shut down. Did not really seem to have too much fear most of the time when we were doing our work.

Díga Plan: What's healthy and unhealthy about caribou-díga relationships?

- Traditional hunters from Norman Wells have to travel along way to harvest caribou. The cost is high due to the distance, so usually done once a year (Mile 50 on the Canol Trail) due to the higher possibility of harvesting caribou as this is part of their migration route
- It's a natural cycle of life. Díga take the sick, old and/or injured, not the healthy caribou. It's a natural relationship and a natural cycle that should not be interfered with.
- I don't believe we have all of the proper answers or the proper scientific information to make suggestions or implement plans that would try to rectify a situation that we have no business in taking part of. For example, a wolf culling program with huge incentives. There is not enough baseline information to interfere with natural cycles of cycles of nature and should be left alone.

Díga Plan: What needs to be done?

- It is unfair to target one predatory species like Diga. There are so many other factors that come into play that affect wildlife. For example in the Norman Wells area, we have to deal with Oil & Gas exploration companies, Outfitters, the Mackenzie Highway extension, Tourism etc., and we know that these do have an effect on predatory animals, wildlife in general and in effect that disturbs the balance of nature.
- We need to respect WL and their natural cycles. A good example is the reintroduction of Diga into Yellowstone National Park. It is amazing how the Park came back into a natural balance. That in itself is testament that nature knows exactly what she is doing. There is a balance in nature and humans should not interfere with that process. It is just not one species that throws everything off balance, it takes multiple factors that are usually led by humans.
- Talk to Elders. They have the knowledge and stories that have been passed down. We are not superior to wildlife, however a lot of humans tend to think they are and by interfering, we only make the situation worse. That has been proven and proven again.
- Respect all wildlife and their natural cycles.

Muskoxen Plan: What changes are happening with respect to caribou relationships with muskoxen?

- Increased numbers and sightings in and around Norman Wells
- More interactions with humans as opposed to any other wildlife
- Territorial/aggressive
- User cutlines as a corridor.
- People seem to worry more about running into muskox while out doing recreational stuff around Norman Wells. More so than bears or wolves, which we have a lot of them around Norman Wells
- People starting to harvest them.
- Still not accepted as a staple country food.
- The meat is leaner and richer compared to other big game (caribou, moose)

Muskoxen Plan: What's healthy and unhealthy about caribou-muskoxen relationships?

- Food seems to be shared more than we thought as muskox eats lichens, willows, sedges, rushes and grasses. Caribou eat lichen, dried sedges, and small shrubs in the winter and in the summer they eat the leaves of willows, sedges, flowering tundra plants and mushrooms. Muskox are not adapted to digging through heavy snow for food, so winter habitat is generally restricted to areas where the snow is shallow or blown free of snow.
- Muskox have a low reproductive rate (every 2 to 3 yrs and depending on other factors) whereas caribou can reproduce every year.
- Muskox will travel far distances for food and usually stay near a water source. Caribou (Mtn.) are non-migratory and do remain in forested areas, migrating between the forested and alpine area's of the Mackenzie Mtns.
- Generally seems that when a muskox is in an area, the caribou will alter their travel route
- Muskox and caribou are susceptible to a parasite called the lung worm. It has been detected for several years but the infection is spreading and climate change seems to be a factor. They have a harder time to breath and tire quickly which in turn makes them easier to be preyed upon by wolves and grizzly bears.

Muskoxen Plan: What needs to be done?

- More studies need to be done to understand the relationship between both species.
- Research and document stories and information from our Elders.
- Read books that are written by our Elders in the Sahtu region (George Blondin) for information, very useful.

Díga and Muskoxen Plan Actions

Action	Timeline	Who	Resources
Meeting to talk about caribou relationships with wildlife.	Once per year	NWRRRC and knowledge holders	\$3,000
Support Indigenous knowledge and science research and monitoring to understand caribou relationships with wildlife.	Ongoing science/ Indigenous knowledge work to start 2022.	ENR in partnership with SRRB and Sahtú communities	\$100,000 starting amount for Indigenous knowledge project (science research already funded)
Develop curriculum including Indigenous knowledge and science to educate youth about caribou relationships with wildlife.	Curriculum development by 2024.	ENR in partnership with SRRB and Sahtú communities	\$50,000

Learning: Monitoring and Updating the Plan

Action	Monitoring	Indicators
Meeting to talk about caribou relationships with wildlife and people.	Once per year	Meeting minutes
Support Indigenous knowledge and science research and monitoring to understand caribou relationships with wildlife.	Once per year, minimum.	Oral and written reports on results.
Develop curriculum including Indigenous knowledge and science to educate youth about caribou relationships with wildlife.	Once per year	Curriculum document.
Updating the plan	Once per year	Revised plan based on lessons learned during the previous year.

Sharing: Documenting and Sharing

- We will prepare oral and written presentations for submission to the SRRB at the 2021-2024 Public Listening Sessions, including lessons learned and monitoring information.
- We would like to have opportunities to share our story at various networks, including:
 - Sahtú regional Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ı - Living on the Land Forum
 - Nío Nę P'ęné – Trails of the Mountain Caribou Hub
 - Canadian Mountain Network
 - National Boreal Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium and Indigenous Knowledge Circle