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**Sahtú Renewable Resources Board accepts community conservation approach for Bluenose East ʔekwé (caribou)**



**Monday, August 29, 2016 — Tulít'a, NWT** — The ʔehdzo Got'jñę Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) has completed its review of two proposed plans for the conservation and management of Bluenose East (BNE) ʔekwé (caribou) and has outlined its findings in its report, *ʔekwé hé Dene Ts'jłj - Sustaining Relationships*. The report concludes that some aspects of both plans should be accepted.

The SRRB received plans from both the community of Déljñę and Government of the Northwest Territories department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), each proposing measures for managing the BNE harvest and addressing conservation concerns. A hearing was held in March in Déljñę, marking the first time a wildlife co-management board has been called upon to review two independently-developed plans by government and community proponents.

After reviewing the evidence provided, it is the Board's conclusion that the community conservation planning process proposed in the *Déljñę Belare wile Gots'ę ʔekwé – Caribou for All Time* plan is the best option for addressing conservation needs through an effective community-based monitoring and harvest management program. The Board therefore accepts Déljñę's plan for harvest management, monitoring and enforcement.

"Dene and Métis users are the main agents of conservation in their communities and their way of life should be the starting point for ʔekwé management and conservation," says SRRB Vice Chair Paul Latour. "People in Déljñę continue to have strong relationships with the land and wildlife, and a community-led conservation approach that maintains that relationship of interdependence and respect should be supported and celebrated."

This marks the first time that a community plan has been considered as part of a hearing proceeding. The Board recognizes that it is breaking new ground in formally supporting a community-driven conservation approach that views wildlife conservation and preservation of Indigenous ways of life as interlinked goals, and that the hearing report signals a departure from top-down wildlife management approaches.

The Board took a "biocultural" approach to weighing the evidence presented at the hearings that included a consideration of Dene laws, values and ways of living as being integral to wildlife conservation, so that culture would be protected alongside caribou.

The hearing report does not support the establishment of a Total Allowable Harvest quota, which the Board believes is unnecessary at this time and would undermine traditional Dene conservation practices that continue to be central to the relationship between people and caribou in the Sahtú Region. Rather, the Board believes community conservation planning,

completed with the input and support of Elders and land-users, will achieve a greater level of conservation in the Sahtu.

“The SRRB recognizes that implementing action items embodied in these decisions will entail a lot of work for all the co-management partners,” notes Latour. “Some of the work involves building a solid foundation of trusting relationships – if this can be achieved, the rest of the work will no doubt be inspiring, innovative, and beneficial for both people and Ɂekwé.”

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