

Nę K'e Dene Ts'ıłı (previously called the Sahtú ERM Forum)

Teleconference

Friday March 31st 1pm - 4pm

Notes of the meeting

We will have a meeting in quite quick succession in April in order to focus on a number of research project updates. However, this meeting, given the current momentum behind and interest in community and regional guardian programs, will focus primarily on updates of Guardian initiatives and will explore the tie-ins between community research and monitoring and broader traditional economy goals.

1pm

1. Introductions

Review of Agenda

Present:

Jimmy Dillon, Délıne ʔehdzo Got'ıne
Michael Neyelle, SRRB Special Representative
Rhea McDonald, Norman Wells RRC
Leon Andrew, Forum Chair; SRRB Special Representative
Stephanie Behrens, ENR
Joe Hanlon, SRRB
Bruce Hannah, ENR
Maura Meng, SRRB
Alana Fletcher, Environment Canada
Mylène Ratelle, University of Waterloo
Roger Odgaard, Norman Wells (calling from Victoria)
Marlene Evans, University of Saskatchewan
Trish Fontaine, University of Alberta
Jenn Baltzer, Wilfrid Laurier University
Thom Stubbs, Headwater Group
Faye Deon-Eggertson, Parks Canada (Tulıt'a)
Gordon Yakeleya, Tulıt'a ʔehdzo Got'ıne
Frederick Andrew,
Tee Lim, CPAWS,
Christine Wenman, PlanIt North
Deb Simmons, SRRB

2. Presentations and updates

Community Perspectives on Fiber Optic Line

Trish Fontaine, University of Alberta

- Masters student in education and works at UAlberta North
- Forum at the end of April on digital connectivity in the north
- Rhea: Doesn't think they had a very good plan when they started the fiber optic line; there were a lot of environmental issues, and they went over budget – the communities will likely pay.
- Trish: interested in whether the communities had opportunities to develop their own plans for benefitting from the fiber optic line
- Rhea: The monitors did a great job, but the contractors were very difficult to work with.
- Deb: a positive outcome is that the communities really took a strong role in documenting environmental problems and bringing concerns to light and ensuring that action was taken.
- Trish: There is a consortium First Mile Connectivity Consortium – a group of researchers and first nations that have been working on this issue from an ownership and self-determination point of view; how can the fiber optic line project be more of a training tool and economic benefit.
- Trish: will be looking at the documentation of the consultation process available online. Her supervisor is looking for funding. Rob McMann.
- If there are communities along the fiber optic route that are interested, they'd like to know.
- Christine will assist Trish in linking with Fort Good Hope folks.
- Gordon: there wasn't proper consultation; for example, there was an old trail that they took over and widened.
- Deb: there is a lot of concern about what proper consultation entails.
- Also UAlberta North is wondering if there's interest in renewable energy projects in the Sahtú Region (no discussion –future follow-up required)

Northern Water Futures

Jenn Baltzer, Wilfrid Laurier University

- Wilfrid Laurier University has been successful in developing a Letter of Intent to the Global Water Futures program – proposal due April 10.
- A multi-disciplinary team to work on environmental baseline in the area that has potential for shale oil development
- A focus is on changing permafrost conditions
- Developing a baseline for groundwater hydrology
- Terrestrial ecology
- Linked to another proposal with University of Guelph (Leon and Deb as collaborators) on understanding the impacts of fire
- A first step would be to sit with community knowledge holders/researchers in Norman Wells and Tulít'a to talk about research design

- A knowledge mobilization plan
- Roger: are they working collaboratively with other ongoing water initiatives in the NWT? Also, is there a plan for community participation and jobs?
- Trish: It would be good to get a better understanding of existing datasets (with the help of postdoctoral students) and identify gaps to guide development of the research. They hope to work with harvesters to document what they're noticing about changes on the land.
- Bruce: Dave Rudolph is trying to identify the groundwater baseline.
- Rhea: Leon Andrew is the SSI representative on NWT Water Strategy, so will be a big help. Also, it's not just harvesters but also environmental monitors that should be involved in a project like this.
- Gordon: RRCs should be directly involved in this kind of project.
- Jenn: there will be opportunities for training and the Participatory Action Research model will allow for community participation in research.
- Leon: it's a great thing to have university help in doing a baseline study.
- Roger: It's going to be urgent soon to do baseline work in the Norman Wells area, since Imperial will be "getting unplugged" soon. This has always been a big concern. What is going to pop out when they demobilize the oil field, which has been shut down since last fall.
- Deb: there have been strong concerns sent to the Sahtú Land and Water Board about Imperial's closure water monitoring plan, and the lack of regard for community concerns about impacts of contaminants on fish. Also there are big concerns about the quality of ConocoPhillips water monitoring.
- Deb: It would strengthen the proposal to have a clear outline of the full range of strengths that communities can bring to the project – skills and expertise, and organisational supports.

Best of Both Worlds – Traditional Economy and On-the-Land Program coordination and strategy

Thom Stubbs, Leon, Deb

- Overview of the Best of Both Worlds Action Plan.

What we drafted was 7 core strategies, they are worth discussing in the context of the role of the Sahtú ERM forum because they focus on how organizations can work together towards the traditional economy. These are:

1. To pursue a recognition of a mixed economy
Through partnerships that are really multi-government organizations ex Sahtú training partnership; Sahtú Shale Oil Partnership. Work with intergovernmental partnerships – Forum could pursue the traditional economy agenda through those two partnerships

2. Support Traditional economy through development agreements.
Example: Land Corporations can support traditional economy by negotiating relevant terms within access and benefit agreements with developers. Also working with GNWT on the socio-economic agreements that they make for major projects. So conditions could be asked or sought either through the GNWT or land corporations.
3. The role of Sahtú organizations themselves- speaks to Sahtú organizations supporting the mixed economy.
4. Review education and training programs that support the traditional economy
5. Deals with recognition. So don't be shy - be proud about the mixed economy. The ideas of this have really come from the GNWT fur program. Recognizing and developing awards for participants in the Sahtú of the Traditional Economy. Developing a website that promotes the diversity of the traditional economy.
6. Continue program supports for harvesting, arts and crafts.
Lobby for continued support - Mackenzie Valley Fur and Arctic crafts.
7. Facilitate research that helps to understand the role of the Traditional Economy. Key role of the Sahtú ERM Forum.
 - Leon described the discussion at the interagency meeting about how it might be possible to coordinate programs to adapt to the special conditions of supporting traditional economy and on-the-land programs
 - Deb: it was amazing to realize that the group addressed all the topics on Thom's action list before having looked at the document, with the exception of research, which is already being addressed by the Forum. There are funding implications - if the group agrees to expand its mandate, there will need to be additional funding to support the extra work needed. But when it came to working on how best to bring people together for regular discussions about how best to have coordinated discussions on supporting Dene and Metis way of life and economy. Coordination between tourism, arts and culture folks - silo that government tends to bring. Jennie right away was saying that the Sahtú ERM Forum is a group that is working really well already and has the kind of expertise that we need and a lot of the same people from the Sahtú perspective - do we really need to establish another committee in the Sahtú or would it be better to work with the strengths that we already have with the Forum? So there was some thinking that maybe we already had the kind of group that we needed to bring people together. Ever since the Forum was founded, this group has done an amazing job making sure that dots are being connected and that people who are working together

and should be talking together are and that not too much duplication. So we wanted to see what kinds of thoughts that the Forum members themselves have.

- Leon's proposed new name for the Forum Nęk'ə Dene Ts'ı̄l̄ı - we live on the land. In Slavey, for us, it should be we the people on the land or the way of life on the land.
- Tulit'a folks? Gordon here – I would agree to the title. How do you do the on-the-land program? For example, the school has been doing the program for quite some years and it has changed over time. So one of the elders takes his skidoo and takes the kids out on the land. Now they want us to take the skidoo and the kids out at no cost. And I heard someone today that wasn't going to go out and then
- Deb – you are singing music to our ears in the sense that what we are realizing – the SRRB has realized that we are not going to have strong RRCs to work collaboratively with if we don't support the communities in keeping the skills, knowledge and practices alive on the land. Doing that is a whole bunch of new issues so we need a good strong team to chip away at these sorts of things.
- Rhea: We already have too many committees in the Sahtú – we don't need another committee if the Forum can take this on.
- Michael: I agree with Leon's title and the expanded scope
- Jimmy: agrees with the title; the expanded mandate makes sense in relation to the discussions that he participated in and listened to at the NWT On-the-Land Summit
- Roger: agrees with the title and expanded mandate, but made the case for completing a database of Sahtú research – Deb described the progress made in compiling the Sahtú Library by Alana Fletcher. Notes that Roger should be given a password to help with his student work. **To-do**
- Thom: in discussions toward creating the action plan, there was interest in the role that the Forum could play in supporting implementation of government programs.
- Christine: we can try to organise our agendas so that the focus is on key themes from community perspectives, which are comprehensive, and coordinate with outside resource people so that they can join our meetings for items that are of particular interest for them. [NOTE: Deb didn't say this, but think that we should ask graduate students/postdocs to attend the whole meetings where possible, so they get a more wholistic understanding of how their research fits into the Sahtú picture – the “jumping into the river approach”]
- Gordon: agrees with expanded mandate, but notes that there are a lot of challenges that need to be worked out to have strong on-the-land programs. People don't want to participate because their skidoo might break down.

Dene Ts'ı̄lı School

Michael, Jimmy and Deb

- Michael: whole initiative arose from interest and direction of young people themselves. 16-day camp at Bennett Field. Focus on learning on-the-land skills from their elders. Youth took a firearms test and 100% passed.
- Note that we've made an effort to learn as much as possible from the first Dene Ts'ı̄lı School, including informal debriefing, evaluation by Maura and Jordan, participation in the NWT
- Maura recommends that there be more of an effort to do an evaluation that is culturally appropriate. Maura and Jordan did an evaluation after the school. At the NWT On-the-Land Summit there was a presenter that was using too much academic jargon and there were some issues with that. We need to define our own approach, similar to how we did the Risk Management workshop.
- Roger: important to follow up on Possession and Acquisition Licenses so that people actually apply. Deb: we had photographer Pat Kane take the portraits for the licenses at the camp, and will follow up with the students once we get the photos. **To-do**
- Deb: exciting news is we are already funded for the second Dene Ts'ı̄lı School through the work of Dr. Audrey Giles – with a focus on safety – transport Canada funding. It will be at Bennet Field again and because we have to work around the academic year so that Audrey can incorporate her research work, it will be the last week of August, first week of September.

Cross-Cultural Research Camp

Deb and Tee

- The next CCR Camp will be at Dechenla Lodge during the week of July 24, with objective to take the Mountain Caribou Plan to the next level (following completion of previous meeting reports, and community meetings); and to train trainers in community conservation planning – so that there will be people in each community who have tools and skills in facilitating planning processes. Stuart Cowell will be a trainer using the Healthy Country Planning approach developed with aboriginal people in Australia – and used by Délı̄ne for their plan. There had been discussion of the value of inviting an AMMO representative at the September 2016 meeting.
- Rhea asked about the report on the 2016 meeting – completion was delayed due to the consultant being overbooked, but this is now top priority
- Rhea noted that it will be important to include Land Corporations as landowners.

Dene Kədə to Dene Ts'ı́łı́ Project

Faun Rice and Deb

- Faun provided an overview of the project, which includes literature review, a “rapid appraisal” survey, and a workshop with community language coordinators, working with Mary Ann Vital (Sahtú Dene Council Regional Language Coordinator).
- Faun: Project will create a timeline for projects related to language and culture revitalization – looking at everything that has been done and how successful they were, what was learned, what hasn’t yet been tried.
- Rhea asked how this project fits with the SRRB’s mandate – Michael and Deb explained that language is critical for implementing the traditional knowledge component of the Board’s policy – and language work is strongly supported by the Board for that reason.
- Deb noted that we’re coordinating with ECE to ensure that there’s good coordination with their programs; the project celebrates the variation in the language, even within communities – which doesn’t necessarily get recognized in Yellowknife with the official languages approach.
- Deb: this is Faun’s second presentation about the project – she and Keren also discussed it with the youth and instructors at the Dene Ts'ı́łı́ School.
- Deb: Faun did an analysis of the statistics around language trends, Dene foods, arts and crafts. Census surveys don’t account for uptake of things like hand games and drumming, which are becoming really popular again among youth and are also traditional strengths. Perhaps we could influence those surveys. **Follow-up required.**
- Hope is that the project will put community coordinators in a good position to apply for strong longer term funding.
- Faun / Michael. Michael emphasized importance of on the land opportunities. Faun: This includes on-the-land learning. Jennifer Redvers wrote a great paper on the value of on the land learning. **Christine to circulate.**
- Discussion about which communities and dialects – answer is all Sahtú communities and dialects. Hope is to have a workshop in each community. Keren really celebrates the diversity of the language, which isn’t always recognized by institutions in Yellowknife.

Next Meeting

April 13, 1:00 pm