

Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ı (Living on the Land) Forum

Terms of Reference

(last revised July 3, 2017 – pending approval)

Background

Many land-based projects and programs are underway in the Sahtú Region, with the involvement of various community, regional, territorial and federal departments as well as industry and academic partners. During a three-day interagency meeting in November, 2013, a consensus was reached that research and monitoring programs and projects should be well coordinated, with strong guidance from Sahtú communities. Governments and industry require research that will support wise, evidence-based decision-making.

As a consequence, Sahtú organizations and the Government of the Northwest Territories (led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources) agreed to convene a group known as the “Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring Forum”. In 2017 a Dene name was adopted to reflect an expanded mandate for the Forum - Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ı - meaning “living on the land.”

With climate change effects and potential cumulative impacts from future possible development scenarios, the need for this work is expanding. During a series of meetings in 2015-2016, Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ı Forum members agreed that current low oil and commodity prices present an opportunity for coordinated planning and communications with the development of a strategic research and monitoring framework in preparation for possible development of the shale oil play in the Tulı́'a District as well as other land uses in the region. Furthermore, a need was identified for engagement and coordination to support community priorities related to Dene ts'ı́ı, including the traditional economy and on the land activities. The Forum chose to expand its mandate in order to address these needs.

Mandated by the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne (Renewable Resource Councils) in each Sahtú community have a special role in collaboration with the ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board - SRRB). Together, ʔehdzo Got'ı́ne and the SRRB support objectives in the land claim agreement, including the objective “to recognize and encourage the way of life of the Sahtu Dene and Metis which is based on the cultural and economic relationship between them and the land.” There is a need

to focus on supporting and resourcing ʔehdzo Got'Inę and create consistent opportunities for their collaboration.

Vision

Traditional economy, on the land, and research and monitoring programs in the Sahtú are coordinated and conducted in ways that reflect regional and community priorities, engage community members and leadership organizations, value both science and traditional knowledge, and support wise decision-making.

Purpose

The Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́l Forum will provide advice and coordination support for traditional economy, on the land, research, and monitoring initiatives by providing a venue for discussing plans and accommodating the priorities and traditional knowledge of Sahtú community members and leadership organizations.

Objectives

The Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́l Forum will address the following objectives in supporting Sahtú traditional economy, on the land and research and monitoring programs:

- Identify regional priorities and gaps
- Build cross-cultural understanding
- Respect, support and protect traditional knowledge processes
- Support wise decision-making based on evidence from science and traditional knowledge
- Support youth leadership development
- Build local capacity in the Sahtú to collaborate in, coordinate and lead programs
- Identify opportunities for: collaborative programs involving communities; communication; information-sharing; and cross-cultural dialogue.

Guiding Principles

The Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́l̨ Forum is cross-cultural, and our processes are based on the following principles of mutual respect:

- All comments are important
- All members can openly share their opinions
- Decisions are made by consensus.
- Be open-minded/don't judge
- Information is plain language whether in Dene or English language, and shared with communities
- Stay focused on objectives
- Think past, present, and into the future

Structure

The Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́l̨ Forum is led by a Chairperson and supported by a Resource Group as well as a Secretariat overseen by the SRRB.

Chairperson

- The Chairperson is appointed by a consensus decision of the group.
- The appointment is reviewed annually.
- The Chairperson works with the Forum Secretariat to set meeting agendas, and to facilitate meetings.

Membership

The Forum consists of representation from each of the five ʔehdzo Got'ı́n̨ in the Sahtú Region; youth, the Sahtú Secretariat Inc., the territorial and federal governments, industry, and the SRRB.

- The majority of the members are Sahtú beneficiaries.
- Alternates are delegated to ensure consistent membership and attendance.
- The Forum may identify additional delegates by consensus to participate as needed.

Member Qualifications

The membership should include people with a range of qualifications, including:

- Dene/Métis harvesters
- Strong communicators
- Expertise in traditional knowledge and science

- Leadership abilities
- Action oriented
- Passionate

Member Roles

Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ıı Forum members assist in achieving Forum objectives in the following ways:

- Attend meetings or send an alternate.
- Be prepared – read background material before each meeting.
- Review and provide feedback on documents distributed by email.
- Provide guidance to the Forum.
- Report back to communities or organizations.

Resource Group and Secretariat

- The Resource Group may consist of staff from partnering organisations, including the SRRB, Sahtú Secretariat Inc., NWT Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, and the Central Mackenzie Explorers Group (CMEG).
- The Secretariat consists of SRRB staff and/or consultants.
- The Resource Group assists the Chair and Secretariat in planning and organizing Forum activities, recording meeting notes, securing funding, administering finances and delivering plain language and technical documents and reports.

Activities

The Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ıı Forum will meet its objectives through activities that will include, but may not be limited to:

1. Development of a five-year Sahtú research and monitoring strategy and a five year traditional economy and on the land program strategy
2. Consistent updates from program leads with proposed projects or activities in progress
3. Discussions of research license applications under review by Forum members
4. Cross-cultural on the land camps and training initiatives
5. Assessments of progress on Forum objectives

Meeting Frequency and Procedures

- An in-person meeting at least twice per year, in locations to be determined by consensus of the Forum membership with consideration of budget constraints.
- A cross-cultural on the land camp once per year.

- At least six additional meetings by teleconference, including thematically focussed meetings, with a frequency to be determined according to workload.
- Plain language summaries of reports and important documents will be prepared.
- Summary documents will be used by Forum Members to assist with written and verbal communications back to the organization that they represent.
- As required, representatives of Sahtú-based organisations will caucus by teleconference or in person, in order to develop inputs for consideration by the larger Forum, or to address Sahtú coordination and capacity building that is not directly applicable to other member organisations.

Reimbursement of Meeting Costs

Meeting costs including travel expenses and honoraria for Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı́ Forum members, as required, will be reimbursed with administrative support from the SRRB as per the Government of the NWT guidelines.