

APPENDIX B – Co-Author Reflections

Each of the co-authors of this report has played an important role in helping to shape the scope, approach, results and conclusions for this report. In particular, the four Dene and Métis contributors - Walter Bezha, Michael Neyelle, Jordan Lennie, and Shelby Lennie - carefully reviewed the compiled materials and checked them against their personal knowledge and experience. The reflections shared here provide important validations of the history portrayed in this Knowledge Synthesis, each highlighting and personalizing a distinct angle and thus giving an indication of the richness of knowledge and visions for resurgence in the Sahtú Region.

One Dene History

By Walter Bezha

After thirty-two years in the resource development field with both the Federal and Territorial governments, Walter Bezha switched to the working with Aboriginal governance organisations. Walter has served as a senior adviser to the Déline First Nation Chief on caribou issues and language programs, as Implementation Director for the Déline Governance office and Lands Administrator for the new Déline Got'ıne Government. He facilitated development of Déline's Belare Wile Gots'ę ʔekwé – Caribou for All Time conservation plan. At the regional level, he was Chair of the ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákeđi (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB), member of the Sahtu Land and Water Board, and member of the Mackenzie Land and Water Board. He was a founding member of the national Learning Communities Network, oriented to understanding the role of communities in resource management. He is author of “Using Indigenous Stories in Caribou Co-Management” (Rangifer, 2012). co-author of “Our Responsibility to Keep the Land Alive: Voices of Northern Indigenous Researchers” (Pimatisiwin, 2010), and “Gúlú Agot'i T'á Kə Gotsúhza Gha (Learning about Changes): Rethinking Indigenous Social Economy in Déline, NWT” (Southcott, Ed., 2015).



Photo credit: Jean Polfus

Bringing forth my own family history has been a huge part of my understanding of Dene Ts'ıı today. Growing up on the land with all my grandfathers has been truly a blessing for me. Eventually as my grandfathers expected I would start to ask myself a basic question “who am I and what am I here for?” Oral history seem to have timelines for all of us, a time for when to ask.

Most of my early years were spent with my grandfathers learning to be part of mother earth. Then we all had to leave and attend residential schools. I was no different then other kids my age, just trying to survive, and get home. One year here, one year home, and so forth – that kept me from losing my language. Early on my grandfather got TB and had to leave home to go to Charles Campsell hospital for TB, in the early 1960's. Many of my people had to leave because of this sickness in the 1960s. My grandfather wanted me to get an education, to learn the ways of the dominant society. I never asked why. In those days there was no such word as why. We learned it in school. In fact it was one of the first words we learned in English.

By the time I was fourteen I managed to get work in construction and since then I never looked back. I always worked hard and supported my family. I should say that my grandfather ʔehtsə Bayha was well respected and liked by all the Roman Catholic priests as far as I can remember. They often visited us at our camps, no matter the season. It seemed to me that they were always there with us. Prayers and fasting were part of my grandfather's daily life, and I came to be part of that life. When very young I was part of his prayers and fasting. Later I was able to choose whether to participate or not. As I remember I always joined in his prayers, although sometimes I couldn't tell if he was praying or giving a fire offering.

Work and school, then later college and eventually full time work with Northwest Lands and Forest Service (Government of the NWT). It turned out that I lived through a whole career in the field of environmental management. In mid career, language and missing my grandfathers and Great Bear Lake, I made a huge career decision to return to Délı̨nę and spend time with my grandfather and family. I had to switch to the Wildlife Service of the GNWT, and to do that I needed to go back to school for Wildlife and Parks management Semesters in Thebacha College.

By this time my grandfather was very involved in his own Dene spiritual journey. His prayers and spiritual songs are very much a part of us today. I am still interpreting his songs and want to learn what messages he is passing on to our people.

By the year 2000, things were not as grand as I thought they would be, although I have had many opportunities to advance to supervisory positions. Looking back I guess I was starting to ask that question "who am I and what am I here for?" As I did more work in this area to find out about my own history, things picked up. I eventually resigned from government and started work for Dene organizations in Land management. I still wanted to part of wildlife management in Sahtu, this came when I was appointed as Chair of the ʔehdzo Got'ı̨nę Gots'ę́ Nákedı̨.

I'm now retired and have more opportunities to choose how I spend my time. I seem to be drawn to do more work and research on our own history. Interpreting and understanding the many Dene concepts that fascinate me, like Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨. Today I am comfortable to say that it is my grandfather's Dene understanding that all things are related and that the main concepts of mother earth and contributing to its existence is central to the Dene way of life.

My challenge was to look at history from the perspective of my people. This is a huge challenge. You need to go through it all and say where does this come from, and sort through mountains of history, and interpret it in its proper context. For example, I've spent a lot of time trying to understand the Dene world that the Oblate missionary Émile Petitot documented in the late 19th century. At the end what is left must be our history as it was before contact.

One piece at a time seems to be my way of making progress today. As things move forward I see all things as our people did at one time. One earth, one Dene people contributing to the earth. I am thankful to whoever created this wonderful world we live in. I love the wildlife that still wanders in the hills and forests close to us. I still drink the water directly from the lake just fifty yards below my house. Now I can make decisions like my grandfathers did, decisions rooted in Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨.

Dene Godí in Délıne

By Michael Neyelle, in collaboration with Deborah Simmons

Michael Neyelle's education was what influenced him the most to become a researcher. He went to Grollier Hall residential school for six years, from 1968-1974. Michael started working for Imperial Oil in 1972 during the summers in Norman Wells, and continued working there after he graduated. Returning to Délıne, he worked in various administrative jobs. He gained experience in radio broadcasting with CBC North, and continues to offer Dene language programming on the CBQO community radio in Délıne.

During 1988-1990, Michael studied Public and Business Administration at Arctic College (the precursor to Aurora College). There he learned about the federal, territorial, municipal, and First Nations governments, accounting, economics. During the 1990s, Michael was sought after as an experienced and knowledgeable community researcher and interpreter. He was a fieldworker for the ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board Harvest Survey and the Sahtú Land Use Planning Board's land use mapping project, and assisted numerous academic researchers with their projects. In addition to serving as Chair of the ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı, Michael is a member of the Délıne ʔehdzo Got'ıne, and a researcher collaborator with the Délıne Language and Stories of the Land program in partnership with University of Toronto and University of Cologne.



Photo credit: Jean Polfus

Délıne use to be called Fort Franklin, after the European explorer who visited in 1825-1827. In those days. This place wasn't much more than a trading post until the 1950, when the Federal day school was introduced. In those days a lot of people lived across the lake at Sǫbak'ə (Port Radium), working at the uranium mine. ʔehtsǫ Ayha had observed the effects of the mine, and based on that knowledge made predictions about the future that are still coming true today.

It wasn't until the mid 1950s that people started to learn English – this was when the Federal Day School was introduced. Coercion was used at the community school. For example, if you talked your Dene language during school hours, you would be disciplined by being strapped or whipped with leather belts. A lot of the students did not know how to say simple things in English while in school, for example: How to say that you want to go to bathroom, or you want to have a drink of water, or you were late because you had to cut wood or get water.

Then, residential schooling was introduced in the 1960s and once again, we were taken away from our Dene way of life. After residential schooling, it was really hard to regain our culture, especially skills for living off the land. The language was not too hard to regain, because most of the people who did not go to residential school kept their culture and language.

Starting in the 1970s, oil and gas exploration started to happen, so a lot of young people left their communities to work. The ones that stayed behind were lucky because they had the elders to teach and tell stories to them.

In the 1970s, cassette tape recorders were introduced, and Dene stories and traditional knowledge were beginning to be recorded and used at schools. The Dene Nation coordinated a big mapping project, and Fibbie Tatti worked with trappers in Délıne to document their history of land use. The Dene Keda Curriculum was created in the 1980s with help from several Délıne Got'ıne researchers and knowledge

holders including Fibbie Tatti, Jane Modeste Vandermeer, and John Tetso. A Dene language dictionary for our language was compiled. This project should be seriously be reconsidered for an upgrade or enhance in the very near future. It is a very useful material because it can be used to write documents, laws, stories, medical terms, etc., all in Dene language.

The idea of creating Dene Náoweró Kó (a traditional knowledge center) was being talked about but no plans were formalized – a trace of this idea is the building bearing that name which is still used for community events like handgames, drum dances, public meetings and workshops. Now there is also an office building in town that we call the Dél̄ñę Knowledge Centre. During this period, anthropologists and linguists like Scott Rushforth, Keren Rice and later Nicole Beaudry started working with our community to document our language and way of life.

After the land claim agreement was settled in 1993, we saw a number of new research initiatives like the Sahtú Land Use Planning Board's recent land use mapping project, the Sahtú Harvest Study, and Dél̄ñę's big five year science and traditional knowledge project to study the impacts of Port Radium. The Dél̄ñę Knowledge Project was established to archive and document stories and language, and facilitated the return of Keren Rice and Nicole Beaudry to resume collaboration in community research. The Language, Stories and Songs project was an outgrowth of this, and is still very active today. This project has introduced a computer program called ELAN, to hear and translate and transcribe elders' stories. This is an outstanding project and it could have been a very useful educational tool for the schools to use to teach students Dene languages. Nicole Beaudry is working with us to compile the Dél̄ñę Song Book. Fibbie Tatti is now leading a Dene Kedá project to document place names and stories.

Today, the Dene languages are slowly disappearing, just like the barren-ground caribou. If we don't come up with a plan to conserve our way of life, we will lose it. We need to take our revival of our way of life back to the land. It is a known fact that the best way to learn about our culture is to take the school out on the land. Take the whole family out on the land for more than a month at a time, and do that three or four times a year. If we have to, we can bring the math or english or biology teachers along.

We have technologies today where we can teach our language, right from our homes to anywhere in the world, and we should start with our people and their children who do not live at home. We are also starting to govern ourselves under our new Dél̄ñę Got'ıñę Government. We should be setting a good example by conducting our meetings in our own languages. Our plans, policies and laws should be written in Dene languages, and translated from Dene to English rather than the other way around – we've already started to do this with our *Belare Wile Gots'ę ʔekwé – Caribou for All Time* conservation plan. We should also certify our own people who can speak fluently in their languages, so they can start teaching Dene language to those who want to learn or re-learn. Colleges and universities should offer Indigenous languages as one of their credit courses. Lastly, we should have an annual gathering to show our appreciation to those individuals or organizations that best exemplify or support the Dene language and in our society.

Máhsı cho!

A Dene Ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ Summer

By Jordan Lennie, in collaboration with Deborah Simmons

Jordan Lennie has been an Intern with the ʔehdzo Got'ı̄neḡ Gots'ę́ Nákedı́ (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) since January 2017, and has been responsible for assisting with coordination of a variety of Tulı́t'a-based research projects including the Strong People, Strong Communities gender research results workshop, and the first two Dene Ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ School sessions (Summer and Fall sessions). A Sahtú beneficiary from Tulı́t'a, Jordan graduated from Mackenzie Mountain School in Norman Wells, in 2016. Jordan is interested in youth leadership having a regional impact. He wants to learn more about wildlife management, become more involved in Indigenous issues, and hopefully find a career he can aspire toward.

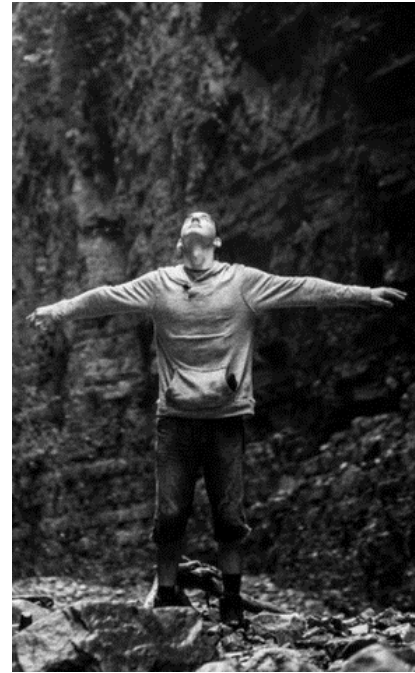


Photo courtesy of Jordan Lennie

This summer I was involved three different on the land programs and a trip to the Ottawa-Gatineau area as part of my internship with the ʔehdzo Got'ı̄neḡ Gots'ę́ Nákedı́: the Canol Youth Leadership Hike, Dechinta Dəho (Mackenzie River) Semester, and Dene Ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ School. Each of these experiences helped me to learn about who I am, and how I can contribute to my community and the Sahtú Region. Before this year, I never had opportunities to learn traditional knowledge and skills on the land, and I had never travelled further away than Edmonton. So all of these activities had a huge impact on me, and have made me rethink my plans for school and future career.

The Canol Youth Leadership Hike took place during July 21-August 1. Sponsored by the Fort Norman Métis Land Corporation, the hike supports youth to learn about the history of the Canol trail and our ancestors use of the trail. Every year, Sahtú youth have an opportunity to hike a different section of the trail. Knowledge holders come along to tell stories - this year, we had William Horassi, Jerry Lennie, and Norman Yakeleya. I was part of a team that was making a film documentary about the historic trail, from the natural landscape, to the remnants of the road and pipeline that was constructed by the United States army during World War II. We hiked from mile 40 to 0 alongside the participants, taking in the rich history and culture surrounding the trail.

I learned more about my own heritage along the trail. I walked I the footsteps of my ancestors, and discovered more about myself in the process. I learned more about the film production process, and found myself learning new skills nigh constantly. Having learned more about the history of the trail, I found myself completely enamoured with the idea of the trail becoming a territorial park, with learning opportunities for this generation, and those to come.

During the first two weeks of August, I joined the Dechinta Dəho Rivers Semester at Tulı́t'a, part way along their trip from Fort Providence to Fort Good Hope. This program, sponsored by the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, provides youth with the opportunity to go out and learn how to be safe on the land. The participants are also taught about the history of indigenous resistance to colonize in Canada.

In the morning we would get breakfast going and have it ready to eat by 8:30. At this time we would have our safety meetings for the day, and allocate that day's duties, such as food prep, dishes, and latrine duty. During the days we paddled along the Mackenzie river from morning until late in the evening, stopping for a 1-2 hour lunch so everyone could relax, and the younger attendees could play on the beach. During the evenings we would set up camp and perform our assigned duties. Afterward we would relax and hear the knowledge holders' stories of the traditional place we landed.

The first thing I learned, 10 minutes into paddling, was a proper paddling technique, up and down, later learning more like twisting the body into a paddle for full power. I learned more about group living, and facilitating programs on the land tailored to youth, and adults. A good group dynamic is centered around the "leaders" of the group, and the individual capacity of each participant.

I also learned more about the history of places along the Mackenzie River, and the differences in traditional stories by elders from different communities. For example, there was a story told about a small island across from Bluefish Creek that looked like a canoe. The story told of Yamoria the lawmaker returning to get that canoe one day. The knowledge holders spoke of him as though he were a malevolent being as opposed to the good natured, helpful giant that I heard about in stories of my childhood.

Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School took place at Dəocha (Bennett Field) on Bear River. This cross-cultural on the land school for youth included traditional skills, leadership training and video-making as well as options for certificate courses in Wilderness First Aid, canoeing, and pleasure craft safety. Participants also had an opportunity to participate in collaborative research on approaches to promoting safe practices on the land.

My role at Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School was that of a first aider – since I have a Wilderness First Aid certificate - and participant. I participated in all activities I was able to fully take from such as tent mending, navigation, and harvesting of medicinal plants. I assisted in teaching a Wilderness First Aid course, and took the lead on the last day, certifying the participants.

I learned about the facilitating programs on the land tailored to youth. And I learned a multitude of on the land skills such as the use of a "bow drill", identification of edible plants, and traditional hunting methods.

The Ottawa-Gatineau trip in September with Michael Neyelle and Deborah Simmons (both co-authors on this report) was a very different kind of experience. It was surprising to realize that I could learn so much about myself by travelling so far away. I attended a workshop sponsored by our Carleton University partners on the use of the Nunaliit Atlas Framework, and how it is helping northern communities document their knowledge, such as traditional place names and stories, and environmental knowledge. I presented about a traditional knowledge mapping project that we did with a knowledge holder and students at Chief Albert Wright School in Tulit'a.

I also participated in several other events while in the Ottawa-Gatineau area: I attended the SSHRC Knowledge Synthesis Forum, and presented about my experience growing up as a youth in Tulit'a, and about what I learned at Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School. It was interesting to learn about the many diverse knowledge synthesis projects on Indigenous issues that have been completed across Canada over the previous months, and how our Dene Kedə to Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ project fits into the big picture.

I contributed ideas about a possible youth component to a planning meeting for the 2018 North American Caribou Workshop – which I have strong feelings about, since I had participated in a youth caribou workshop in Délı̨ı̨ę in 2016 and presented on behalf of our Sahtú Youth Connection group at the Bluenose East Caribou Hearing right afterward. Finally, I attended the opening of the Northern Studies

course at Carleton, and realized just how challenging it can be to gain a real understanding of our northern reality in a southern university. It felt strange that Michael and I were two of the only Indigenous people in the room.

Now as I prepare to travel to Yellowknife for the next phase of my life, I feel like I'm on a much stronger footing than I was when I graduated from high school. I now have an idea of what Dene Ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ is, and I am proud to be part of a youth resurgence movement. I may have to go away for a long time to continue my learning, but I'll always carry home with me – and I'll have the tools I need to be who I am.

Reawakening: Dene Ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ School 2017

By Shelby Lennie

Shelby Lennie is an Intern with the Pehdzo Got'ı̄n̄ę Gots'ę́ Nákedı̄ (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board). Born and raised in Tulı́t'a as part of the local Métis community, Shelby Lennie completed high school diploma at Chief Albert Wright School in 2012. After a number of years living and working at various jobs in Hay River, she returned home in 2016. She spent time on the land during the summer/fall of 2017, including work with a wire cleanup crew on the Canol Road, and two weeks at Dene Ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ School. Her passion lies in seeing her culture thrive. Her immediate goal is to continue learning to speak her language, so that she can be able to understand her ancestors and what it is her people want, to have a better connection to the land and assist in creating a better future for it and the generations to come.



Photo courtesy of Shelby Lennie

When I was asked to present my experiences growing up as a Métis woman in Tulı́t'a, I thought to myself, “Where do I start?” I thought about it for some time and I came to the conclusion that I should just go back to the beginning. And the beginning for me starts with my grandfather, Archie Lennie Senior.

Throughout my school years I had kept my focus on books – textbooks, novels, and even writing my own short stories. Essentially, “móla knowledge.” I picked up some traditional knowledge in school, but never cared to fully immerse myself in it. The traditional knowledge that I learned outside of school just consisted of spending time with my grandfather, stuck to his hip. Including the days I didn't go to school.

Those days that we spent together, learning from each other, me mostly absorbing stories, skills, and notions – those are memories that I treasure. But at the time, I never thought much about what I was learning. It was just something I felt I had to do. As I got older the interest faded, and completely disintegrated after my grandfather passed away. These past seven years without him have been what I call grey. A blur. I had spent all that time running away. Running from who I was, where I am from and what I come from. Just not taking it into consideration. Basically, I didn't want to be part of the Sahtú anymore. It's like I disowned my home. My family and most importantly, myself.

I continue to kick myself for not paying attention when I was young. For not taking the time to go to an elder, or to a meeting, during that time of hurt in which I needed it so badly. So, as a message to the youth: Today, learn your language, go speak to your grandparents and listen to their stories. Let them help you to be who you are because you are the ones who will carry the knowledge onto the next generation. And if you get the chance to be with the land, then go. Go be strong Dene men and women.

It wasn't until this year, 2017, that I decided to stop running. To stop stomping on who I am and just be who I am and be proud of that. It's unfortunate that something bad had to happen in order for me to snap out of it and see. For me to look at my life square in the face and say "I am proud of you." So I am grateful to say that this year is the most I've spent time on the land since my grandfather left us. The Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School was a big part of that experience.

Upon our arrival at Dəocha (Bennett Field) on August 25, we were gathered into a group and introduced to participants (youth) from other communities, researchers from other parts of Canada, and leaders and knowledge holders from the Sahtú Region. I soon discovered that the agenda at Dəocha was far from what I had expected going into the program. I had been thinking that I would learn only bush skills. Skills that my ancestors had acquired over centuries, I thought I would be learning in two weeks. Instead, I learned that we would be given cross-cultural training that would help us to live well in two worlds.

Over the course of those seventeen days, I learned a plethora of life-altering lessons. As a student, it was just like being in a new school as the "new kid." Having been one before, it was a little intimidating to experience that again. But as the first week of activities went by, I noticed that everyone else was feeling the same groove that I was feeling. I then realized that we were all the "new kids" and it wasn't just me having that sensation. The reassurance that we can finish the school together as a shared experience was enough for me to want to continue.

Communication was one of the biggest challenges we experienced as a group. Just like any family you find in the world, there were conflicts and social issues at play. As I think back on my time at the camp, I can't help but also think of my grandfather and my ancestors before. How would they have dealt with this? How, in the midst of surviving, did they deal with conflict? Did they even experience social issues and times of miscommunication? Was it a big deal then as it is now? How did they persevere? All of these questions led me to believe that in order for anyone to survive there needs to be teamwork. We need to band together for a better outcome, to always learn from mistakes and to continue to support one another. For better or for worse, the people I shared that time with were the ones I had to count on and it was evident to me that I was fighting the same battle my ancestors have.

The agenda of the school was not unusual. We had scheduled times to meet and to participate, free time of our own and time for slumber. Apart from learning about communication, I also learned a lot about my history: the land, the animals and our language, which contributes so greatly to it. Anything I've done up to the time of living in Dəocha seemed almost irrelevant.

I feel as though I've learned many vital life lessons through taking it back – back to my home on the land, back to the history and putting myself in my ancestors' shoes. Instead of fighting my way through modern society, I had allowed myself to glide through the traditional lessons. For something that felt so foreign for so long, I felt I had finally found my calling and hunger for my culture.

Regained. Rejuvenated. Reawakened. These words I use to describe what Dəocha meant to me. What a cross-cultural camp can do for all people of ages who are struggling to connect with who they are and what it means to be a Dene person. Above from learning about cool things like navigation, harvesting medicinal plants and learning to tie all types of knots, I learned a great deal of things about myself and I believe that was the bigger lesson to take away.

Ultimately, cross-cultural camps like the Dene Ts'ı̨ı̨ School are something that should be more expansive, to help and teach others just as they helped and taught me. I am eternally grateful for these lessons, and will utilize them for the future of my people.

Máhsı cho to

- Benny and Tisha Doctor for the use of their camp at Dəocha (Bennett Field).
- Deb Simmons and the SRRB, for organizing.
- All the researchers and participants, for meeting and learning from all and building the friendships.
- The Knowledge Holders, for sharing your knowledge so willingly and with humility.

Thanks to all - without you I wouldn't have had the opportunity to be reminded of the important things nor would I have been on this path. I hope to see you all again soon.