

# Job Description

## On the Land Program Manager

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**Deadline to apply Monday, November 5, 2018**

*NOTE: This position is new, and it is expected that it will evolve to reflect the Board's experience over time, as well as the specific skills brought to the position by the successful candidate. A regular appraisal process will provide opportunities for reviewing the Job Description.*

### Purpose of the Position

The On the Land Program (OTL) Manager position is designed specifically to support the regional initiatives of the ʔehdzo Got'ine Gots'é Nákedí (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB) at the community level, including but not limited to, Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ıłı - Living on the Land Forum, Sahtú Youth Network, and Nę K'ədıkə – Keepers of the Land Initiative.

### Position Description and Scope

The ʔehdzo Got'ine Gots'é Nákedí (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB) is mandated to address objectives of the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement related to wildlife, habitat and harvesting. The SRRB works with local harvesting committees (ʔehdzo Got'ine - Renewable Resources Councils) in the five communities of the Sahtú Region, Northwest Territories, and with regional forums including the Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ıłı (Living On the Land) Forum, Sahtú Youth Network, and the Nę K'ədıkə (Keepers of the Land Guardians Program).

The SRRB has adopted an innovative, cross-cultural, decolonizing, land-based, and youth-centred strategy (“the Strategy”). The SRRB supports the training of Sahtú beneficiaries with an eye to enhancing capacity in the region. The OTL Manager is expected to work in ways that reflect the values and approaches of the SRRB and the values of the five communities of the Sahtú Region.

This full-time, permanent, position is located in Tulít'a, Northwest Territories. The OTL Manager reports to the SRRB Executive Director. However, the SRRB values a team approach and the OTL Manager is expected to work in a collaborative manner both with members of the SRRB and with partners across the Sahtú region and beyond.

The OTL Manager works closely with the Community Conservation Planner to promote the SRRB Strategy and initiatives. Working at the community level, the OTL Manager supports regional initiatives of the SRRB including the Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ıłı Forum (Appendix A) and the Sahtú Youth Network, a germinal initiative to support development of youth environmental leadership. The OTL Manager's responsibilities related to these initiatives include: research and monitoring projects and programs, on the land activities, policy development; the evaluation of existing programs; collaborative program planning; preparation of proposals, reports, briefing notes, correspondence, and public communication materials; coordination and facilitation of meetings and activities; and mentoring SRRB interns.

In addition, the OTL Manager is responsible for working closely with and supporting the on-going development, implementation, and operations of the Nę K'ədıkə - Keepers of the Land Guardian Program. Responsibilities include facilitating local initiatives relating to the Nę K'ədıkə (Appendix B)

involving Guardians<sup>1</sup>, Elders, knowledge holders, and youth; providing expertise in designing and undertaking collaborative and traditional knowledge research and education in the communities and during on the land camps; addressing key questions through the facilitation of focus groups; and aiding in the interpretation of the results of Guardian fieldwork.

The OTL Manager operates in a multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural setting. Cross-cultural aspects of the position include, but are not limited to, capacity building, program delivery, participatory action research (including monitoring), and supporting self-determination. They are expected to perform tasks such as proposal writing, reporting, and budget management to support research, training, and stewardship initiatives. They will also be required to provide hands-on support in the delivery of on the land programming, including, but not limited to, travel, camps, harvesting activities, and research and monitoring.

The incumbent communicates regularly with the SRRB Board, staff, and community partners. Given the collaborative nature of this position, the incumbent also works to maintain close relationships and partnerships with Communities, Community Members, program participants, and stakeholders from government, business, and non-profit agencies.

## **Responsibilities**

- Support the on-going objectives of the Nę K’ə Dene Ts’ı̄l̄ı Forum and the Sahtú Youth Network, which includes:
  - Provide support in the organization and execution of the annual Dene Ts’ı̄l̄ı Schools, including proposal development; program planning, budgeting, coordination and supervision; risk management; and reporting.
  - Support research and monitoring programs.
  - Plan, coordinate, and supervise on the land activities.
  - Take part in the development of policies relating to SRRB initiatives and programs.
  - Prepare proposals for both programs and research, undertake reporting.
  - Correspondence, including briefing notes and public communication materials.
  - Coordination and facilitation of meeting and activities.
  - Mentor SRRB interns.
  - Actively pursue professional development opportunities as needed to support programming.
- Support the development, implementation and on-going initiatives of the Nę K’əd̄ikó – Keepers of the Land Guardian in partnership with the Sahtú Dene Council and other participating organisations.
  - Facilitate local initiatives relating to Nę K’əd̄ikó involving Elders, knowledge holders, and youth.
  - Undertake collaborative and traditional knowledge research and education in the communities and during on the land camps.
  - Aid in the interpretation of results of Nę K’əd̄ikó fieldwork.
  - Support training and risk management for Nę K’əd̄ikó in a culturally appropriate manner.
- Support SRRB operations
  - Foster, develop, promote, and maintain relationships and partnerships with communities, community organizations, program participants, and stakeholders.
  - Provide information and offer expertise where available to the Executive Director to inform SRRB programs.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on Indigenous Guardians, see [www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca](http://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca).

- Attend SRRB meetings as needed to provide reports and information as needed.
- Generate funding proposals to support SRRB research and programs, undertake required reporting.
- Other duties, including administrative tasks, as required to support SRRB programming.

## **Education**

Education for this position is typically attained through the completion of a Master's degree in a relevant field **OR** a combination of education and experience applicable to the position. Relevant fields include, but are not limited to, Native Studies, Environmental Studies, and Community Development.

## **Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

- Experience generating funding proposals for research and/or programming and the reporting and budget management requirements related to such proposals.
- Experience working with community organizations and developing healthy partnerships in cross-cultural contexts.
- Strong research skills and ability to remain current with trends and best practices.
- Well-organized, able to plan and work independently and in teams.
- Ability to work in a multi-disciplinary environment.
- Ability to network with government, business, and non-profit agencies.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.

## **Assets**

- Knowledge of the Sahtú Region, the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, and Dene Kede (North Slavey) language.
- Sound understanding of environmental and Indigenous issues in the North.
- Experience in leading On the Land programs.
- Experience in mentoring, education, or training.
- Certifications in the following areas of outdoor leadership: Environmental Monitoring, Wilderness First Aid, Project Management, Risk Management.

## **Working Conditions**

The position is located in a remote community that is only accessible by air for the majority of the year. The majority of the OTL Manager's time will be spent working in an office setting, with some time spent at community events, and networking and meeting with various stakeholders and the community at large. Some work time will be in outdoor settings, including being on the water in the summer and being outside during the winter months. This may include instructing or attending outdoor leadership activities, attending culture camps in the bush, and travel in a wilderness setting. On occasion, and depending on operational requirements, the OTL Manager may be required to work evening and weekends.

The OTL Manager is required to frequently travel between Sahtú communities. Travel may take place using, but not limited to, small plane, boat, snowmobile, or canoe. Occasional travel to centres outside the NWT may also be required.

## APPENDIX A

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

# Terms of Reference

(last revised May 28, 2017)

## 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'ııı - 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'ııı 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 Tulıf'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'ııı, 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'ıne (Renewable Resource Councils) in each Sahtú community have a special role in collaboration with the ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ė Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board - SRRB). Together, ʔehdzo Got'ıne 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'ıne 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'ı̨ 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

Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı̨ 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 research
- Identify opportunities for: collaborative research involving communities; communication; information-sharing; and cross-cultural interpretation of research results

## Guiding Principles

The Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı̨ 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'ı̨ 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'Inę 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'ı̄l̄ 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 Managers.
- The Resource Group assists the Chair and Secretariat in planning and organizing Forum activities, recording meeting notes, securing funding, administrating finances and delivering plain language and technical documents and reports.

## Activities

The Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ı̄l̄ 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'ı̄l̄ Forum members, as required, will be reimbursed with administrative support from the SRRB as per the Government of the NWT guidelines

## Appendix B

Summary Proposal

# Sahtú Nę K'édiká – Keepers of the Land *Pilot Program*

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*With assistance from ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı*  
July 5, 2018



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## Introduction

Guardian programs “empower communities to manage ancestral lands according to traditional laws and values.” Guardians themselves are our “eyes and ears on the ground” and undertake environmental monitoring, cultural site maintenance, land-use planning, tourism activities and more. Guardian programs, in Canada and worldwide, have significant ecological, social, cultural and economic benefits – they connect people to their lands, strengthen transmission of Indigenous knowledge, stories and wisdom, and provide employment opportunities.

There is a desire from Indigenous Governments, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), and the Government of Canada to work together to advance Guardian programs by bringing together complementary programs towards the larger goal of land stewardship. Simultaneously, it is important to ensure that Guardian programs are designed and led by Indigenous communities and reflect community needs and values. GNWT and Canada – as well as other non-government organizations – can play key supporting roles.

In the Northwest Territories (NWT), Guardian programs are gaining traction and many communities are looking to develop or enhance on-the-land initiatives. The Sahtú Region is proposing a pilot Nę K’édiké (Guardian) program arising from our strengths in environmental governance involving locally driven programs with a regional framework. Our focal points for the pilot will be proposed Indigenous Protected Areas, involving elders and youth with support from various partners with partners and Sahtú Dene Council taking the lead. There are many reasons why the Nę K’édiké Program is both timely and needed. A wide variety of partnerships and funding mechanisms will play a key role in supporting this program.

### A Diverse People in a Diverse Land

The Indigenous peoples of the Sahtú Region have governed ourselves and have provided stewardship over the land since time immemorial. Evidence of this is the language that is written on the land through our placenames, and the stories passed down through generations dating back to the era of giant animals that roamed the earth, the dispersal of some of our original peoples westward and southward following the double winter of a long ago volcano eruption, and the sinuous trails carved into the land and partially traced through the Dene Nation mapping project.

Our homeland is perhaps the most ecologically diverse and pristine landscape in North America, encompassing Sahtú (Great Bear Lake) the world’s eighth largest inland sea, as well as large portions of the majestic Shúhtaot’ıne Nęné (Mackenzie Mountains) and Dəho (Mackenzie River), the longest river system in Canada and the second largest drainage basin of any North American river, and Nęla (the end of the treeline). The diversity of the land is reflected in our rich cultural and linguistic diversity, maintained through family-based harvesting and stewardship systems collectively encompassing the entire landscape. We are a healthy land supporting robust populations of numerous species listed under the Federal and Territorial Species At Risk Acts. Consistent with the International Convention on Biodiversity, and especially Article 8(j) related to Indigenous knowledge and ways of life, we envision a future for the Sahtú in which our biocultural diversity remains resilient in the face of global environmental change. **We seek to establish approximately 15 million hectares of Indigenous Protected Areas by 2020 as a contribution to Canada’s Pathway to Canada Target 1.**

### A Framework for Wise Environmental Governance

Our communities have been preparing for this opportunity for since establishment of the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement in 1993 – the Agreement envisions a robust framework for land use planning and community-driven conservation based in Dene Ts’ııı, or “the way of life of the Sahtú Dene and Métis which is based on the cultural and economic relationship between them and the land.” Our environmental governance system is guided by Dene ɛɛɛ (laws) and Dene ts’ııı, and drawing strength from our spirituality and ceremonies reflecting our deep knowledge of our place in the universe.

Community-driven processes are well underway for establishment of three Indigenous Protected Areas as focal points for a Nę K'édiké – Keepers of the Land program. **A Sahtú Leadership Meeting in Tulit'a on April 24-25, 2018 called for a unified proposal to the Federal and Territorial governments for a Sahtú Pilot Guardian initiative.**

The Nę K'édiké program will build on our existing strengths in governance: **Indigenous governments** will ensure that the Nę K'édiké program remains consistent with the vision for healthy peoples and land, with advice from established local interagency **Working Groups. ʔehdzo Got'ine (Renewable Resources Councils)** are empowered under the land claim agreement to support community participation in way of life and research/monitoring initiatives with support from the regional **ʔehdzo Got'ine Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board - SRRB)**. The regional **Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ıı - Living on the Land Forum**, established in 2014, has a strong track record in supporting coordination of efforts and networking with outside resource people on themes of common interest through monthly teleconferences and annual conferences; community representatives on the Forum are tasked with keeping leaders informed of plans, activities, and key learnings that can be used in decision-making.

### From Local to Global

Our experiences are diverse, but many of the socio-ecological processes that currently affect us are cross-regional or even global. For this reason, we wish to pilot an initiative that is founded in our longstanding governance and stewardship practices, provides a strong regional system based on strongly self-determining communities. This system will encompass training, research and monitoring, and learning – in family areas, in districts, in the Sahtú region as a whole, territorially, in Canada, and internationally. As elder George Barnaby puts it, the Sahtú governance is founded in self-determination at the grassroots; at local and regional levels, the leaders take their direction from the best knowledge and experience of the people, including both traditional knowledge and science. We strongly believe that a regional Nę K'édiké system will be the basis for wise decision-making at all these scales, embracing the combination of spiritually informed diversity and coordinated action that is necessary to achieve our vision for healthy futures.

### Community Needs and Priorities

At the April 24-25 Leadership Meeting in Tulit'a, elders, leaders and youth all spoke to key challenges in securing for achieving our vision for healthy homeland and peoples. Six intersecting priority themes were identified in order to address these challenges – themes that are embedded in the objectives defined in the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement:

1. Healing, spirituality and ceremony
2. Family-based learning bringing together three generations
3. Understanding changes
4. Dene ʔetęne (traditional trails)
5. Dene béré (food security/sovereignty)
6. Dene kədə, Dene godı and Dene ʔeʔa (language, stories and laws).

### Knowledge Framework

At the heart of the Nę K'édiké program is Dene and Métis life on the land. Each community has a core on the land program, but it has been a struggle to maintain these programs due to lack of long term or coordinated capacity support (human resources and funding). A balance of community and regional training, research/monitoring and governance processes will ensure that learnings from on the land programs are well documented, analysed, and mobilized to serve as the basis for decision-making at different scales. Local oversight will be provided by **Interagency Working Groups** and an **Elder Advisor**. A full time **Community Coordinator** will facilitate local initiatives involving Guardians, elders, knowledge holders and youth, and will be provided with technical assistance by a **Regional Coordinator** and Managers with relevant expertise. A **Community Researcher/Language Specialist**

will provide expertise in designing and undertaking collaborative/traditional knowledge research and education in the community and during on the land camps, and along with specialised **Focus Groups** will address key questions and interpret results of Guardian fieldwork.

### A Network of Committed Partners

The strength of program is evidenced by the partners who will be involved in a partnership-based approach. It will be led by the **Sahtú Dene Council**, with direction from community Elders, land users, youth and the Guardians who will form the backbone of the program.

Sahtú communities have already established strong **partnerships with university, government and non-governmental organisations** that will be enhanced through the new Guardian initiative. In particular, long term collaborations with NWT Environment and Natural Resources (Sahtú and Head Offices), Canadian Wildlife Service/Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, Tides Canada, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Coalition, and a variety of universities – notably University of Alberta, University of Toronto and Wilfrid Laurier University.

GNWT is committed to providing significant in-kind support to the initiative, including through staff time and leveraging of existing programs that may support program efforts. GNWT has worked with Sahtú communities on a variety of collaborative, community-based initiatives, including the NWT-wide Community-based Water Quality Monitoring Program, so partnerships have been established. The leadership also anticipates inviting a number of federal agencies, including Environment and Climate Change Canada, who have established relationships and monitoring initiatives in the community.

A number of major multi-year letters of intent and proposals have been submitted to various funding sources for combined traditional knowledge and scientific research, including two proposed Network Centre of Excellence programs (ArcticNet/ULaval and the Canadian Mountain Network/UAlberta), as well as the Global Water Network/USaskatchewan, and the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)/TrentU Strategic Initiative. Proposals of this scope are indicators of extensive and **rigorous collaborative priority setting and strategic planning** and will play an important role in providing focus and rigour to local and regional Guardian activities.

### Community Programs

Each community program is centred on a proposed Indigenous Protected Area, brought together under the umbrella of the Nę K'édiká program. Activities will include Guardian fieldwork, traditional knowledge and collaborative research and education with knowledge holder and youth focus groups in the community and at on the land camps, monthly Interagency Working Group meetings, and participation in regional, territorial and national Guardian networking activities. The following are focal points of each program.

#### Délıne (Délıne Got'ıne): Proposed Tsá Túé Indigenous Protected Area

Délıne's program in the Sahtú (Great Bear Lake) watershed is founded in the strategic plan for the new Tsá Túé International Biosphere Reserve, the first Indigenous-nominated Biosphere Reserve recognized by UNESCO and the largest in North America, encompassing approximately 9,331,300 hectares<sup>2</sup>. The Biosphere Reserve partners with Saoyúé-?ehdacho National Historic Site to conduct annual on the land activities with researchers, elders and youth, with cabins already constructed at Nqore?á (Deerpass Bay) and Tláado (Cloud Bay). Délıne pioneered community caribou conservation planning in Canada with their approved *Belare Wile Gots'é ?ekwé – Caribou for All Time* plan. **Core questions** relate to changing barren-ground caribou ecology and news that the thermocline of their giant lake is rapidly changing, affecting their food staples, cisco, whitefish and trout.

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<sup>2</sup> [tsatue.ca](http://tsatue.ca)

## Rádeljĥkó (K'áhsho Got'Inę): Proposed Ts'ude Nıłıne and Tuzeyeta Indigenous Protected Area

Rádeljĥkó has long been working on protection of the proposed Ts'ude Nıłıne and Tuzeyeta IPA, spanning approximately 1,010,000 hectares. The area is recognized by the Sahtú Land Use Plan (2013) as a Proposed Conservation Initiative, and is recognized by the Government of the NWT as one of eight Candidate Protected Areas<sup>3</sup>. For generations, Ts'ude Nıłıne and Tuzeyeta has been used for trapping, hunting, fishing and camping – evidenced by many archaeological, burial and historic sites. A critical wetland that filters millions of litres of water per day, it is a key migratory bird terrestrial habitat site, and provides excellent nesting, brood rearing and staging habitat for ducks, geese and loons. **Core questions** investigate water quality and waterfowl diversity in the wetlands, and the role of fish camps in K'áhsho Got'Inę food security, wellbeing, and monitoring systems.

## Tulít'a/Tłęgóhı (Shúhtaot'Inę, K'áalq Got'Inę, Dəho Got'Inę), and Ross River (Tu Łidlini Dena): Proposed Nío Nę P'ęné Indigenous Protected Area

Since 2014, Tulít'a and Tłęgóhı have been collaborating with Tu Łidlini and diverse partners in development of the Nío Nę P'ęné – Trails of the Mountain Caribou conservation plan<sup>4</sup>, which includes a large Indigenous Protected Area encompassing K'á Tó (Willow Flats) and Proposed Conservation Initiative areas<sup>5</sup> critical mountain caribou habitat bordering Náats'ıch'oh National Park Reserve in the NWT, as well as the Tu Łidlini area in the Yukon, for a total of approximately 5,000,000 hectares. This is an exciting cross-boundary initiative in shared traditional territory, part of the Canadian Mountain Network, a proposed Network Centre of Excellence<sup>6</sup>. **Core questions** relate to the definition of range boundaries and ecological “edge” interactions in the context of climate change, the nature of Indigenous environmental governance instruments in the mountains, and the interdependence of ecological and cultural diversity.

## What This Program would Mean for the Sahtú Region, GNWT & Canada

There are many expected benefits that will emerge from this program. Many partners stand to benefit from this innovative, land-based approach to collaboration. For example, the program can:

- **Strengthen family cohesion** – the approach is take families out on the land together, to learn together and strengthen relationships; family support networks can be a social determinant of health.<sup>7</sup>
- **Create opportunities for language and knowledge transmission** – Through stories, teachings of traditional skills, place names and more, the program will create space for Elders and knowledge holders to pass on wisdom and language to promote and maintain Dene Ts'ı ıı (Dene ways of life)<sup>8</sup>.
- **Create space for healing** – Being on the land and connecting to culture can support healing, including from intergenerational trauma, and can contribute to overall wellbeing<sup>9,10</sup>.
- **Braid knowledge systems**: On-the-land activities can create an organic and decolonized space for Indigenous knowledge and applied science to come together to monitor and track conditions and

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/conservation-network-planning/tsude-niline-tueyeta>

<sup>4</sup> [http://srrb.nt.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=378&Itemid=1739](http://srrb.nt.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=378&Itemid=1739)

<sup>5</sup> Recognized under the approved Sahtú Land Use Plan.

<sup>6</sup> [canadianmountainnetwork.ca](http://canadianmountainnetwork.ca)

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization, 2018. Available at: <http://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/>

<sup>8</sup> Rice, F., et. al., 2017, From Dene Kedə to Dene Ts'ııı: Rethinking resurgence in the Sahtú Region, Northwest Territories.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> GNWT, 2015. Strong Cultures, Strong territory: GNWT Culture and Heritage Framework.

changes on the land and identify collective solutions for protection and conservation of traditional territory.

- ***Create economic benefits*** – The program will create jobs for community members, ranging from full time program coordination to seasonal work. Linking Guardians with existing monitoring efforts can also create longer term employment. NWT Guardian programs also have proven economic impacts through increased access to traditional food, decreases in crime, increased income for monitors, and additional leveraged funding for partners<sup>11</sup>.
- ***Identify community research needs*** – through stories from Elders and land users, knowledge passed down from generation to generation, and observations on the land, the program can help identify questions that need further investigation.
- ***Foster partnerships*** – Through multiple partners working together, relationships are strengthened. Knowledge is reciprocally shared and new knowledge co-produced. Identification of research questions allows the community to reach out to the academic community where needed to help address research needs.
- ***Support Canada's Pathway to Target 1*** – the Indigenous Circle of Experts identified Guardian programs as part of supporting the Pathway to Target 1, through enforcement of Indigenous and Crown laws, land use and watershed planning, as well as ongoing operations and management<sup>12</sup>
- ***Provide information for decision-making at multiple levels*** – with climate change impacts and potential for resource development, monitoring information from Indigenous knowledge and applied science collectively is needed for evidence-informed decisions. People continually monitoring the land will provide important information for land use plans, watershed management, regulatory decisions and more.
- ***Advance reconciliation efforts*** – Supporting Indigenous-led Guardian programs, in ways identified and needed by Indigenous partners, represents an opportunity to advance reconciliation efforts at multiple scales, through application of Indigenous knowledge, values, laws and protocols in the stewardship of traditional lands.

## The Beginning of Something Bigger

As a pilot, the program represents just the beginning of the ways in which multiple partners can work together to support and advance Indigenous-led Guardian programs. Many communities and regions in the GNWT are interested in developing or enhancing Guardian programs, and GNWT is committed to working with communities in ways that best serve their needs.

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<sup>11</sup> SVA Consulting, 2016. Analysis of the Current and Future Value of Indigenous Guardian Work in Canada's Northwest Territories.

<sup>12</sup> The Indigenous Circle of Experts, 2018. We Rise Together: Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit and practice of reconciliation.