

A preliminary discussion document

ʔekwé ʔeʔah K'é Áít'e *Living by Caribou Law*



Délı́nę ʔehdzo Got'ı́nę (Délı́nę Renewable Resources Council)

in collaboration with ʔehdzo Got'ı́nę Gots'é Nákedı́ (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)

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Background: The Meeting between ʔekwé and Díga

When the earth was created, díga and ʔekwé held a big meeting around the Aklavik area. The wolves said to the caribou, "Caribou should not be on earth any longer." The caribou responded, "As long as we've been here, we've been good and we've eaten well. We've done nothing to you. We've not destroyed your food. You have lived well off us. So what's wrong with us?"

The wolves said, "That's right. There's nothing wrong with ʔekwé. They don't get in anybody's way. So we shouldn't tell them what to do. Let them graze, and feed, and wander around. Let's not destroy them completely, because in the future we will need them."

from ʔekwé Guli (The Fate of Caribou), told by William Sewi (Sahtú Atlas, 2005)

ʔekwé Nezq Bek'adı́ – *Taking Care of Caribou*

Sahtúgot'ı́nę (the people of Great Bear Lake) are extremely concerned about news that the Bathurst and Bluenose East herds are declining. The Sahtúgot'ı́nę prophets have said that ʔekwé will remain with us as long as we take good care of them. This means that that we must make wise decisions gogha horı́la (when they're in danger). The Délı́nę ʔehdzo Got'ı́nę (Renewable Resources Council) is willing to work with our community to make changes so that ʔekwé will decide to come back. Following the words of Dene ʔehtséoká (our grandfathers), we believe that it is necessary to follow ʔekwé ʔeʔah and



not people's law in our action plans. We wish to work with other Aboriginal peoples and governments, but are also determined to take action ourselves, whatever happens. This document is a starting point for discussion about how we can best follow Ɂekwé ɁeɁah at this time. *The Délı̨nę Ɂehdzo Got'ı̨nę will be holding its annual public general meeting on November 3, at which time Délı̨nę community members will review the approach to caribou stewardship recommended in this document.*

Ɂekwé ɁeɁah

There are just a few simple Ɂekwé ɁeɁah that should be considered in action planning so that caribou will decide to come back to live with us again:

1. **GoɁó begħo ts'e dénı̨dé tsáqt'e (when people talk about caribou too much, it's not good).** The talk disturbs caribou and they don't like it. When the caribou move away, this is a sign that they want to be left alone. We need to give them a rest for as long as it takes for them to recover. Dene Ɂehtséokə say that when they decide to return, Ɂekwé ı̨Ɂah, they make a thundering sound. The Délı̨nęgot ı̨nę community is considering the following measures: a stop to harvesting Ɂekwé in the ı̨ts'ere Túé (Hottah Lake) area for at least two years; limiting the harvest within the Délı̨nę District; and avoiding harvesting ts'ı̨da (female caribou) in spring when they are getting ready for calving, as our ancestors did. We oppose invasive methods of monitoring caribou.
2. We need to go back to our traditions in harvesting other Dene béré (country foods), including fish, moose, beaver, muskrat, small game, and berries during specific times of the year. More support for our traditional economy will help us to maintain **Dene ts'ı̨ı̨ (who we are)** and our way of life even while we are reducing our harvest of Ɂekwé.
3. **Areyóné łót'ı̨ne áıt'e (we are all one family).** It is important that we build strong sharing relationships within our community and with other communities and regions in order to maintain Dene ts'ı̨ı̨. We invite our Aboriginal neighbours to meet with us in Délı̨nę on January 26-27 to talk about maintaining our way of life and our food security in these changing times.
4. **Dene k'ę naızé gha (we have to hunt like our grandfathers did).** This means that the knowledge of respectful practices needs to be taught and learned. For example, the rule that Ɂekwé must be treated humanely (for example, must not be hit with a stick), needs to be fully understood. Experienced hunters should have authority to monitor harvesting on the land, and teach young and inexperienced hunters. Ɂehdzo Got'ı̨nę need to be strong leaders in ensuring that harvesting decisions are respected. Harvest monitoring within the community will be a source of knowledge for good decision-making. A permit system for visiting Aboriginal harvesters will be an opportunity to build awareness of community decisions to limit the harvest.

Máhsı cho

We thank our community members and our Aboriginal neighbours for sharing stories and working together to make difficult decisions. We look forward to continuing to learn how we can live well as Dene in times of environmental change. We believe that funding support to conserve ekwé should be directed to supporting our efforts to harvest alternate species, to maintain our traditional economy, and to teach Ɂekwé ɁeɁah to our people and to outsiders.