

## Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring Forum

# Teleconference Notes

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December 11, 2015, 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Notes by Christine Wenman

## Participants

### Sahtú ERM Forum Members

Ed Reeves, Walter Bayha, Ted, Jennie Vandermeer, Laurel MacDonald, Leon Andrew

### Invited Guests

Heidi Brown, University of Calgary

Mylène Ratelle, University of Waterloo

### Secretariat

Deborah Simmons, ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gotsé Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB)

Christine Wenman, PlanIt North

## Agenda

- Introductions, review agenda
- Research activities updates
  - Re/mediating Indigenous Environmental Justice: Resource Extraction, Divergent Risk Perception, and Economic Equality in the North (Alana Fletcher, Queen'sU)
- Community visits updates
  - Community Mapping Initiative visits to Délıne, Tulıt'a and Norman Wells - Heidi Brown (see attached newsletter)
  - Christine Wenman, Contaminated Sites Mapping
  - Janet Winbourne, Harvest Study Completion (will be joining the call late due to travel requirements)
- Délıne and Colville/Fort Good Hope caribou initiatives
- Research Licensing review update and proposed next steps (Christine)
- Research strategy – overview of research to date (Christine)
- In-person meeting, January 26-28 – confirm location (Colville or YK)
- Community forum members internal discussion
- Update on ʔehdzo Got'ıne formal appointments

## Meeting Notes

### Update from Heidi Brown – Community Mapping Initiative

Heidi provided an update about the time that she spent in Délıne, Tulıt'a and Norman Wells working on the Community Mapping Initiative

- Topics included
  - Getting feedback from last year's mapping work
  - Reviewing the on-line mapping tool

- Discussing issues surrounding mapping and learning about community mapping needs
- Building on Christie Benson's work with the Dene mapping project. Received positive feedback about mapping projects so far and gaining guidance going forward.
- The CMI is a cooperative project so right now the focus is on getting guidance from communities, RRCs, researchers and Sahtú organizations
- Three weeks ago Heidi visited Tulít'a, Norman Wells and Délı̨ne. Hoping to include FGH and CL in the future
- Purpose was to provide an overview of the project to date and plan for potential projects in the future
- Délı̨ne activities included: a public open-house; meeting with Elders; meeting with RRC; provided technical support to Délı̨ne place name project and will return in January to continue to provide technical support.
- Tulít'a activities included: a meeting with the RRC; talked about possible RRC mapping workshop meetings in the new year. Priority from Tulít'a was involving the youth more.
- Stage right now is reviewing what already exists, evaluating its quality and how it can be used and then looking to identify and fill gaps.
- Deb added that this is really the beginning stages to make sure there is agreement on how to move forward because mapping and data issues can be a very sensitive topic.
- Deb also added that in discussion with people from Colville Lake this week, they have said that they have work that they want to do right now with respect to setting up policies for data handling and there are capacity restraints so they don't want to participate right now but they would like to revisit this next year.

### **Update from Mylène Ratelle, human biomonitoring project**

- Mylène was in Tulít'a and Délı̨ne last week to discuss the biomonitoring project with people in the community. The project is going to begin in the new year in the Dehcho but it is still at the stage of developing the proposal in the Sahtú
- The project is going to look at the integration between food, contaminants and nutrients and will be measuring contaminants in human hair, blood and urine.
- Délı̨ne: Mylène was able to meet with leaders, the Chief, Walter at the land corporation, the RRC with Ed Reeves and a number of community members in a public meeting (12 males attended). People in the public meeting had constructive comments and questions and emphasized that uranium exposure was a big concern. Mylène was also able to do a radio interview and meet with staff at the health centre.
- Tulít'a: Mylène met with Chief Frank for several hours over a few meetings. It was a more challenging time in Tulít'a because there was a conflicting meeting and open-house but over-all people welcomed the project. In Tulít'a, lead exposure was voiced as a concern. There has been some advisories there around eating liver from predatory fish.
- Another theme that people spoke about was including store food in the study because people want to know what contaminants are in those foods compared with country foods so Mylène's team will be able to emphasize that more in their study design.
- Next step: consult with other Sahtú communities in the new year; proposal due in the new year with hopes of starting the project in the Sahtú in the fall of 2016.
- They now have all licenses in place; three licenses were needed. 1) Ethics approval from the University of Waterloo, an Aurora Research Institute Science License and a license from Stanton because the work deals with human health.
- Clarification on roles of health centres: the team can take hair and urine samples but because blood samples are being taken, the research team will need help from the health centres because a licensed nurse has to take the blood samples.
- Mylène and Brian Laird both presented about the project at the Northern Contaminants Program results workshop in Vancouver last week. There is a lot of interest in the project because of the collaborative approach being used. Community involvement has been strong in informing the

project even before the project begins. This started in the summer at the cross-cultural research camp.

- Clarification on time line: these community visits were to introduce the project only and seek feedback in its design. The funding proposal is due in the new year and if successful it would be in the fall, probably November 2016. Results would be available and reported back to the community 6-12 months after that.

### **Re/mediating Indigenous Environmental Justice: Resource Extraction, Divergent Risk Perception, and Economic Equality in the North (Alana Fletcher, Queen'sU)**

- Alana couldn't make the call but Deb explained that she is working to make on-line resources available
- Alana is also helping Morris Neyelle to make a biography about Johnny Neyelle who is Michael and Morris's Dad. This is a project that has been in the works for more than a decade. Alana seems to be working very hard on it so hopefully the project will receive funding.

### **Earlier Agenda Items**

- An earlier version of the agenda included an update on Diana who is working on education type research with youth in Fort Good Hope and she spent over a month there so she will have lots of stories once she is able to join the call.
- David Vokey and his team also set regrets and will try to join another time

### **Déline and Colville/Fort Good Hope caribou initiatives – Deb Simmons**

- Caribou genetics: Jean Polfus and Fred Andrew have been giving visual and oral presentations and have presented in three communities including to Aurora College, to the public and schools in Norman Wells, Inuvik and Tulít'a. Fred has probably done more than 15 presentations already!
- Leon: Leon was able to join in Tulít'a with respect to the Sahtú caribou east and south. People were very impressed with the idea that DNA can shed light on stories back to the ice ages so that people can learn about caribou since the ice ages.
- Deb: Jean called in to Colville Lake with 10 minutes notice to do presentation and they were very excited there too because what they are learning from the genetics are things that echo the stories of the Elders. For instance, the Elders talk about the caribou crossing the river en masse at a certain point and the DNA provides evidence for this.
- There was initially concern about Jean speaking to much about Caribou but she was able to explain how much she has learned from Michael, Leon and Fred and that the results from the DNA would not have the same meaning without the context from the Traditional Knowledge in their stores.
- They are now looking for ways to push ahead to do this work on barren ground caribou because to date the work has focused on Todzi (Boreal woodland caribou). To look at barren ground caribou a lot more samples will be needed so it will need to be a major collaboration between regions.

### **Proposals**

- Already spoke about the bio-monitoring proposal due in January
- Cumulative Impacts Monitoring Program (CIMP) Letters of Intent were submitted. Colville Lake was invited to submit a full proposal looking at alternative means of caribou research so looking at collaring but also more non-invasive approaches because people feel strong opposition to collaring. If successful this will be 3 years of well-funded research and Colville Lake will be able to hire a biologist to help.

- Another proposal submitted to CIMP had to do with using computer tools to look at cumulative effect and CIMP staff sent a response that CIMP was proposing a similar proposal and had been hoping to work in the Sahtú. The hope is to work together to combine the two proposals Thom Stubbs involvement will be good because he has worked with Sahtú communities. The CIMP partner is Graham Nobel from University of Saskatchewan. They were proposing a slower approach in developing the questions and not jumping to using the mapping tools until the questions and objectives are clear.
- The Sahtú Climate Change LOI was not successful but it is hoped that at least some of Délı̨nę's work on the project can be supported through other means.

### **Research License Process Review – Christine**

- The conversation during the last call was helpful in terms of discussing what a new model of handling research licenses might look like. Though feedback on having one point person from each community to coordinate responses has been positive, as well as the Forum having a stronger role in coordinating responses, people emphasized how important it is that every organization is respected. So, it will be important to move ahead slowly and encouraging a lot of dialogue with all organizations (First Nations, Hamlets, Development Corporations, RRCs and SSI) to make sure that consensus can be built.
- Christine would like to work with the Forum reps to facilitate those conversations with other organizations and seek feedback.
- Walter discussed that in Délı̨nę people would likely welcome one person to play that role. People can play politics with these things so that has to be avoided.
- As currently being developed the proposal is for the Forum to play a strong role in the referral process if all organizations agree that the Forum can have the authority to sign non-controversial licenses because of the specialized expertise in research at the Forum.
- At the last meeting, Laurel had discussed involving youth. Deb pointed out that Daniel T'Seleie is working with youth through the Sahtú Youth Network so Christine will be in touch with Daniel about the topic.
- Christine will talk more with Forum members and other delegate members to a) further develop what is being proposed and b) brainstorm with them about how to approach other organizations and who to speak with.

### **Harvest Study Completion**

- Janet Winbourne couldn't join the call but Walter can speak to the topic because he was working on this with her when she was in Délı̨nę
- She spent 2.5 days in Délı̨nę.
- The harvest used to be much higher so data would be useful if Délı̨nę wanted a greater harvest quota.
- People enjoyed validating the data.
- One lesson is to spend more time in the future on translation and to ensure at the beginning that everyone understands the background to the project better.
- Deb: Janet's feedback to her was how important the interviews with harvesters are in order to make the data meaningful. This is a really critical piece and the Sahtú is the first region to do this kind of review, which is exciting and groundbreaking. They also learned how important it is to get the right people in the room. It has to be the people who were harvesting at the time the data was collected, not just people with general Traditional Knowledge. This can be useful too but that first piece is really critical and the two roles are different.

## **Regional research strategy planning update – Christine**

- Christine is working with some documents that Andrew Applejohn put together last year. He has already looked at a couple of examples of regional studies – the Beaufort Regional Environmental Assessment and the West Kitikmeot-Slave Study. She will summarize the work that he did but the two provide examples of different governance and funding structures as well as other aspects of approaches which we can learn from and then discuss what is appropriate for the Sahtú. There will be a briefing note for discussion for the next meeting.

## **Update on ?ehdzo Got'ine formal appointments**

- Colville Lake wants to hold off on participating in the Forum because they don't have the capacity right now. Deb emphasized that that door will always remain open to them when they are ready.
- Roger Odgaard – Norman Wells
- Gordon Yakeleya – Tulít'a
- James Caesar – Fort Good Hope
- Leon Andrew and Frederick Andrew – SRRB reps.

## **In-person Forum meeting**

- Last week of January – January 26, 27 and 28 (Tues, Wed, Thurs)
- Will be in Yellowknife
- Walter will check if he can come and if the Land Corporation can pay for it. Forum can cover Jimmy. Ted is invited as the youth rep (also covered by Forum).
- Will be interesting to look at how we can expand participation.

## **Next meeting**

- Monday January 11<sup>th</sup>, 9am to noon