



Chair's Closing Remarks

George Barnaby, Zehdzo Got'ine Gots'é Nákedı
January 21-23, Colville Lake

9:00 am Call Public Listening Session to Order

As Chair of the Zehdzo Got'ine Gots'é Nákedı, I would like to thank all the participants for your contributions to this Public Listening Session or Hearing. Over the past three days, there has been a lot of respect shown by the people in this room – respect for caribou, respect among the people, communities and regions, respect across cultures, and respect for the collaborative management processes outlined in the land claim agreement. I thank you all for the respectful discussions.

This Public Listening Session has been difficult at times, because the situation we all find ourselves in is difficult. It involves several cultures, languages and dialects, several regions, several communities, two kinds of knowledge – traditional knowledge and science – and a lot of questions arising from changing environmental and social conditions for caribou conservation.

But the Parties have maintained their commitment to a collaborative approach in addressing the current challenges. This is a strong foundation supporting the Board in the decisions that it must make.

Approach

This has been unique as a formal Public Hearing in several ways:

- We've called it a Public Listening Session – with this title, we remind everyone that we are working to actively listen to all the evidence presented.
- We have taken a hot topics approach instead of focusing on individual caribou populations.
- We had Sam Bradd helping to interpret the proceeding through Graphic Recordings.

The formal hearing structure can be frustrating at times. It's a legal structure arising from the land claim agreement that is not the approach that Dene and Métis are used to for working on issues together. In order to address this, the Board has taken a much more flexible approach than is normal for this kind of proceedings.

In our region we've been doing this kind of working together for many generations. It's our way to respect others when they want to speak, especially elders, listening carefully, and building on what they say. It's like making a soup – there are a lot of different ingredients that go into making it taste just right.

By using our Indigenous cultural approach, we have tried to bridge with the legal culture invoked by the land claim agreement.

We have made special efforts to support the use of Sahtú Dene and Tłı̨chǫ languages and dialects at this hearing, along with English, and to develop a shared cross-cultural vocabulary of key terms and concepts. We will make Sahtú Dene and Tłı̨chǫ language recordings of the hearing available on our public registry, and to community radio stations, so that people who were not able to attend can hear what has taken place.

We have been grateful to be able to hear from traditional knowledge experts, elders and knowledge holders from Colville, Tulít'a, Délı̨ne, Norman Wells and Fort Good Hope, as well as Inuvialuit and Tłı̨chǫ regions, whose advice and guidance will be taken very seriously.

Our Board members and Special Advisors have worked hard to develop guidelines for a fair proceeding to avoid conflict of interest related to the Colville proposal and the evidence presented by the other Parties.

Our land claim sets up a special type of decision-making structure meant to bring together different perspectives to come together, keep open minds, and act as one voice. It has been important to be especially careful to have a process that is fair and unbiased, and we designed the agenda and chairing with this in mind.

Our Board members that are Sahtú beneficiaries have shown their commitment to a fair process, but they also remain committed to being who they are as community members and elders. They have all been listening carefully to what everyone has to say with their Board hats on, out of respect for the legal basis of the hearing.

But sometimes they have taken off their Board hats and put on their community hats on, and in speaking as community members they have shown the variety of perspectives that exists on the Board. As Chair, I am confident that the decision of the Board will not be dominated by one perspective. The decision will be the outcome of taking seriously all the different knowledges and perspectives expressed in this room.

We thank people for having been patient with this process and for having been supportive of the process.

What We've Heard

We have heard a presentation of a proposed ɹədə or caribou plan from the Colville panel, and presentations of plans and evidence from all the four other Sahtú communities. We've also heard presentations from all the other Parties present, including the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, Sahtú Youth Network, ENR, and the Inuvialuit Game Council. Each presentation has benefitted from questions and comments by the community Panels, the Parties, Inuvialuit Game Council delegates and Sahtú elders sponsored by the Sahtú Dene Council. Our visiting Observers, the Tłıchǫ Government delegation, has been present and listening throughout the hearing, and have contributed a presentation.

There have been some strong ideas, strong themes over the last few days. Everybody has been really trying hard to understand how community harvest regulation systems caribou fit with other community, regional and cross-regional harvest regulation systems.

We heard strong messages from people in the Sahtú communities that they do not accept the idea of a quota imposed on them from the outside.

We have also heard evidence from ENR and other regions about the status of the caribou populations, and approaches to coordinating harvest regulation across regions.

We've heard from the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, Sahtú Youth Network and elders about the importance of caribou for food security.

We've had a chance to learn about the statistical and community analysis of the Sahtú Harvest Study and its relevance for caribou harvest regulation.

There was also a strong message throughout the hearing about the role of communities and ʔehdzo Got'ıne or Renewable Resources Councils in caribou conservation and the need to support their roles as defined in the land claim. There's been a lot of discussion about the role of the Board and the role of ENR. It will be a priority to address the issue of governance as it has been discussed.

The Board will think about how to deal with those messages and questions in our final report. We are committed to tracking our responses to the messages on the key issues that we have already

listed before the hearing, and to the additional issues that have come up during the meeting, or that may come up after the hearing.

I want to clarify and emphasize one thing about the scope of this hearing. The trigger for this Public Listening Session was evidence from all the Parties about caribou conservation concerns, and the need to consider the most effective way to regulate harvest of the three kinds of caribou that live in our region. The Board is committed to considering all the factors and options for caribou harvest regulation.

The *List of Key Emerging Issues* was shared with the Parties before the hearing, posted on the public registry, and discussed at the pre-hearing conference. This list was distributed to the Parties, posted to the public registry and discussed at the Pre-Hearing Conference on February 19. We welcome input on this list and any other issues that we may have missed.

Final Arguments

Although a lot has already been said, we want everyone to know that there are more opportunities to provide input over the next two weeks. The record for this hearing has not yet been closed – the closing date is February 10.

We want to be sure that everyone, even people who could not be at the hearing because they were working or travelling on the winter road or couldn't get to Colville Lake from their home communities, has a chance to be heard. If anyone wants assistance, our staff are there to help record submissions in any format that people wish, oral or written.

The Board requires final submissions by the February 10 deadline so that the Board has the time it needs to prepare our final Public Listening Report and reasons for decision by our March 31 deadline. The Board will be meeting tomorrow to review the discussions at the hearing. We'll also be looking at the timelines, and will inform all the parties if there's a change in the schedule. The Board will hold our internal decision meeting on February 11-13.

At our meeting in February, Board Members will consider all the information we heard over the past three days, and all the written materials given to us.

Máhsı Cho

I have thanked all the participants in the Public Listening Session – my Board, the Parties, community members, visiting delegations, but I also have a long list of people to thank for all their work to make this hearing a success.

I know that some of the most important people are the ones in the background who have been working hard to support this big group with logistics, and meals – all the essentials to keep us all going for three long days and nights.

I want to name each of these people individually, for the record, so everyone is aware of who has been on the support team that has helped us be able to work together.

First I'd like to thank the amazing Colville team that were so welcoming to 68 visitors or more – we nearly doubled the size of this community! Partnering with Colville in hosting this first Public Listening Session in the planned series of five Sessions has been a great experience.

Many people in Colville – in fact, the entire community – ensured we were comfortable, entertained and well fed. These include (and sorry if I've missed anyone): Fran Caballero, Snowbird Kochon, Barry Gully, our head cooks, Jennifer Lafferty, Dora Kochon, Sharon Tutcho, and Anne Kochon-Orlias, not to mention their helpers and the amazing kitchen team that kept the dishes washed, coffee on, water tank filled and space clean. Thanks to Isabel Orlias for her work to organize evening social and cultural events that added meaning to the Public Listening Session, helping to support a positive context for our work.

I also want to thank our staff, Kirsten Jensen, Lori Ann Lennie, Leon Andrew, Hannah Taneton, and Kyanna Lennie Dolphus. They have become expert event organizers, and were key to making everything run smoothly. They were also dedicated to supporting the Parties to have their voices heard, in the interest of fairness. A big hand for them.

Thanks to our legal counsel Nick Sowsun who is here, and Lorraine Land in the background who has worked many hours to prepare the Board for this hearing, and to advise us during the hearing.

We owe huge thanks to the interpreters that have been dedicated to ensuring that everyone understands each other. Sahtú Dene interpreters Laura Tutcho and Dora Duncan, and Tł̨ch̨q̨ interpreters Jonas Lafferty and Francis Zoe. They deserve special recognition for their role in supporting Dene and Métis participation in co-management.

Ryan Dempster with Pido Productions was our sound guy, and made sure that people could be heard – he also recorded the proceedings in both languages so that people can listen to the hearing in the future. And as you experienced, he knows how to improvise and work miracles under pressure!

Thanks to Sam Bradd, our graphic recorder, who did a huge amount of preparation for this event and worked tirelessly over the past three days to interpret and showcase the presentations of all

the Parties as well as the Sahtú Harvest Study presentation, and the contributions of the elders and the public.

We owe all of these people special thanks for being willing to work over two evenings of this proceeding.

The court recorders at Digi-Tran were standing by for recordings of the proceedings, but unfortunately Ryan wasn't able to send them since the files are huge. But as of tomorrow afternoon they will be working extremely hard to put what people are saying in writing. We hope to have completed transcripts within a week.

So máhsı to everyone.

Future Public Listening Sessions

We hope that you agree that this Public Listening Session has made significant progress in gathering evidence related to the central question, "What is the most effective way to regulate the harvest of caribou?" We are also aware that much work remains to be done. People are concerned about the other four hot topics that the SRRB plans to address over the coming years:

- Knowledge About Caribou and Landscapes
- Wildfire and Climate Change
- Predators and Caribou
- Caribou and the Sahtú Economy

With this, I am very pleased to know that Délıne is offering to host the Public Listening Session on Knowledge About Caribou and Landscapes, in February 2021! We will be able to formally announce the 2021 Public Listening Sessions very soon. This will give us an entire year to prepare to address this important hot topic.

Closing Ceremony

I'd like for us to close this formal proceeding properly, with a closing prayer, drumming and a handshake all around.