

Norman Wells 2024 ʔełets'éhkwę Godı
Public Listening Session (PLS)
February 20 – 22, 2024
Responses to Round 1 Information
Requests



Norman Wells
Public Listening
Climate Change
& Forest Fire



Tulít'a ʔehdzo Got'ıneę (Renewable Resources Council)

Deadline for responses December 8, 2023

This template includes Round 1 Information Requests (IRs) addressed to the Tulít'a ʔehdzo Got'ıneę (Renewable Resources Council), for the Norman Wells 2024 Public Listening Session on ʔełets'éhkwę Godı (*Caribou Conservation, Climate Change and Wildfires*) being held on February 20-22, 2024.

IRs are written requests for information directed to a Party or Parties in the PLS. Please submit responses to Round 1 IRs by **December 8, 2023**.

Parties are also encouraged to submit information requests for other parties that will be included in Round 2 IRs (to be issued on January 2, 2024). Reminders of other opportunities for Public Registry submissions are also included in this template.

Information Request (IR) ʔełets'éhkwę Godı (*Caribou Conservation, Climate Change and Wildfires*)

A. Observations of Caribou and Climate Change in General

SRRB IRs to all Sahtú Communities:

1. Has your community observed changes in:

- Weather systems and patterns?
- Freeze up and/or thaw dates?
- Permafrost?
- Watercourses and sediment?
- Ice build up on snow?
- Wind speeds and/or direction?
- Rain in winter events?
- Other changes to weather and climate?

Climate change is happening, all we can do is pray; pray to the creator is the only thing we can do.

With the rain, we don't have enough rain this summer. Usually, it rains in May. Now it's changing so much. Now rain in September.

No more mice running around, not seeing the smaller animals. Summertime is so hot, no birds flying around, no rabbits, no mice. Still seeing lots of ravens.

When we go check out the ice, we sure seeing weather changes. When it comes in the spring, the river flow but it thaws out. Lots of places we can't go to anymore because of the differences in the ice.

When on the lakes, it's so dry. Don't see the water. Unexpected.

More slides on the river. Seeing a lot of that now.

Used to set nets in spring normally, at same spot. Not the same.

When the geese fly, we know when they come. Not like that any more.

Willow Lake spring, lots of sulphur. Lot of sulphur on the lake.

Mackenzie River – used to be solid thick. Now it's more crystal and easier to break.

Difference in bugs? No more flies (we don't know what type). No bugs. Last year hardly no mosquitoes. Frogs.

It's getting warmer and warmer.

In mountains this year, we saw lots of moose, about 7-8 each day. Seeing more moose on river. Are the fires pushing them into the mountains? Cousin in Wrigley, seeing 60 moose, one herd. Never seen like that before. Lots of stuff changing.

Years ago, caribou movement changed. Used to travel around caribou flats. Saw a white caribou in the mountains. How many animals are getting killed?

One of the changes, Bear Rock starting to see landslides Last year, starting to see changes.

Starting to see magpies. Starting to see sparrows but all the crows are starting to attack them. Are the fires causing the crows to attack them? Every summer, they went in and took everything away.

2. What has your community noticed about how these changes affect caribou?

Mt. caribou – migration has changed due to activity (outfitters, there are now seven). Outfitters take the bulls out in the fall for trophy.

Chopper activity really impacts the young ones. The bouncing noise off mountains. Early 60s and 70s, there were horses and no noise. Now things changed.

Overhunting.

3. In what ways is how you harvest caribou been affected by these changes?

4. How has the quality of the caribou affected by these changes, if any?

We're expecting a lot of changes next year after 2023 fire season. Will likely get worse.

Everything so dry. Not enough rain, not enough water for things to grow properly. Animals eat plants that are also medicine and good for us. We will lose that.

Down south people don't care about climate change.

Years ago, tried harvesting muskox.

5. What, if any, new dangers or safety concerns are showing up on the land with the changes observed?

This year, got to travel with youth on the land on Kelly Lake. But it didn't happen because of the fires. Going to bring the kids up to Bear Rock. Prayers are part of the stories for youth.

Starting to see landslide on trails.

A couple of years ago, started to seeing things change. Even at Kelly Lake, there are slides. Hardly got a fish.

This fall, went out to the Wells, sand bars popping up unexpectedly. Hard to know where you're going. Can't go to Police Island. Can't go passed certain points. Need to be more aware.

Hardly seeing moose on river.

When it comes in the spring, the river flows in the spring. But it thaws out. Lots of places can't go to anymore because of the differences.

Set hooks below Joe's house, can see sandbars through the ice.

A few years ago, you could hear the ice break. Ice is different. Is there stuff coming to us in the air from the air?

Now can't get fish because water levels...can't get jet boats up river. Seeing more and more sandbars.

6. What does your community look for to know if it is safe to go on the land or if there is any danger due to these changes?

7. Do the above dangers or concerns affect how your community accesses land and water?

8. What stories does your community have about climate change from the ancestors, grandfathers or grandmothers, or other knowledge holders?

Dad told us years ago people will get sick. It's important to listen to elders. Pick up the stories you really love. People used to stick together when there were no phones or technology. People told stories. Now hard to communicate to the youth.

9. How is the weather and climate change described in your indigenous language?

B. Observations Wildfire and Caribou

SRRB IRs to all Sahtú Communities:

1. How does your community view/value wildfire?

Fire fighting needs to go back to initial attacks (IA). They [ECC] should have people helping, worry about the land. With IA, used to have camps at Kelly and Stuart Lakes. Fight fire right away. Don't let the land burn. Go back to IA. Have choppers in communities (at camp). Don't wait for it to get big, and don't just use sprinklers.

2. What changes in wildfires has your community observed over time?

- i. When did your community first notice these changes?
- ii. Where on the land have the wildfire changes been seen?

3. What changes has your community observed in smoke and any lingering affects? In humans? In caribou?

Some caribou not as fat. Not moving as much as before. Might be the fire.

Back in the day when elders were alive, when caribou was fat, its different. Blood on the fat.

This summer, someone brought meat in from mountain, lots of fat and was clean.

4. What stories does your community have about wildfires and burning from the ancestors, your grandfathers or grandmothers, or other knowledge holders?

Different world back then. Doing training on fire.

Now, five years of training. New technology coming out that will take a long time to be trained on (piloting at night). We never had to wait five years to learn thing. We don't have five years or the land will burn by then. We need to protect what we've got right now.

Good to understand Dene laws. The changes are big. In 1969, rushing things to become one people. Today still fighting. Things given up to get land claim settlements. We have rights in the land claim. Good for people to understand land claim.

With devolution, don't know if we can change policy. We have to change zones. What needs to/can be changed in the white world? Want RRC to be on top. No room for the band. Don't know who we are now?

Good thing for our people if things can be our way.

Elders say you have to be there. Stewart Lake has new channels. Very shallow. More water up above than below. Stopped at Underground, shot 11 sheep. You could hear the water outpour.

Elders, give us your stories.

Willow Lake 80s, now there's open water where used to be lots of crushing ice. Fall getting hardly nothing. Climate Change...can feel it. How can you tackle it? Seeing landslide on trails. Carcajou nothing there. Places getting flooded out while we've got nothing.

Joe out in a boat, water is getting lower and lower. Lots of stuff at the bottom.

In past fire fighting with five water pumps and five hoses. We can see it and deal with it ourselves. Borrow a pump but someone wouldn't lend it to them. Told to have their own pump. Used to fight fires on our own. 31 people, all summer fighting fires.

Talking about important things. Hard to say something. Don't know what do say. Went to my cabin, my dad's grave. Nothing. Trying to cut trail to cabin as lakes not freezing properly.

This year's fire, lost some cabins.

Way back, before, 1960, playing cards, bet .25. In those years. Made .25/hour fighting fires. Pump operators .45/hour. Fighting for over a month. RRC/SRRB/ENR who can turn to to ask when the fire starts?

5. Does your community distinguish between good and bad wildfires? If so, what are the characteristics of each?

Fire part of nature but climate change not. We look after the land, it looks after us.

At SSI, they (Coleville Lake) started their own crew, don't have to wait on the government to help them. We (Tulita) want to look at their own crew. Attack the fires right away before it gets too big. Need more hoses, improved equipment.

In 70s ad 80s, didn't wait for ENR. Went out fought fires. TK of the land and put out fires right away. Since ENR created policy to leave if no values. Burned cabins this year. Don't need ENR. Dene knows what to do. We're from the land.

6. How are different types of fires described in your indigenous language?

7. What changes in wind and how wind affect wildfires have your community observed?

Winds are starting to come up of nowhere. Winds are changing, lasting longer.

Warm weather creating new, different, more winds.

Fires used to be quiet. Winds and more making it fast. Happening so fast. Moves fast. Big winds. Fire behaviour is changing. Looks like it's attacking the community.

8. What effects of wildfires on caribou or caribou habitat has you community observed?

Outfitters are saying the caribou aren't moving and some say they're shifting their movements. More bears now. Starting to see more bears in the mountains.

9. Where on the land and/or water have these changes been noticed?

10. How long does it take for caribou food and habitat to return after burning?

Habitat: scientists may have misunderstood. Caribou food favourite food is lichen. Scientists seeing caribou eating in burned areas. Muskox also eats lichen, it grows faster versus fire which will destroy it.

11. What can be done to protect caribou and caribou habitat from wildfires?

SRRB IRs to Sahtú Youth

1. How can the SRRB better support youth participation in climate change action?

2. (e.g.) How does climate change affect opportunities for intergenerational knowledge transfer on the land and water?

3. Is climate change anxiety/eco-anxiety common amongst youth in the Sahtu?

4. What kind of educational opportunities (camps, classroom, workshops other) would you find useful to understand climate change? Wildfires?

5. What opportunities do you have to voice your concerns about climate change?

6. What opportunities would you like to have to voice your concerns about climate change?

7. What opportunities would you like to have to contribute to the fight against climate change?

SRRB IRs to all interested parties

1. Do you have questions for other parties?

EEC - How does the fire-retardant impact the animals? The water?
How long for the trees to grow back?

2. What effects does government forestry management have on wildfires?