

March 26, 2024

Norman Wells Renewable Resource Council

“What should people’s role be in addressing the impacts of climate change and wildfires on caribou?”

The impacts of climate change and wildfires is something we as humans have caused. It’s a reality that we have to live with moving forward and how we can make an impact now to manage the effects that we have caused. The impacts are having many effects on wildlife and nature. From habitat changes, dry seasons (Drought), wildfires and the list can go on. What matters now is how we take action in slowing the effect to sustain a long and healthy world to live in. Conservation is one of the ways that we can move forward to sustain life and try and rectify human caused issues we are dealing with today.

The Dene principle and Dene way of life are a reflection on how to manage and mitigate these effects. For Millennia our people have lived in coherence with mother nature. We have traveled with animals (Caribou) and Harvested what is around us when the quality of an animal's (caribou, beaver, ptarmigan) life is in lower numbers that given year. The weather is changing due to climate change and the effects it's taking on the world today. Our people have noticed these changes for years and by being a part of the natural landscape, we rely on traditional knowledge, learned and past down, share stories and share our knowledge to try and help and find ways to understand what is going on and how we can help to make the situation better. Whether it be from low water levels, low snow levels, ice patterns changing in the freezing months and spring breaks ups, to even the smallest shrub change. This is how we monitor and share this information with the surrounding communities and other people to help with climate change and help to protect what we hold close and is also a part of our identity, the animals especially the caribou.

Dene and Metis people are observers. We observe changes and we tell them by stories or orally through an exchange of knowledge with one another. We have acted on this to protect and guide our people for generations to come. With the changing world and the technology that has risen over generations. It has given us tools to gather and share knowledge. Especially during this time and crisis we are going through and for the survival of our people and the wildlife and the sustainability of the land, it is an important tool that has to be utilized and recognized. Traditional knowledge has guided us and will guide us as Indigenous people. That is our educational system. We never stop learning as we learn by the land, animals, water and everything that allows us to live and only take what we need and know when to stop taking if it is impacting another living thing. We only have one world and today we need all the help we can get to try and make it better for everyone so we can keep it for along time.

With work being done by modern science and our TK, bridging gaps will finally bring an understanding of how Dene and Metis have lived with and have had a long relationship that has always worked with wildlife and land.

Mahsi

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