



Hon. Robert C. McLeod
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources
PO Box 1320, Yellowknife NT X1A 2L9

Delivered via email

November 8, 2016

RE: Minister's Response to SRRB *ᑭekwé hé Dene Ts'įłı* – *Sustaining Relationships* Report on the Bluenose East *ᑭekwé* (Caribou) Hearing 2016 and the Délįnę *Belare wíle Gots'ę* *ᑭekwé* Plan

Dear Minister McLeod:

On behalf of the Délįnę Got'įnę Government and Délįnę *ᑭehdzo Got'įnę*, we are writing further to our joint letter with the *ᑭehdzo Got'įnę Gots'ę Nákedı* (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board - SRRB) sent on October 31. We would like to provide our own community perspective, grounded in our *Belare wíle Gots'ę* *ᑭekwé* – *Caribou for All Time* plan.

The Délįnę *ᑭekwé* Working Group and Délįnę *ᑭehdzo Got'įnę* met with the SRRB Board on October 19, and met again on November 8, to discuss the Minister's letter. The Working Group, *ᑭehdzo Got'įnę* and Délįnę Got'įnę Government hereby confirm that we are of one mind with respect to our commitment to upholding the conservation principles and actions outlined in our plan, and in the SRRB's *ᑭekwé hé Dene Ts'įłı* – *Sustaining Relationships* report on the Bluenose East (BNE) *ᑭekwé* Hearing 2016.

We reiterate our thanks for the Minister's expression of support for the community conservation planning approach advocated by the SRRB and embodied in our plan. However, we note that the Minister's September 26 letter to the SRRB regarding the BNE Hearing Report indicates that he has not fully comprehended the implications of this approach.

Délįnę believes that there are many factors leading to reduced availability of *ᑭekwé* in our traditional harvesting area, and as outlined in our plan, we aim to take initiative on a number of different fronts, rather than focusing only on harvest management as the Minister has chosen to do.

Délįnę has already undertaken sustained engagement with the community to establish its harvesting threshold, and successfully invoked this threshold by stopping the BNE harvest in early 2017. We will not accept changes to our plan, including the reduction of the threshold and the zero *tsída* (female) harvest requested by the Minister, without meaningful consultation. We reject the Minister's statement in his September 26 letter, and paraphrased in ENR's statement in *News/North* on

November 7, that “in the interests of fairness, consistency, and the precautionary principle, ENR believes it is appropriate for all NWT harvesters of the herd to follow the same harvest regime and that migratory caribou, like Bluenose-East herd, need to be managed consistently on a herd-wide basis.” This focus on “consistency” runs completely against the community planning approach that the Minister claims to support, and demonstrates that the Minister does not fully understand this approach.

The user groups in the Sahtú region, as well as the SRRB, the main instrument of wildlife management mandated under the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, have universally agreed that it is inappropriate to invoke the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) mechanisms in the agreement at this time, and that community conservation planning is the region’s preferred alternative. We recognize and respect that user groups in other regions have accepted the TAH approach. However, a focus on standardized formulas for allocating harvest numbers to achieve “consistency” across regions will effectively constitute imposition of a TAH in the Sahtú Region, and will undermine the diverse, culturally embedded processes and outcomes that are inherent to community conservation.

This being said, Délı̨nę is strongly in favour of cross-regional dialogue with other indigenous user groups to arrive at consensus about how Bluenose East ʔekwé should be shared. We are working quickly to develop a harvest management plan for the upcoming season, building on lessons learned from the first year of plan implementation. We also have a plan for reducing the percentage of tsída harvest to comply with our plan for 20% harvest.

Our approach to harvest management is proving to be robust. Délı̨nę leaders and harvesters are continuing their support for the plan because we are drawing upon their knowledge of actions that will work to achieve our conservation objectives. We are proving that community driven harvest management will more likely be successfully implemented than top-down “consistent” measures.

Contrary to the Minister’s view about the need for consistency, it is our experience that a community-based approach, allowing for diverse harvest regimes, will be a strong foundation for building cross-regional consensus. This approach is consistent with longstanding Dene traditions in cross-regional decision-making.

We thank you for considering our supplementary explanation of the community conservation planning approach that we have developed over the past year. We are hereby proposing two priority actions, as follows:

First, we request that ENR consider supporting the costs of a small user group meeting including Délı̨nę and our Tłı̨chǫ neighbours before the December holiday period. The Délı̨nę ʔekwé Working Group has begun to discuss an approach to the meeting with the Tłı̨chǫ Government, and has identified a delegation of three individuals for such a meeting, including representatives of the Working Group and Délı̨nę Got’ı̨nę Government. We also propose that the Kugluktuk Hunters and

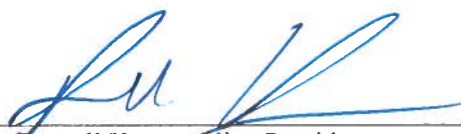
Trappers Organisation be invited to the meeting, given our shared interest in BNE ʔekwé conservation, and community conservation planning.

Second, in order to further strengthen recognition of our plan and our powers to ensure compliance, the Délı̄ne Got'ı̄ne Government hereby requests a meeting with ENR and the Department of Justice as soon as possible to discuss next steps for establishing a restorative justice agreement as recommended in the SRRB's Hearing Decision 38 (July 28), and Action 16 in the SRRB's Final Decisions document (October 26).

Signed,



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