



Backgrounder: Bluenose-East Caribou Management Hearing

Overview

In the summer of 2015, NWT Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) surveys of the Bluenose East caribou showed a 25% decline per year in calf recruitment over the previous three years. The numbers were alarming and consistent with previous surveys that had also showed a steady decline.

As the primary harvester of the Bluenose East herd in the Sahtú, the Déljné ᑕehdzo Got'jné, (Renewable Resources Council), Déljné First Nation and Déljné Land Corporation have filed a caribou conservation plan (*Belarewílé Gots'é ᑕekwé*) with with the ᑕehdzo Got'jné Gots'é Nákedí (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB).

ENR has also filed a *Proposal on Management Actions for Bluenose East Caribou 2016-2019*.

The Plans

Belarewílé Gots'é ᑕekwé:

- is a two-year plan that represents the first time a community in the Northwest Territories has implemented its own conservation plan, including harvesting restrictions, before any regulations have been put in place.
- calls for a ceremonial harvest, limited to 150 ᑕekwé.
- includes other conservation measures, from returning to hunting the way the grandparents did, to using more of other traditional foods.
- is rooted in Dene relationship with ᑕekwé, Dene laws, and the Dene language.
- includes a three-step community-based approach to ensuring the plan is respected, including financial incentives, sentencing circles and ENR enforcement as a last resort.
- is an example of how the Sahtú Agreement empowers Renewable Resources Councils to regulate their own relationship with wildlife.

ENR's Proposal on Management Actions for the BNE Caribou:

- recommends limiting the harvest of caribou to 163 bulls for Sahtú Beneficiaries.
- proposes other management measures, including predator management.
- outlines ENR's opposition to potential development activities on caribou calving grounds.

- supports improved hunter education and use of aboriginal laws and hunting methods to promote respect for wildlife, and reduce wastage.
- Prioritizes accurate harvest monitoring enforcement, without closing the door to community-based, culturally-appropriate measures.

The Process

The ʔehdzo Got'ı̨nę Gots'ę́ Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board - SRRB) is the primary authority for wildlife management in the Sahtú Dene-Métis Land claim.

The Board has called a Public Hearing Mar 1-3, 2016, to consider harvest management of the Bluenose-East caribou.

- The Board has offered to hold workshops in the Sahtú communities to help local ʔehdzo Got'ı̨nę and members of the public prepare for the hearing. (To date workshops have been held in Délı̨nę and Coville Lake.) Workshops cover the content of the two plans, and the hearing process and timelines. The Board is also proposing a youth workshop prior to the hearing.
- The SRRB invited members of the public to register as participants or to speak at the Hearing.
- The SRRB also invites the public to provide written or oral recorded submissions and supporting documentation concerning the harvest management of Bluenose East caribou. These must be filed with the SRRB by February 26, 2016.

The Decision

- The SRRB will compile a report on the hearing, including a decision, as per its powers under the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. The deadline is May 16, 2016.
- The Minister has 60 days to accept, reject or modify any of the recommendations. If the Minister rejects or modifies any recommendations he must provide the board with written reasons.

Collaborative Community-based Co-management

Sahtú leaders have agreed to a community-driven approach to ʔekwę́ management that accounts for the distinct mix of wildlife to which each community has access. Délı̨nę's plan builds on the work done by the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM) in its *Taking Care of Caribou* management plan (2014.)

The Board provided technical support to Délı̨nę in the development of Belarewı́lé Gots'ę́ ʔekwę́, which is consistent with the relationship the Sahtú Agreement has established between the Board and the Renewable Resource Councils. ENR provided financial support for training related to the development of the plan.

Hearing Collaboration

Understanding the need for coordination in harvest management across the territory of Bluenose East ʔekwé and especially across the Sahtú and Tłı̄chq̄ regions, the SRRB and the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on their hearing proceedings.

Each Board will attend hearings held by the other Board, and use the information posted on each other's public registries. This collaboration will allow for consistency in the Boards' respective decision-making processes.

Language

In developing *Belarewílé Gots'é ʔekwé* there was a lot of discussion about using the right language to describe the relationship between Dene and ʔekwé. Many Dene concepts do not directly correspond to English terms.

We ask that journalists respect this use of Dene terms and orthography, while also keeping in mind the potential for copy and paste errors. Free Dene unicode keyboards and an online tool are available at denefont.com.

About the ʔehdzo Got'ı̄nę Gots'é Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – SRRB)

The Sahtú Dene-Métis Agreement establishes the ʔehdzo Got'ı̄nę Gots'é Nákedı (SRRB) as the primary body for wildlife management in the Sahtú. The Dene name literally translates as “helpers of the ʔehdzo Got'ı̄nę, the Trap People.” The Board works together with the ʔehdzo Got'ı̄nę (Renewable Resources Councils) in the five communities of the Sahtú Region to maintain Dene and Métis harvesting traditions, and keep the land and animals healthy for future generations.