

# Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council Plan Submission

Déłnę 2021 Public Listening Session

Original DRAFT Submitted November 22, 2021 (Lisa McDonald, Jasmine Plummer, NWRRC Technical Team)

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Second (2<sup>nd</sup>) DRAFT Presented by Lisa McDonald, NWRRC Technical Team Lead

# Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council Plan Presentation

## Terms & Concepts

**Biological Trait** – may be inherited or acquired. (Eg: Eye color in general)

**Biological Characteristics** – variation in features such as hair, eye color, skin color, which corresponds with environmental conditions (Eg: Blue eye color)

**Biodiversity** – a key indicator of the health of an ecosystem and refers to the variety of plants and animals found on Earth. It measures variations at ecosystems, species and genetic levels.

**Conservation** – preservation and protection of something. Planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect.

**Biodiversity Conservation** – Refers to the protection, upliftment, and management of biodiversity in order to derive sustainable benefits for present and future generations. Three (3) main objectives: (1) to preserve the diversity of species (2) Sustainable utilization of species (3) Ecosystems.

**Spatial Data** – direct or indirect reference to a specific location or geographical area. Spatial data can have any number of attributes about a location. Eg: Maps, photographs, historical documents or information.

**Special Concern** – a status category (wildlife) describing a species that may become threatened or endangered because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats (SARA – Species at Risk Act)

**Threatened Concern** – a plant, animal or other living organism that is becoming rare and that may become in danger of extinction if current trends continue (SARA – Species at Risk Act)

# Outline

- Setting the Context
  - Scope of planning
- Predator Plan
- Competitor Plan

# Setting the Context: Proposed Plan Components

The NWRCC is submitting two plan components for consideration by the SRRB and the Parties at the Délı̨nę 2021 Public Listening Session (PLS). These components address two of the main topics of the 2021 PLS, namely:

- Living With Wildlife: Predators
- Living With Wildlife: Competitor

The NWRRC has a strong interest in taking more responsibility for harvest regulation. We plan to develop our own harvest regulation plan for presentation at one of the Public Listening Sessions planned for 2022-2024.

# Setting the Context: What are these plan components trying to achieve?

These components add to planning work that was already done through Níó Nę P'ęné planning process by addressing key hot topics in mountain caribou conservation. For predators and competitors, the plan components are also relevant for tǫdzi conservation.

# Setting the Context: Mountain Caribou and Todzi General comments on status;

- Because of the pandemic, people are travelling more on the land instead of travelling outside the region, which means we have more eyes and ears on the land.
- It's a silver lining with the pandemic that the wildlife was given a break.
- The environment is changing, and wildlife distribution is changing. We're seeing more and more moose; however, we have seen an increase of moose infected with ticks (ghost moose), which in turn affects the hide and depending upon the infection of ticks, the hide may not be salvageable for use. So, with the supposed decline of caribou and the tick infested moosehides, this plays a huge role in our Aboriginal people not being able to practice our traditional teaching of tanning hides and sewing practices etc.
- Climate change is here. We, as Indigenous people need to proactively plan for a healthy future for the land, water, wildlife and people. It is much more efficient and cost effective to responsibly conserve land now than it is to restore land in the future.
- The relationship we have with caribou are place-based meaning communities are traditionally responsible for stewardship in their established harvest areas. We are responsible for the overall health of Caribou and other wildlife and also the health and protection of the land, keeping, honoring and renewing the importance of our harvest traditions for future generations.
- There are many threats to the future of caribou and wildlife in general, such as a changing environment from climate change (wildfires, changing weather, introduction of new invasive species etc.), poor hunting practices (harvesting of mega-bulls, taking too many cows, overharvesting of caribou and other wildlife), no awareness and respect for Dene/Metis hunting laws, increased motorized access, noise and disturbance at some traditional hunting areas, lack of use and transmission of traditional knowledge, mining and exploration, poor policy coordination and implementation (overlap issues, lack of communication etc.), a lack of capacity (implementation purposes, and people not utilizing the land as much anymore), and contaminants (Canol Trail – barrels of fuel, asbestos, wire,).
- Importance for protected land and conservation initiatives such as the Nio Ne Pene Beghare Shuhta Go'epe Nareha – Trails of the Mountain Caribou plan and also the Nio Ne Pene plan.

# Setting the Context: Mountain Caribou Status

- There was less outfitter activity in the mountains due to the pandemic so there has been less disturbance and harvesting in the mountains.
- Fewer people were going to Mile 222 area because they couldn't travel through the Yukon, so they to do a more expensive fly-in hunt – and fewer people were comfortable travelling in the NWT.
- We were not seeing many caribou tracks on Begáadə (Keele River). Not like there used to be. People weren't getting much caribou. But we did see lots of moose.
- Mountain caribou are listed as a Special Concern (May become threatened or endangered in the Northwest Territories because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats) under the Species at Risk (NT) Act and may become Threatened if negative factors and threats to their habitat are not managed properly.
- Critical habitat is threatened by factors such climate change. Ice patches (Mackenzie/Selwyn) are used to cool down in the summer months and are an escape from insects. Other threats include harvesting, recreation activities, resource development, and disrespectful harvesting behavior.
- Warmer weather can increase parasites and that can affect behavior, condition, and productivity of caribou. (Eg: Lungworm - their range used to be limited by the climate, but longer summers and shorter winters have seen the disease move north and that is a direct cause of climate change).
- With a warmer climate, some areas may experience an earlier greenup, providing better food for caribou during calving, a critical time for growth.
- Part of the Mountain Caribou range in the NT is protected within Nahanni and Naats'ihch'oh National Park Reserves.
- The Nio Ne P'ene Begháre Shúhta Pepe Narehzá – Trails of the Mountain Caribou Management Plan is a Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship initiative that is a shared vision for healthy caribou and people.

# Setting the Context: Todzi Status

- We can't say there have been changes. We have noticed that there seem to be lots of tōdzı, more than usual. This might be because there's been less disturbance than usual because less industrial activity than usual. Up until 20 years ago it would be a big deal if someone were to harvest tōdzı – it was a lot rarer.
- The status of Todzi are listed as threatened in the NT and likely to become endangered if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to its extirpation or extinction
- Todzi tend to live in small groups, prefer to stay within the forest year-round, and do not migrate.
- Todzi females space out for calving to reduce the risk of predation and need large areas of intact habitats for these critical periods.
- The main source of habitat disturbance is wildfires, predation and land use activities;
- There are knowledge gaps in understanding the specific relationship between Todzi abundance, habitat distribution and predation.
- Careful management of habitat disturbance is critical in maintaining a healthy and sustainable population for future generations.

# Setting the Context: How were these plan components developed?

- Lisa McDonald, Jasmine Plummer and Jaryd McDonald worked together as a Technical Team to review existing materials, participate in the Regional Preparation Workshop, and prepare draft materials for NWRRC review.
- Legal counsel reviewed materials to ensure they support NWRRC interests and priorities.
- NWRRC reviewed and approved submissions to the SRRB. These have been adapted the current plan component submissions.

# Setting the Context: Community Engagement

The Norman Wells caribou working group proposes to hold workshop(s) and meetings, either in person or Via Zoom. In Norman Wells for the NWRRC members/youth to gather information and to have a better understanding of the CPP process in regards to Caribou Stewardship conservation issues and the community conservation planning processes. Other engagement ideas will be through local Radio Station advertisement, information pamphlets, social media and posters. Engagement information will be in simple terms in plain language.

Engagement will also be shared with all community members for a better understanding of the big picture. The Information should also be shared with organizations, companies, Industry, etc., that have a stake in the process. This will include the NWLC, as they have title to settlement lands and should be included in the planning process.

Furthermore, the TDLC should be included as well. As they are responsible for ownership and management of private lands.

# Vision and Goals

The Níó Nę P'ęné plan includes a two-part vision that the NWRRC considers to be relevant for both mountain caribou and tǫdzi. The vision is as follows:

- Shúhtaot'Inę, Métis, and Tu Łidlini Dena continue to peacefully co-exist with shúhta go?epę in an ecologically diverse and healthy mountain landscape as they have for thousands of years
- Shúhtaot'Inę, Métis and Tu Łidlini Dena are travelling, harvesting, sharing and gathering throughout their territory, keeping Dene kədə (language), Dene ts'ııı (ways of life), and Dene ?e?a (law / respect) strong.

# Díga Plan: What changes are happening with respect to caribou relationships with díga?

- Wolf numbers have noticeably increased along with pack sizes.
- Noticing larger groups, more pronounced around our traditional hunting area (Three (3) Day Lake)
- Díga do take part in herding caribou and wean out the sick, old and injured. (mountain caribou)
- More people hunting (Mile 50 on the Canol Trail) from Tulita, Norman Wells & Ft. Good Hope
- Seeing a lot more of lone wolves coming into camp areas and Town of Norman Wells as opposed to seeing packs.
- Wolves seen in the foot hills, tracks following moose but not as noticeable in the valleys, where there were more caribou. Actually couldn't tell due to amount of Caribou tracks.
- Heard wolves calling when doing caribou scat collection and seen a few in the foothills but never heard them when doing work in the valleys. The caribou would scatter and run when landing in a chopper but would eventually come back to where they were eating when the chopper shut down. Did not really seem to have too much fear most of the time when we were doing our work.

# Díga Plan: What's healthy and unhealthy about caribou-díga relationships?

- Traditional hunters from Norman Wells have to travel along way to harvest caribou. The cost is high due to the distance, so usually done once a year (Mile 50 on the Canol Trail) due to the higher possibility of harvesting caribou as this is part of their migration route
- It's a natural cycle of life. Diga take the sick, old and/or injured, not the healthy caribou. It's a natural relationship and a natural cycle that should not be interfered with.
- I don't believe we have all of the proper answers or the proper scientific information to make suggestions or implement plans that would try to rectify a situation that we have no business in taking part of. For example, a wolf culling program with huge incentives. There is not enough baseline information to interfere with natural cycles of cycles of nature and should be left alone.

# Díga Plan: What needs to be done?

- It is unfair to target one predatory species like Diga. There are so many other factors that come into play that affect wildlife. For example in the Norman Wells area, we have to deal with Oil & Gas exploration companies, Outfitters, the Mackenzie Highway extension, Tourism etc., and we know that these do have an effect on predatory animals, wildlife in general and in effect that disturbs the balance of nature.
- We need to respect WL and their natural cycles. A good example is the reintroduction of Diga into Yellowstone National Park. It is amazing how the Park came back into a natural balance. That in itself is testament that nature knows exactly what she is doing. There is a balance in nature and humans should not interfere with that process. It is just not one species that throws everything off balance, it takes multiple factors that are usually led by humans.
- Talk to Elders. They have the knowledge and stories that have been passed down. We are not superior to wildlife, however a lot of humans tend to think they are and by interfering, we only make the situation worse. That has been proven and proven again.
- Respect all wildlife and their natural cycles.
- There needs to support for the re-emergence of Indigenous knowledge and relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

# Muskoxen Plan: What changes are happening with respect to caribou relationships with muskoxen?

- Increased numbers and sightings in and around Norman Wells
- More interactions with humans as opposed to any other wildlife
- Territorial/aggressive
- User cutlines as a corridor.
- People seem to worry more about running into muskox while out doing recreational stuff around Norman Wells. More so than bears or wolves, which we have a lot of them around Norman Wells
- People starting to harvest them.
- Still not accepted as a staple country food.
- The meat is leaner and richer compared to other big game (caribou, moose)

# Muskoxen Plan: What's healthy and unhealthy about caribou-muskoxen relationships?

- Food seems to be shared more than we thought as muskox eats lichens, willows, sedges, rushes and grasses. Caribou eat lichen, dried sedges, and small shrubs in the winter and in the summer they eat the leaves of willows, sedges, flowering tundra plants and mushrooms. Muskox are not adapted to digging through heavy snow for food, so winter habitat is generally restricted to areas where the snow is shallow or blown free of snow.
- Muskox have a low reproductive rate (every 2 to 3 yrs and depending on other factors) whereas caribou can reproduce every year.
- Muskox will travel far distances for food and usually stay near a water source. Caribou (Mtn.) are non-migratory and do remain in forested areas, migrating between the forested and alpine areas of the Mackenzie Mtns.
- Generally seems that when a muskox is in an area, the caribou will alter their travel route
- Muskox and caribou are susceptible to a parasite called the lung worm. It has been detected for several years but the infection is spreading and climate change seems to be a factor. They have a harder time to breathe and tire quickly which in turn makes them easier to be preyed upon by wolves and grizzly bears.

# Muskoxen Plan: What needs to be done?

- More studies need to be done to understand the relationship between both species.
- Research and document stories and information from our Elders.
- Read books that are written by our Elders in the Sahtu region (George Blondin) for information, very useful.
- Community Based Biodiversity Monitoring programs need to be established, supported and funded on a long term basis in order to get results that are viable and can be used to for future research programs, assisting and collaborating with other regions, Government and Non-Government agencies etc.
- Traditional Knowledge has to be at the forefront in creating a curriculum for a Community Based Biodiversity Monitoring Program in all aspects.
- There needs to be more incentives and encouragement to promote local involvement from Indigenous and Non-Indigenous land users. They are the eyes and the ears on the land and can contribute valuable information. Their input is vital.(outfitters, lodges, hunters, pilots, naturalists, etc.)
- Use invasive means of gathering data for WL use such as camera's and sound recorders that could contribute to data gathering on a much larger scale.

# Díga and Muskoxen Plan Actions

Action	Timeline	Who	Resources
Meeting to talk about caribou relationships with wildlife.	Once per year	NWRRC and knowledge holders	\$3,000
Support Indigenous knowledge and science research and monitoring to understand caribou relationships with wildlife.	Ongoing science/ Indigenous knowledge work to start 2022.	ENR in partnership with SRRB and Sahtú communities	\$100,000 starting amount for Indigenous knowledge project (science research already funded)
Develop curriculum including Indigenous knowledge and science to educate youth about caribou relationships with wildlife.	Curriculum development by 2024.	ENR in partnership with SRRB and Sahtú communities	\$50,000

# Learning: Monitoring and Updating the Plan

Action	Monitoring	Indicators
Meeting to talk about caribou relationships with wildlife and people.	Once per year	Meeting minutes
Support Indigenous knowledge and science research and monitoring to understand caribou relationships with wildlife.	Once per year, minimum.	Oral and written reports on results.
Develop curriculum including Indigenous knowledge and science to educate youth about caribou relationships with wildlife.	Once per year	Curriculum document.
Updating the plan	Once per year	Revised plan based on lessons learned during the previous year.

# Sharing: Documenting and Sharing

- We will prepare oral and written presentations for submission to the SRRB at the 2021-2024 Public Listening Sessions, including lessons learned and monitoring information.
- We would like to have opportunities to share our story at various networks, including:
  - Sahtú regional Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ııı - Living on the Land Forum
  - Nío Nę P'ęné – Trails of the Mountain Caribou Hub
  - Canadian Mountain Network
  - National Boreal Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium and Indigenous Knowledge Circle

# **Procedural Guidance, and Revised Draft Hídó Gogha Se ,né'' gots'ı , ʔá' (Plan for the Future) Policy and Guide**

This procedural guidance document and documents of this nature can only be broken down to a certain context without the information being misunderstood.

A suggestion would be to minimize the terminology and write it in plain english. The amount of information in this document is extensive and that can be very overwhelming to someone who is not used to or who has never written "a plan".

The meaning of conservation and/or stewardship from an Indigenous perspective is that we live it, respect it and understand that we are caretakers and not owners of the land, water, air or animals.

It would be beneficial if community visits were done to review the document prior to PLS deadlines, so that the process is not only understood but also respected knowing that the information that is contained in the "plan" came from their experiences and knowledge and will be used as a guide for future generations.

A short video in North slavey (dialect choice) would be very useful as definitions in the english language are not always translated or mean the same in our native tongue.

Another option could be training through online courses or have workshops to make sure people are getting the "big" picture and fully understand the importance of a "conservation plan" and all that it entails.