



May 13, 2022

Ms. Camilla Tutcho, Chair  
Sahtú Renewable Resources Board  
PO Box 134  
TULIT'A NT X0E OK0  
srrb.camilla.tutcho@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Tutcho:

**Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Final Written Arguments to the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board – Délı̄ne 2021 Virtual Public Listening: Tı̄ch'ádı́ hé Gots'edı́ (Living with Wildlife) / Predators and Competitors**

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Government of the Northwest Territories is pleased to provide the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) with its final written arguments for the Délı̄ne 2021 Virtual Public Listening: Tı̄ch'ádı́ hé Gots'edı́ (Living with Wildlife) / Predators and Competitors.

Sincerely,

Erin Kelly, Ph.D.  
Deputy Minister  
Environment and Natural Resources

Attachment

- c. Minister Shane Thompson  
Environment and Natural Resources

Dr. Brett Elkin  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations  
Environment and Natural Resources

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Heather Sayine-Crawford  
Director, Wildlife and Fish  
Environment and Natural Resources

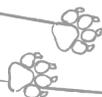
Deborah Simmons  
Executive Director  
Sahtú Renewable Resources Board



# Tłch'ádíi hé Gots'edi (Living with Wildlife) Caribou Predators and Competitors

Final Written Arguments to the 2021 Délngé Public Listening Session

Government of  
Northwest Territories



## Introduction

The following is the final written arguments of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) for the Délı̄nę 2021 Public Listening: Tı̄ch'ádı̄ hé Gots'edı̄ (Living with Wildlife) / Predators and Competitors held virtually from April 25-29, 2022.

ENR provided its written submission to the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) on April 22, 2022. The written submission outlined ENR's understanding of the interactions between caribou in the Sahtú and three wildlife species that have important relationships with caribou; muskoxen, moose and wolves. It also provided some examples of actions people can take to support and maintain healthy ecological relationships between caribou and these other species. The information presented in the written submission and this document have been drawn from the Indigenous, community and scientific knowledge compiled for status reports on barren-ground caribou, northern mountain caribou, boreal caribou, muskoxen and moose, as well as information gathered for boreal caribou recovery actions, wolf management actions and other wildlife monitoring and research projects carried out in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and elsewhere.

## Muskoxen

In the early 1900s muskox populations almost disappeared due to over harvesting but have slowly returned to most of the areas where they were previously found. Muskoxen populations in the NWT are currently found on Banks, Eglinton, Melville and Victoria Islands and on the mainland from the Arctic coast southwest to Artillery Lake.

Muskox surveys in the Sahtú in 2020 and 2021 indicate that the muskox population has increased in size and distribution since 1997. Although the most recent surveys have observed low numbers of calves, this does not necessarily mean the population may decline but suggests that the population may not respond well to increases in predation, harvest, or disease.

At this time, muskoxen in the Sahtú are generally healthy, though some cases of disease and parasites have been detected. ENR would appreciate hearing from harvesters regarding their observations of any sick or dead wildlife so that the department can learn more about the sample kits submitted by hunters. The information from these observations and samples can help to monitor and manage muskox and other wildlife populations.

Muskox continue to be a healthy and sustainable country food option for people in the Sahtú.

## Moose

Moose are found almost everywhere in the NWT, mostly in forests and to a lesser extent on the tundra, and prefer to be near shallow lakes, ponds and rivers. ENR recognizes moose are very important to Sahtú communities. Indigenous, local and scientific knowledge suggest that moose populations in the Sahtú region are currently stable.

Research on boreal caribou in other areas of Canada, including the southern NWT, suggests that increasing moose populations can affect boreal caribou populations, especially where habitat has been disturbed by fire or human activity. Fires and human activity result in younger forests that are attractive to other prey species like moose. If there is enough young forest to increase the total number of moose, wolf numbers may also increase, leading to more predation on boreal caribou.

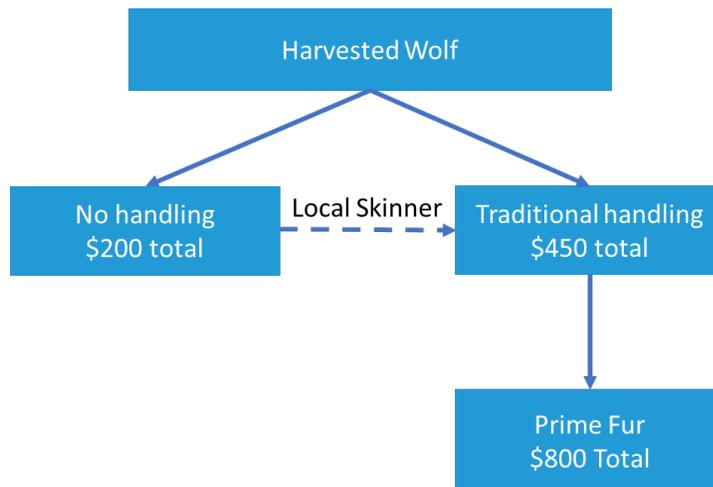
The best way to support and maintain healthy relationships between moose, wolves and caribou is to manage landscape changes to ensure there is always enough undisturbed habitat available to boreal caribou. This is the goal of the Sahtú Todzi Nene Plan (Boreal caribou range plan).

The Sahtú Todzi Nene Plan will help communities, decision-makers and land and resource users manage on the land activities in a way that supports healthy Todzi (boreal caribou) populations. ENR looks forward to working with the SRRB and Sahtú communities on the Sahtú Todzi Nene Plan (Boreal caribou range plan).

## Wolves

Wolves are found in low numbers and densities throughout the NWT including in the Sahtú. There are two types of wolves in the NWT and in the Sahtú region: boreal wolves and migratory tundra wolves. Boreal wolves live in the forests and mountains and are sometimes found near communities. Tundra wolves prey primarily on barren-ground caribou and follow them on their annual migrations.

ENR supports local wolf harvesters and the traditional economy who are harvesting wolves in the Sahtú Settlement Region. Currently, a harvester who submits a wolf carcass with no handling will receive \$200. ENR will provide the wolf carcass to a local skinner. If the harvester has processed the wolf with traditional handling, they will receive \$450 for the fur and skull. If the wolf meets the prime fur bonus, then they will receive a total of \$800 per wolf.



In some situations, where caribou numbers have declined to very low levels and wolf predation is considered to be a contributing factor, management actions to reduce the number of wolves may be needed to support caribou conservation and recovery. As referenced in ENR’s written submission, and stated during the presentation, there are currently no plans to implement enhanced wolf management actions in the Sahtú region. ENR would only consider additional actions if there were further significant declines in caribou numbers and following discussions with Sahtú communities and the SRRB.

## Conclusion

ENR looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with Sahtú communities and the SRRB on the monitoring and management of caribou, as well as their predators and competitors, within the Sahtú region. ENR works closely with the SRRB, communities and harvesters to ensure the wise stewardship and management of wildlife and wildlife habitat in the Sahtú Settlement Area.

One of ENR’s roles in the co-management of wildlife in the Sahtú includes provision of information to the SRRB and the public to help inform decision making. ENR hopes the information presented in the written submission, during the Public Listening and in these final written arguments will be useful to the SRRB as it considers ways to conserve caribou in the Sahtú, and to communities as they develop community conservation plans.