

Ross River Dena Council Round 2 Information Request Responses



January 10, 2020

Topic 1: Traditional Harvesting Practices

IRs to All Parties

1.1 Could you provide examples of traditional caribou conservation measures used in your community? (ENR)

So in regards for conservation measures in Ross, we have a core working group here that encompasses our governance – the Ross River Dena Council and Elders Oversight Committee, gives all the elders in Ross the chance to voice their concerns about caribou and protection.

It was initially put together with the partnership of Ross River and SRRB during the 2017 workshops in Dechenla. There was strong representative from all communities. We had open and fluid conversation about conservation of caribou and IPCAs, etc. From there we tackled what the priorities for conservation are and being more sustainable with what we're trying to achieve as land stewards.

In the beginning there wasn't very much conservation measures because it's only recently that we have started to make a plan about what to do about the caribou? There are quite a number of people from the community like me who have been going on the land and we see an influx of non-members harvesting and not following the Dena laws for harvesting moose caribou and sheep on North Canol Trail and there is no system in place to monitor that. We have seen a big decline in the numbers. I remember as a kid we used to see thousands of caribou on the barrens and now we're lucky to see a few.

So there was a need to do something and in 2014 the Tu Lidini invited Sahtu delegates to Ross to discuss what was happening around Dechenla and that's where we decided to make the plan. That's also when people who spend a lot of time on the land around there told us of all the human activities and disruption to water and land and the ATV trails and that there were people going up there in May which is when the caribou are on the calving grounds. So there was a lot of participants who were passionate about what they saw and passionate to share their concerns.

1.2 Could you describe the traditional harvesting practices of your community as they relate to harvesting cows vs bulls or different age classes of animals throughout the year? (ENR)

Going back to the roots of who we are as Dena people, everything was equal and shared one language. As we moved forward, we lost that a bit, so we have been trying to keep our traditional practices and the way we practice traditional harvesting. So we have to leave the big bulls as they are considered leaders.

We only take what we need so you don't really over harvest. So we follow a pretty strict practice since time immemorial. There is a kind of a constitution between us here in Ross – “Dena a' nīzīn”. This word encompasses laws and respect. We try to practice this law in our homeland.

Topic 2: Hunter Education

IRs to All Parties

2.1 During the collaborative drafting of the Wildlife Act, which included representatives from Aboriginal governments and wildlife co-management boards, it was heard that a hunter education course should be developed and made available to all hunters in the NWT. As of January 1, 2020, the course will be a legislated requirement for new hunters in the NWT. It is online, free and available now (www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/hunter-education). Although Sahtú rights holders are exempt from the requirement to take the course, we previously heard a desire for Sahtú youth and new or inexperienced hunters to take the course. ENR can make these courses available in-person, would you be interested in this style of delivery?

This matters for Ross River because whatever happens in NWT affects Ross River because we have many non-members that come through Ross River to go hunting in NWT. So if the Act is already settled, this leave not much room for discussion with Ross River.

Topic 4: Public Listening Process and Timelines

IR to All Parties

4.1 In considering the capacity of the SRRB and the Parties, and the experience of preparing for the Colville 2020 Public Listening Session, do you support a revised timeline for Public Listening Sessions with only one Session per year, with a schedule to prepare for each Session in modest steps throughout the year, and completion of Reasons for Decision report by March 31? Please comment on the following timeline, topics and hosting communities, keeping in mind the benefits of holding sessions during winter road season to maximize participation:

2021 – Session 2: Knowledge of Caribou and Landscapes (Délıne)

2022 – Session 3: Caribou and Predators (Fort Good Hope)

2023 – Session 4: Wildfires, Climate Change and Caribou Habitat (Tulít'a)

2024 – Session 5: The Sahtú Mixed Economy and Caribou Conservation (N. Wells)

2025 – SRRB Final Wrap-up Hearing Report

Does this mean that each community has an opportunity to voice their concerns about wildlife conservation/regulation? If yes, then sounds good.