

# Best of Both Worlds

Sahtú Gonéne T'áadets'enı̄tq  
*Depending on the Land in the Sahtú Region*

Volume I – Discussion Document



Prepared by  
Betty Harnum, Joseph Hanlon, Tee Lim, Jane Modeste, Deborah  
Simmons and Andrew Spring

December 2014 edition

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Betty Harnum, Joseph Hanlon, Tee Lim, Jane Modeste, Deborah Simmons *and* Andrew Spring

with

The Pembina Institute

for

ǂehdzo Got'ı̄ne Gots'ę Nákedı̄  
(Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)



December 2015 edition

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Development Agency)



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Government of the Northwest Territories



*Best of Both Worlds:*

*Sahtú Gonéñé T'áadets'enító – Depending on the Land in the Sahtú Region*

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December 2014 edition

Prepared by Betty Harnum, Joseph Hanlon, Tee Lim, Jane Modeste, Deborah Simmons and Andrew Spring, with The Pembina Institute

Dene language (Sahtúgot'ine dialect) terminology by Jane Modeste

Partners:

Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS), Wilfred Laurier University  
*and the five ?ehdzo Got'ine of the Sahtú Region:*

Colville Lake ?ehdzo Got'ine

Déline ?ehdzo Got'ine

Fort Good Hope ?ehdzo Got'ine

Norman Wells ?ehdzo Got'ine

Tulít'a ?ehdzo Got'ine

Sponsors:

CanNor (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency)

Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Government of the NWT

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# Executive Summary

The Dene and Métis people of the Sahtú Region have always depended on the land for survival. Development of non-renewable resources over the past century has provided people with opportunities to expand their means of survival to include jobs with industry. The special kind of economy that has long sustained families and communities in the Sahtú, combining jobs and traditional activities, has come to be known as a “mixed economy.” Understanding this economy as a whole can be a starting point for finding ways to keep it healthy in times of change. While a lot of information exists about the industrial economy, the role of the traditional economy is not as well understood.

*Best of Both Worlds* is a two phase project to develop an Action Plan for promoting workforce readiness to support a healthy mixed economy. This discussion document is the outcome of Phase 1, which involved a literature review, workshop, focus group and interviews to learn about the status of the regional mixed economy and develop preliminary recommendations as the basis for the action planning phase. Preliminary terminology research provided insights into Dene concepts related to the mixed economy.

The following five questions related to the mixed economy of the Sahtú Region were explored through Phase 1, with a focus on the traditional sector of the mixed economy:

1. What is the history, nature and status of the contemporary mixed economy?
2. What is the status of the traditional economy?
3. What are program, institutional, and community barriers, opportunities and supports for the mixed economy?
4. What are the strengths and challenges in education and training for the mixed economy?
5. What are some recommended actions in program development, education and training, communication and awareness-building, and research to support workforce readiness in a healthy mixed economy?

This discussion document provides an overview of the concepts of traditional and mixed economies, and the history of the Sahtú mixed economy. A description of factors affecting the Sahtú economy is provided, followed by a discussion of key messages from the workshop, focus group and interviews. A series of 29 recommendations for action compiled on the basis of the engagement activities addresses the areas of program and infrastructure development, education and training, communication and awareness-building, and research.

# Contents

Executive Summary ..... iii

Introduction ..... 1

Objectives..... 2

Methodology and methods..... 10

Literature Review ..... 17

Sahtú Region Overview ..... 32

Results..... 45

Recommendations for action ..... 79

Conclusion ..... 84

References ..... 86

# List of Figures

Figure 1: Persons 15 and over who trapped in previous year (%) (source: NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, October 3, 2013 presentation to Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)..... 39

Figure 2: Number of pelts harvested in the NWT (source: NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, October 3, 2013 presentation to Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) ..... 39

Figure 3: Value of pelts produced in the NWT (source: NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, October 3, 2013 presentation to Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) ..... 40

Figure 4: Persons working more than 26 weeks per year (%) (source: NWT Statistics 2012)..... 43

Figure 5: Average personal income (source: NWT Statistics) 2012 ..... 44

## List of Tables

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1. % of persons 15 and older with high school or more 1991-2011 (credit: NWT Statistics) ..... | 75 |
|--|----|

## List of Appendices (Volume II)

Appendix A – List of Participants

Appendix B – Terminology List

Appendix C – *Best of Both Worlds* Workshop materials and recommendations

Appendix D - Tulít'a ʔohda kə Focus Group Questions

Appendix E – Interview Instruments

Appendix F – Measuring the value of dene béré (country foods)

# Introduction

The Dene and Métis people of the Sahtú Region have always depended on the land for survival – Sahtú gonǵenǵ t'áadets'enǵtǵ. Development of non-renewable resources over the past century has provided people with opportunities to expand their means of survival to include jobs with industry. The special kind of economy that has long sustained families and communities in the Sahtú, combining jobs and traditional activities, has come to be known as a “mixed economy.” Understanding this economy as a whole can be a starting point for finding ways to keep it healthy in times of change. While a lot of information exists about the industrial economy, the role of the traditional economy is not as well understood.

*Best of Both Worlds* is a two phase project to develop an Action Plan for promoting workforce readiness to support a healthy mixed economy. This discussion document is the outcome of Phase 1, which involved a literature review, workshop, focus group and interviews to learn about the status of the regional mixed economy and develop preliminary recommendations as the basis for the action planning phase. Preliminary terminology research provided insights into Dene concepts related to the mixed economy.



Credit: Jean Polfus

## Using Dene k'e (Dene language)

This document uses Dene language terms to enhance cross-cultural understanding of Sahtú gonéné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄ (the economy of the Sahtú Region). The Délı̄ne dialect is used, because the workshop that was the central event shaping messages presented here took place in Délı̄ne, and the interpreter/translator, Jane Modeste, is a Sahtúgot'ı̄ne language expert. Further terminology research is needed to develop the concepts in the four main dialects of the Sahtú Region. Further discussion of the value of using Dene language and the difficulties is provided on page 11, "Note on terminology," and in Appendix B.

Understanding technical terms or jargon used by particular professions or groups is always difficult, whether they are in English or Dene language, and is especially difficult in a cross-cultural context. Technical terms can be valuable in a project like this, since they summarize complicated concepts that take a lot of space to fully explain. We have tried to provide plain language explanations both in the main text and in the terminology list provided in Appendix B. Two Dene language concepts are highlighted here, since they are pivotal in the discussion.

In the Sahtú Region today, the Délı̄ne dialect phrase "**néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄**" (depending on the land) applies to the combination of traditional activities and wage-based activities that families and communities rely on for survival. We're using this term here to refer to the "**mixed economy.**" In using the Dene concept, we learned a lot about the specific nature of Aboriginal mixed economies in the north.

The Délı̄ne dialect explanation of the technical term "**traditional economy**" is "**denewá kárapa ts'ı̄lı̄ edek'é edegots'eredı̄,**" meaning "we live the indigenous people's way." In this report, we've used shorter term "**denewá ts'ı̄lı̄**" or "being original Dene."

## Objectives

The following five questions related to the mixed economy of the Sahtú Region were explored through Phase 1, with a focus on the traditional sector of néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄ (the mixed economy):

1. What is the history, nature and status of the contemporary néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄?
2. What is the status of denewá ts'ı̄lı̄ (the traditional economy)?
3. What are program, institutional, and community barriers, opportunities and supports for néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄?

4. What are the strengths and challenges in education and training for néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄?
5. What are some recommended actions in program development, education and training, communication and awareness-building, and research to support workforce readiness for néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄?

This project was in large part defined by four overall objectives listed in Chapter 1 of the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement related to denewá ts'ı̄lı̄, as well as three objectives listed in Chapter 13, "Wildlife Harvesting and Management." The relevant objectives are outlined below.

### Land Claim Chapter 1 Objectives

The following four objectives provided for the land claim agreement as a whole are especially relevant for this project:

1.1.1(c) to recognize and encourage the way of life of the Sahtú Dene and Métis which is based on the cultural and economic relationship between them and the land;

1.1.1(d) to encourage the self-sufficiency of the Sahtú Dene and Métis and to enhance their ability to participate fully in all aspects of the economy;

1.1.1(e) to provide the Sahtú Dene and Métis with specific benefits, including financial compensation, land and other economic benefits;

1.1.1(f) to provide the Sahtú Dene and Métis with wildlife harvesting rights and the right to participate in decision making concerning wildlife harvesting and management.

### Land Claim Chapter 13 Objectives, "Wildlife Harvesting and Management"

In addition to the relevant Chapter 1 objectives, those provided in Chapter 13 provide a specific framework for interpreting the mandates of both the Board and the ʔehdzo Got'ı̄nē. The following three objectives are relevant for this project:

13.1.1(a) to protect for the future the right of participants to gather, hunt, trap and fish throughout the settlement area at all seasons of the year;

13.1.1(c) to provide participants with certain exclusive, preferential and other harvesting rights and economic opportunities related to wildlife;



13.1.1(d) to respect the harvesting and wildlife management customs and practices of the participants and provide for their ongoing needs for wildlife.

## Project team

**Betty Harnum**, MA, acted as project lead. She facilitated the *Best of Both Worlds* workshop in Délı̄ne, and conducted interviews with representatives of government and educational institutions.

**Tee Lim**, MA, Analyst, of the Yellowknife Pembina Institute office, conducted the literature review with Andrew Spring, undertook interviews with community members, industry and other stakeholders, and co-facilitated the Tulít'a ʔqhda kə Focus Group.

**Eugene Boulanger**, Digital Media | Strategy @ultranorthwest is of Shúhtagot'ı̄ne ancestry, and is a digital media strategist. Eugene assisted in the areas of research and facilitation, and developed the web-based products of this project.

**Andrew Spring**, PhD Student, Wilfrid Laurier University, conducted the literature review with Tee Lim and participated in the *Best of Both Worlds* workshop.

**Jane Modeste** was interpreter for the Délı̄ne workshop and translator for terminology about Sahtú goné̄né t'áadets'enı̄tə.

**Leon Andrew** was interpreter and co-facilitator of the Tulít'a ʔqhda kə Focus Group.

**Deborah Simmons**, PhD, Executive Director of the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board, initiated the project, coordinated the team's efforts, and co-facilitated the Tulít'a ʔqhda kə Focus Group.

**Joseph Hanlon**, Program Coordinator of the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board, conducted community interviews, coordinated input from the participants in the BEAHR (Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources) Environmental Monitor Training course, and provided input on the discussion document.

## Expert Advisors

The Project Team benefitted from expert advice generously provided by the following individuals:

**Frances Abele**, PhD, Professor of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton University, Academic Director of the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation,

Fellow of the Centre for Governance and Public Management, and Research Fellow at the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

**Walter Bayha**, Lands Manager, Délıne Land Corporation.

**Alison Blay-Palmer**, PhD, Assistant Professor at Wilfrid Laurier University and Director of the Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems.

**Jim Edmondson**, MA, Regulatory and Policy Specialist and Independent Consultant (Yellowknife).

**Thom Stubbs**, MA, Principal, Headwater Group.

## Ełehá Eghálats'eda (Partnership)

This project was initiated by the ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board), in ełehá eghálats'eda with Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS), Wilfrid Laurier University, along with the five ʔehdzo Got'ıne (Renewable Resources Councils) of the Sahtú Region.

The project was an effort to better understand a key aspect of the mandates of the Board and ʔehdzo Got'ıne under Chapter 13 of the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, and further guided by four overarching land claim objectives listed in Chapter 1. The Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS), Wilfrid Laurier University joined the ełehá eghálats'eda and provided key support in literature review and networking across regions on aspects of the project related to food security.

## ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)

The ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı is “the main instrument of wildlife management” in the Sahtú Region (Section 13.8.1[a]), with responsibilities related to wildlife, habitat and ne k'á edeghálats'ereda (harvesting). The Board must act in the public interest; however, a special place is accorded to ʔehdzo Got'ıne co-management partners in research and management related to land claim objectives. Under Section 13.8.32(h), the Board may provide advice to government on plans for training participants in management of wildlife and related economic opportunities.” The Board also provides dene gháonetę (education) and advice related to its mandate that can inform decision-making about exploration and development in Land and Water Board pre-screening processes and environmental assessments.



## ʔehdzo Got'ineᑦ (Renewable Resources Councils)

There is an ʔehdzo Got'ineᑦ in each of the five Sahtú communities. They are empowered under 13.9.4(b) “to manage, in a manner consistent with legislation and the policies of the Board, the local exercise of participants' rights in ne k'ə edeghálats'ereda (harvesting) including the methods, seasons and location of harvest.” The Board seeks input and participation from ʔehdzo Got'ineᑦ in research and management matters related to its mandate. More information about each of the five ʔehdzo Got'ineᑦ, their mandate and activities can be found at [www.srrb.nt.ca](http://www.srrb.nt.ca).

## Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS), Wilfrid Laurier University

The Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems addresses interconnected environmental, social and economic challenges facing the global food system. Food systems are an effective lens for understanding and acting on some of the most pressing issues facing communities. Through food, citizens, practitioners, policy-makers and academics can grasp the importance of ecological stewardship, social justice, prosperous economies, participatory democracy and food security.

The centre brings together researchers from across the university including Geography and Environmental Studies, Psychology, Biology, Global Studies, Religion and Culture as well as the School of Business and Economics.



## Sponsors

This project was sponsored by CanNor (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency) and the Department of Industry Tourism and Investment, Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT).



The project was also enhanced through dialogue undertaken through several initiatives of the ʔehdzo Got'ineᑦ Gots'é Nákedı and ʔehdzo Got'ineᑦ, with various sponsors, including:

- The Tulit'a-based project *Youth-Led Adaptations for Healthy Sahtú Communities in an Uncertain Era of Climate Change*, sponsored by Health Canada.<sup>1</sup>



- The regional *Traditional Knowledge Guidelines and Monitoring Framework* project, funded by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and ConocoPhillips Canada.



- The regional on-the-land BEAHR (Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources) Environmental Monitor Training course sponsored by Aurora College, Sahtú Secretariat Inc. ASETS (Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy), NWT Education, Culture and Employment, NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, and ConocoPhillips Canada.



## Participants

People from all five Sahtú communities participated in the project, including representatives of the local ʔehdzo Got'ıne and other community organisations, as well as industry and government. In all, 93 people provided some form of input. Appendix A provides a detailed overview of participation, along with complete list of participants.

## Summary of project activities

In order to gather the information required for this analysis, the project team undertook a number of activities, as follows, beginning in January 2014:

- Literature review
- Two group discussions:
  - the *Best of Both Worlds* workshop in Délıne on February 11-13, with participants from each Sahtú community, and representatives of government and other organizations

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.srrb.nt.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=140&Itemid=658](http://www.srrb.nt.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=140&Itemid=658)

- a focus group with ʔhda kə (elders) in Tulít'a on March 25-27



*Best of Both Worlds Workshop, Délı̄ne, February 11-13, 2014. Credit: Jean Polfus*

- A series of oral interviews with community members and representatives of government, educational institutions, and industry, and a written questionnaire administered to students in the BEAHR Environmental Monitor Training course at Drum Lake on March 25.
- Development of a Sahtú Economy website with related resources
- Media interviews and posts on the Sahtú Wildlife Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/SahtuWildlife](http://www.facebook.com/SahtuWildlife)) to introduce people to the project
- Development of a preliminary list of terminology in North Slavey related to Sahtú goné̄né t'áadets'enı̄tq

## Document overview

This document is for discussion purposes. The document is structured in eight main parts, briefly described below:

1. **Introduction:** Background on the project purpose, objectives and activities, and the organisations and people involved.
2. **Methodology and methods:** A description of the general approach taken to the project, and details about the process. Includes special notes on the use of Dene terminology and statistics in this document.

3. **Literature review:** A synthesis of the literatures on the history of denewá ts'ı́ı (the traditional economy) and the transition to the current néné t'áadets'enı́ı (mixed economy) of the Sahtú Region.
4. **Sahtú Region overview:** Background on key factors determining the specific nature of the Sahtú economy.
5. **Results:** Presentation of the results of the workshop, focus group, and interviews conducted for this project.
6. **Recommendations:** These represent recommendations of the project team based on all of the consultations activities. Recommendations from the Délı́ıı workshop can be found in the Appendices.
7. **Conclusion:** Final remarks
8. **Appendices:** Additional details and materials related to project activities.



# Methodology and methods

This project was necessarily complex, hybrid and adaptive in design, given the diversity of participants and the cross-disciplinary scope of the questions. A modified collaborative and cross-cultural methodology for engagement was adopted for the workshop and focus group. The aim was to encourage participants to consider the implications of the discussions in terms of recommendations and action items that could inform the second Action Planning phase of the project planned for 2014-2015.

Efforts were made to adapt to Aboriginal ways of knowing, and to take Aboriginal concepts and terminology as the starting point – while recognizing that any discussion of Sahtú gonę́ę t’áadets’eniṭo would necessitate a bridging of concepts and knowledge from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures.

Group discussions and interviews alike were semi-structured and qualitative, with the aim of eliciting input that could be used to validate and interpret available quantitative data and relevant research results documented in the literature.



Betty Harnum and Leon Modeste. Credit: Jean Polfus

## Note on terminology

This project made a first effort to document Dene (known to linguists as North Slavey) terminology related to the economy of the Sahtú Region. A preliminary terminology list is provided in Appendix B. The hope is to strengthen cross-cultural understanding by developing a Dene/English conceptual toolkit. The two languages bear qualitatively distinct historical foundations, offering concepts and technical terminology specific to the societies that speak them. Dene language is founded in the land-based way of life, *denewá ts'ı́łı* (the traditional economy) and *dene náoweré* (traditional knowledge); English is considered to be the language of industry, *eghálats'eda t'á s'óba ts'eretsı* (the wage economy), and science. For many concepts, there is no direct one-to-one translation between the languages, and the concepts rather need to be explained. This reality can be noted in the fact that bilingual speakers will shift languages depending not only on who they are speaking with, but also the context and subject matter (on the land or in town, at home or in the office or at school).

Language shifting can mask misunderstanding or partial understanding in cross-cultural discussions. Bilingual Dene speakers bring their own concepts to their understanding of the English language, so it is often the case that a conversation carried out entirely in English can be riven with misunderstanding without anyone being aware of it. This can be a source of tension and even conflict.

It has become standard in the NWT for terminology work to be done so that English concepts can be translated into Aboriginal languages; it is much more rare for Dene concepts to be translated into English. The resulting lack of understanding may be a source of the oft-heard complaint from Dene language speakers that they have not been listened to or heard by non-Dene interlocutors, and that they don't fully understand efforts to communicate with them about activities that concern them. Fully developed terminology research starting from Dene concepts requires specific collaborative procedures with Dene language speakers and language specialists that were not within the scope of this project. Rather, terminology was developed as a response to plain language English explanations of the cross-cultural discussions that took place at the *Best of Both Worlds* workshop. The interpreter at the workshop, Jane Modeste, developed the terminology list based on her knowledge of the discussion. The terminology list used in this document is a work in progress, and requires further development. Additional discussion about the limits of the list is provided in Appendix B.



Jane Modeste at work.

The effort to weave the terminology through the report is unconventional. Normally a bilingual terminology list would simply be included in the appendix - if it is included at all - and project reporting is unilingual (ie. entirely in English), with Dene terms rarely incorporated. However, the Project Team was concerned that without applying the terms in context, they would not gain meaning and currency in future discussions. Integration into this report is an effort to contribute to Dene language literacy in the Sahtú Region, where many speakers do not have opportunities to read in their own language, and where English speakers rarely have opportunities to become familiar with Dene concepts through the written word. The authors recognize that reading in Dene language is difficult without gradual introduction to the sounds, writing system, and individual words. A future iteration, based on additional terminology work, would make space for translation of individual words as part of an explanation of the phrases used to translate the terms. This will make it easier for readers to become more comfortable with the terms, and to better understand the discussion from a Dene perspective.

It should be noted that Jane Modeste is Sahtúgot'ıne (a Délıne dialect speaker), and speakers of other dialects might use different terminology. There is considerable variation in the Dene language of the region. In Tulıt'a, either the Willow Lake (K'ááł), Mountain (Shúhta), or River (Dəoga) dialects are spoken; the people of Délıne speak the Sahtú dialect; and residents of Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake speak the Hare (K'ásho) dialect. There is also variation within dialects, depending on family roots which often extend to other communities or regions (in particular, there are many relatives in the surrounding Dehcho, Tłıchǝ, and Gwich'in regions). The variation extends along a scale of greater and lesser difference, where people understand each other more or less. During a recent workshop of ʔqhda kə language speakers, it was found that people understood each other well among the K'ááł, Shúhta, Dəoga and Sahtú dialects, but speakers of these dialects and speakers of K'ásho dialect had difficulties understanding each other. As a result, two editions of the book resulting from the workshop were published: one in the dialect complex of the Tulıt'a/Délıne communities (as agreed to by the speakers and language specialists who were at the workshop), and another in the K'ásho dialect (Harnum et al 2014).

Further terminology work would need to be done in Year 2 of this project to more fully develop the Dene language concepts with back-translations in English. Note that the Dene language spelling system is adapted from the Roman orthography (the alphabet that we use for English language), to reflect the sounds for which there is no equal in English. For more information about the Dene language spelling system and phonetics, see [www.srrb.nt.ca](http://www.srrb.nt.ca).



## Group Discussions

### Best of Both Worlds Regional Workshop

The *Best of Both Worlds* workshop in Délı̄nę was held February 11-13 with 48 participants from all five Sahtú communities as well as representatives from government and other organizations. The workshop included a combination of presentations and facilitated discussions. The proceedings were audio recorded and transcribed.

The workshop kicked off the project with an explanation of the project objectives and a passionate discussion on topics related primarily to denewá ts'ı̄lı̄ (the traditional sector of the economy). Involvement in wage employment was also discussed, with an examination of employment opportunities, aspirations, barriers, and gaps. The group spent some time identifying skills that are transferable between the two sectors. Workshop materials, including poster, Briefing Note, invitation letter, agenda, and recommendations are provided in Appendix C.

### The Tulít'a ʔq̄hda kə Focus Group

This focus group was held March 25-27, in Tulít'a in ełehá eghálats'eda (partnership) with the *Youth-Led Adaptations for Healthy Sahtú Communities in an Uncertain Era of Climate Change* project. The focus group was co-facilitated by Tee Lim, Leon Andrew, Eugene Boulanger, and Deborah Simmons, and included 12 participants. A key objective was to develop an understanding of the experience of knowledge transfer through on-the-land-based activities.



The mooskin boat arrives in Tulít'a, August 27, 2013

The community of Tulít'a provided an ideal deneghágót'á (opportunity) for this discussion, since there had recently been two community on-the-land events that community members wished to assess: A mooseskin boat-making camp and trip back to Tulít'a with the boat along Begádeé (Keele River) in August 2013; and a trip to Pietł'ánejo (Caribou Flats) for the fall caribou náts'ezé (hunt) in September 2013. Of particular interest with respect to the latter event was the focus on food security, since it was organised in conjunction with the Tulít'a TAASTE (NWT Time-honoured Aboriginal Actions Sustaining Traditional Eating) project which also included objectives in cross-generational knowledge transfer. In addition, a third trip to the traditional spring duck and goose náts'ezé (hunting) area at Káalq Túé (Willow Lake) was imminent, ełehé eghálats'eda (in partnership with) Chief Albert Wright School.

The questions that provided structure and focus to the discussions related to the objectives of this project are provided in Appendix D.



Processing meat at the Pietł'ánejo Fall Hunt Camp, September 17-30, 2013. Credit: Jean Polfus

## Interviews

Interviews were a means of validating and developing more in-depth key messages from the group discussions – and were deneghágót’á (an opportunity) for people to participate who either weren’t comfortable speaking in larger groups, or were unable to attend the workshop or focus group. Interviews were semi-structured, and varied somewhat depending on the group. Details are provided in Appendix E.

## Community representatives

Following a series of letters, faxes, emails and community visits to Band Councils, Land Corporations, and ?ehdzo Got’ıne, a total of nine representatives of community organisations were interviewed either by phone or in person in Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope, Délıne, and Tulıt’a. In addition, eleven students at the BEAHR Environmental Monitoring Training course at Drum Lake participated in a discussion about the project, and completed a written questionnaire. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

## Government

Discussions were convened face-to-face and by telephone with 22 representatives of the Government of Canada, the Government of the NWT and the Sahtú Secretariat Inc. The focus of the discussions varied depending on organisational mandate and responsibilities. Interviews were recorded in detailed notes.

## Industry

Selected respondents were sent a list of questions in advance of telephone and/or face-to-face interviews. Several invited participants requested that their input be deferred to the second phase of the project. Three interviews were conducted by phone. Interviewees preferred not to be audio recorded; rather, detailed notes were taken.



BEAHR Monitor Training students at Drum Lake Lodge, March 2014.

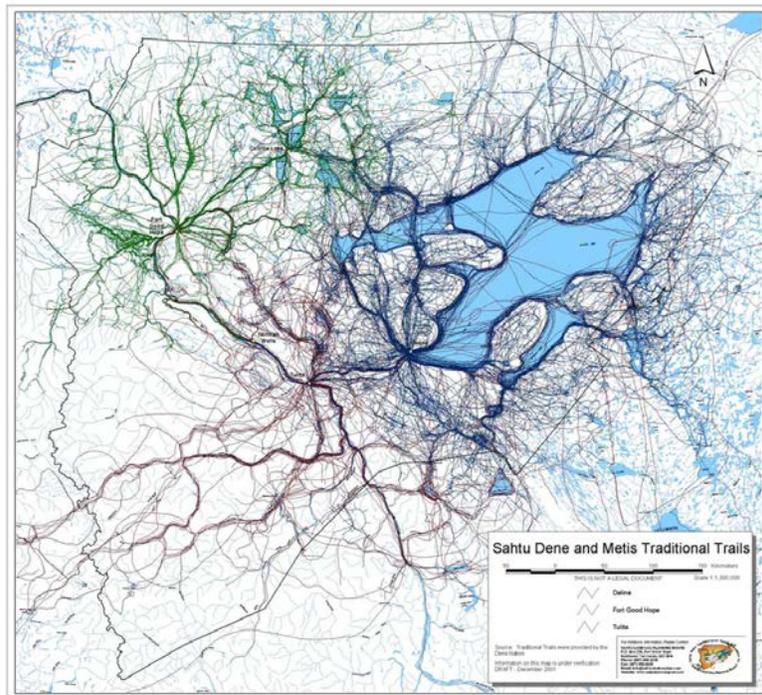
Credit: Adam Bathe

# Literature Review

The ways of life of land-based Aboriginal societies in the North and elsewhere have long been written about by researchers, some of whom have spent time in the Sahtú Region. Dene and Métis people often note that their way of life is not always accurately represented or understood. It is helpful to review research that has been done in the past in order to learn where current information from people supports earlier understandings, corrects errors, that have been made and repeated over time, or addresses gaps. This literature review is a first effort to provide conceptual and historical context for understanding the current nę́nę́ t'áadets'enı́tq.

More needs to be done to understand what can be learned about Sahtú gonę́nę́ t'áadets'enı́tq from projects like the Sahtú portion of the Dene Nation Mapping Project, the Sahtú Land Use Planning Board's Current Land Use Mapping project, and the Sahtú Settlement Harvest Survey conducted by the ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę́ Nákedı. However, this will require a larger effort that is not within the scope of this project.<sup>2</sup>

Traditional Trails, Dene Nation Mapping Project, Sahtu Region.  
Map layout: Sahtu GIS



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<sup>2</sup> Note that the ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę́ Nákedı is facilitating several regional initiatives to address this, including the Dene Nation Mapping Repatriation project, the Spatial State of Knowledge project, and the Harvest Study Completion project.

This literature review provides an overview of research on the history and nature of denewá ts'ı́ı (the traditional economy), followed by a discussion of concepts related to néné t'áadets'enı́ı now integral to the communities of the Sahtú Region, incorporating elements of both the traditional and eghálats'eda t'á s'óba ts'eretsı (the wage economy) and achieving a dynamic specific to its hybrid nature. It should be noted that an explicit gender analysis was not incorporated into this literature review. However, an objective of Phase 2 is to integrate a greater focus on gender issues as they relate to the denewá ts'ı́ı, eghálats'eda t'á s'óba ts'eretsı and néné t'áadets'enı́ı, in terms of both existing literature,<sup>3</sup> and in the project work undertaken.

### Why look beyond the Sahtú Region?

Literature specific to the history of the area now known as the Sahtú Region is limited. At the same time, from the days of the fur trade to the present era of industrial development, the Sahtú has been affected by national and even international influences. For this reason it is helpful to reference literature from the NWT and beyond in order to shed light on the Sahtú experience. This being said, examples from other places should be considered with caution. The history and way of life of the Sahtú Region shares commonalities with other Northern regions, but there are also important differences that need to be accounted for. The Sahtú Overview as well as the discussion and quotes in the Results section of this document provide more precise insights into Sahtú gonéné t'áadets'enı́ı.

## Denewá ts'ı́ı (Traditional economy)

Researchers have talked about land-based Aboriginal ways of life using a variety of terms, including “bush subsistence” (Asch 1979; 1982; 1989), “domestic” (Sahlins 1972; Usher 1982; 1989), “gatherer-hunter” (Kulchyski, 2005), “foraging” (Leacock and Lee 1982), kinship or “kin-ordered” (Wolf, 1982), “Native” (Berger 1988; Usher 1980) and “traditional mode of production” or “economy” (Asch 1989; Usher 1980).<sup>4</sup> The present project draws on this range of concepts to inform an understanding of

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the work of academics Rauna Kuokkanen and Patricia Monture will be consulted.

<sup>4</sup> While the term 'mode of production' is more appropriate and accurate per the academic literature, for convenience and the purposes of this project we have substituted the word 'economy', broadly conceived, following (Usher 1980). As Usher explains, "the idea of mode of production includes not only the economy factors of production...and the technology of production, but also the social organization of production and its supporting ideology and values. It is not simply an economy, it is a way of life" (1980, 1).

denewá ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ (the traditional economy) in the Sahtú region. This is a starting point for fully understanding n̄́n̄́ t'áadets'en̄ı̄t̄o.

Denewá ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ in the Sahtú region, as with most other regions of the North, consists of a wide variety of activities, including but not limited to n̄́ k'ə edeghálats'ereda (harvesting, i.e. náts'ezé [hunting], ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı̄ (trapping), dats'eʔa [fisheries], and ɬezets'ehł̄ə [gathering]) and processing activities through which dene béré (country food), fuel and other materials are provided for household and community needs (Usher 1980), as well as náats'enelu hé ası̄l̄ı̄ yáts'íhtsı̄ (arts and crafts).

Dene and Métis n̄́ k'ə edeghálats'ereda (harvesting) skills and practices have enabled them to thrive in a harsh environment. Before the establishment of the five administrative centres, Dene lived in small self-sufficient “local groups,” with high mobility due to the seasonal cycles of the wildlife on which they depended (Abel 1993; Asch 1977). Métis communities emerged in the late 1800s as a result of a combination of Métis migration from other regions through the fur trade, as well as unions between Dene ts'éku kə (women) and deneyu kə (men) of the fur trade – the Métis culture was distinct, but closely intertwined with the Dene way of life.

### Kúukare ełeghats'eredı (sharing)

Dene béré (country foods) were not only primary sources of protein and nutrients in Dene and Métis diets, but also had cultural, social and spiritual significance. A central feature of denewá ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ has been kúukare ełeghats'eredı of dene béré and other goods.. This practice has been documented in Fort Good Hope (McMillan and Parlee 2013) and is common in Aboriginal communities throughout the NWT and other parts of the country (Chabot 2003; Collings et al 1998; Condon et al 1995; Dombrowski 2013; Skinner et al 2013).

Kúukare ełeghats'eredı (sharing) can be expressed in many forms, through gifts (giving dene béré to others) or the sharing of meals. Typically it is structured by kin or direct family relationships (Chabot 2003; Collings et al 1998), but can extend more

K'áalq Túé, April, 1986.

John Blondin, George Campbell, Gordon Yakeleya, Francis Baton, Joe Bernard, Elizabeth Yakeleya, Alice Bernard, Cecile McPherson, Jane Yakeleya, Rosa Bernard, Celine Campbell, Claude Marie Vadrot. Credit: NWT Archives/Rene

Fumoleau fonds/ N-1995-

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Best of Both Worlds

broadly into the community to include friends, ᚖᚖhda kə (elders), and those in need. In a survey conducted by the Dene Nation (2010), more than 60% of people in Dene communities in the NWT said that they often received dene béré from others, while 37% indicated that this occurred occasionally.

## Fur trade

In the late 1700s as the fur trade expanded northward to feed growing demand in Europe, a commodity and exchange component was introduced into denewá ts'ı̄ı̄. Fur traders came to encourage Dene to produce surplus goods for exchange, on top of the sustenance needs which had been their focus previously (Usher 1998). The Dene acted as independent, small-scale primary commodity producers in the fur trade, taking advantage of deneghágót'á (the opportunity) to supply furs in return for equipment and supplies that could enhance their lives (Asch 1979). During this period, Dene life shifted in many ways from a hunter-gatherer based economy to one based on trade. But because traders depended greatly on production of furs, dene béré and other goods based on traditional skills and dene náoweré (traditional knowledge), Dene were able to maintain their way of life – the fur trade economy supported this in some respects (Abel 1993; Coates 1985; Usher 1982).

In the early 1800s, the first trading posts began to operate throughout the region in Fort Good Hope (in 1804), Tulít'a, then known as Fort Norman (around 1810), and Fort Franklin, built on Great Bear Lake in the area of the present-day site of Délı̄ne (in 1812) (Usher 1971). There is evidence that Dene would change the timing of their seasonal round to include the sometimes long trek to the trading posts for supplies, with occasional encampment at the posts in the summertime (Asch 1977).

In its early phases the fur trade was supplementary to denewá ts'ı̄ı̄, offering goods that were not essential for survival. Harvesting was still largely a collective activity and the basis for subsistence, and distribution of dene béré (country food) and other goods still based on reciprocity and kúukare ełeghats'eredı (sharing) (Asch 1977). However denewá ts'ı̄ı̄ experienced a shift by the early 1900s, due to externally driven developments in the fur trade that resulted in an increased emphasis on trade goods, alongside local subsistence goods. These developments included increasing competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and free traders, the introduction of money as the medium of exchange in the 1890s, the appearance of steam transportation, and increasing fur prices during the First World War (Asch 1977). In this period, the types and quantities of trade goods changed, and included repeating rifles and steel traps.

In enabling access to rifles, steel traps and other productive technology, the fur trade supported náts'ezé (hunting) and ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı (trapping) for both subsistence and exchange, as well as access to new staples such as flour, tea and sugar; metal utensils and implements; blankets; tobacco; and other goods which became important resources for families (Asch 1977). Rifles and steel traps made for more effective nachits'alə (harvesters), able to more easily provide for their family. These new items and tools began to replace the items that would be made from the land, which often required significant labour to produce.

While these technologies allowed for greater independence amongst Dene nachits'alə, many náts'ezé practices including co-operative game collection continued (Asch 1977). It is important to recognize that these technologies were never forced upon Dene peoples, but rather they generally retained their agency and choice in interactions with the fur traders. Denewá ts'ı́lı́ endured simply by integrating these technologies into Dene way of life. Dene have always been actively involved in these cross-cultural relationships and interactions, and throughout their history have adopted various artefacts for use within their social and environmental parameters. As Berger observed, Dene do not regard "the aboriginal past, when they were isolated from and independent of southerners, as their traditional way of life" (1988, 175).

Eventually, however, researchers have argued that denewá ts'ı́lı́ transitioned from an independent, "total" economy to one that relied on both local subsistence goods and trade goods exchanged for furs. Denewá ts'ı́lı́ came to be linked to and depend upon external conditions such as market prices for fur in relation to trade good prices, and the availability of "productive surpluses" in terms of wildlife and their furs (Asch 1977). This posed a major threat to denewá ts'ı́lı́ following the influx of non-Aboriginal people to the Sahtú region in the 1920s, due to the added strain on wildlife



Marten furs ready for market. Source: NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment

populations.

The balance between fur prices and trade goods remained largely stable through both world wars and the Great Depression (Asch 1977). However as Usher notes, "during the 1940s and 1950s, a crisis in the fur trade [occurred], marked by, among other trends, a sharp and persistent drop in the value of furs related to the cost of imported goods" (1982, 416). It was hoped that fur prices would recover and, supported by the extension of family allowances and old age pensions to Aboriginal northerners in the late 1940s, many Dene maintained their focus on the fur trade and denewá ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ (Asch 1977; Usher 1982). However in the years following World War II, the fur trade element of denewá ts'ı̄l̄ı̄ collapsed, and by the 1950s it was clear it would not recover – at least, not without direct government intervention (Asch 1977). The government of the day did intervene, but not to stabilize fur prices – concern for sovereignty and security, postwar extension of the liberal welfare state, and increased demand for northern resources led to a much greater and more active federal presence in the North (Abele 2009a).

Usher (1982) argues that whereas in previous decades the government had sought to avoid the social costs of health, education and welfare by encouraging Dene and Métis to remain self-sufficient hunters and trappers, increasing awareness of the social and economic crises in the North signaled the end of the government's laissez-faire approach. The extension of social assistance was followed by the construction of residential and federal day schools and nursing stations in the 1950s and 1960s, and then by the provision of housing and municipal services in the 1960s and 1970s.

Whatever their benefits, these interventions were clearly imposed according to southern Canadian attitudes and agendas – minimal consideration was given to what Dene and Métis peoples actually wanted. Within government



Colville Lake School trapping program.  
Credit: Pat Kane Photography

administrations, the prevailing view was that denewá ts'ílį was dying out,<sup>5</sup> and an agenda of 'modernization' and 'development' was carried out. The government's immediate solution was to provide healthcare and welfare, while their long-term solution was education and wage employment. As Usher states with some irony, "Only in this way could Native people be prepared for the industrialization of the North which surely lay ahead" (1982, 431).

Notwithstanding the dire predictions that industrial development would bring about the demise of denewá ts'ílį, the traditional sector of Aboriginal economies in the North has remained vital to the present. ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı (trapping) has long played a major role in denewá ts'ílį, as furs have been traded for other commodities and cash to purchase equipment and supplies for other traditional activities, such as náts'ezé (hunting). The ongoing resilience of the ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı as part of the Dene and Métis way of life is evident in the fact that production quickly increases when market prices increase.

## Industrial development

Following a wave of resource exploration in the early 1900s spurred by rumours of abundant natural resources across the North,<sup>6</sup> the discovery of t̄eh (oil) deposits in the area around what is now Norman Wells led to development of a t̄eh well and small refinery in 1920. This refinery supplied t̄eh (petroleum products) first to local communities, then industry throughout the NWT before becoming a crucial t̄eh supply during World War II (Bone and Mahnic 1984). Also, in the 1930s deposits of uranium were discovered in what became Port Radium on the eastern shore of Great Bear Lake (Johnson 1984). This mine employed Dene people to provide dene béré (country food) and wood for the operation, but also in the mine itself. This was the first significant introduction of Dene/Métis wage labour in the Sahtú (Simmons et al 2014).

During the Second World War, the region was subject to increased activity because of the need to develop the Canol Trail as part of a North American defence strategy. Non-renewable resource development in the North had become a central focus of the government in the aftermath of the war, particularly since Prime Minister John

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<sup>5</sup> This view did not necessarily reflect actual conditions.

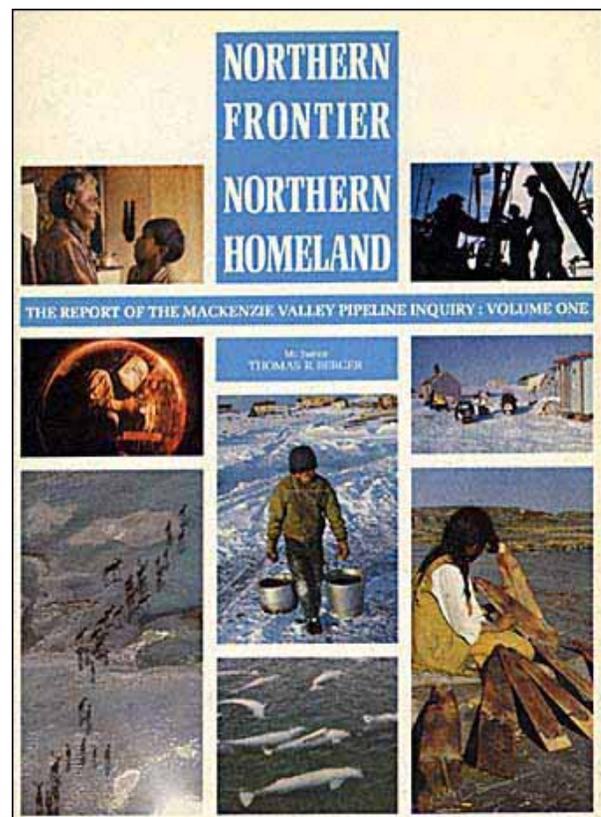
<sup>6</sup> Oil seeps in the Norman Wells area had been well documented throughout history, as Aboriginal people and early explorers used them to waterproof canoes and tar was traded amongst northern outposts (Government of the NWT 2013).

Diefenbaker's 1958 "Northern Vision" for major industrial development in the Canadian North (Abele 2009a; Coates 1985; Neufeld 2001). This economic strategy sought to raise the State's awareness of the North's resource potential, broadening the Canadian polity from north to south, as had occurred from east to west previously (Isard 2010, 13). The "Northern Vision" of that period is interpreted by Abele as follows:

The North, like the west 50 years earlier, would provide staple export commodities. Northern minerals, like western wheat 50 years earlier, would fuel the engine of the national economy by providing export credits, jobs, and investment opportunities. The role of the state would be to facilitate resource development (1987, 312).

In 1957, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and the Progressive Conservative government initiated the Road to Resources Program, for the purpose of constructing transportation routes to open remote regions of Canada, including parts of the NWT, to mineral exploitation. By the time the program was finished in 1963, numerous roads and bridges had been built, and parts of the Canol Trail had been refurbished. These new transportation routes opened the north to an ever-increasing stream of outsiders.

In 1970, much of the early tleh activity culminated in the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline project, which would have taken tleh from the Mackenzie Delta and parts of Alaska to processing facilities in the South. To assess the impacts of this development, the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, known as the Berger Inquiry for Mr. Justice Thomas Berger who presided over the process, was established in 1974. The Berger Inquiry was novel not only in its scope, but its methodology (Gamble 1978). Justice Berger spoke to the communities throughout the impacted region and heard what the people had to say, going above and beyond the scope of the standard impact studies of the day. He heard concerns about environmental impacts, and the fear of loss of culture. As well, people felt that they would not benefit from the development but instead bear the



Justice Thomas R. Berger, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry Volume I* (1977, rev. 1988).

burden of social cost (Dana 2009; Usher 1993).

It was recognized in the Inquiry's findings that traditional activities were still the backbone of the Dene, Inuit and Métis economies, and wage-based employment was seen as a way of providing for and supporting these activities (Stabler et al 1990). Furthermore, it was suggested that this development would have a significant negative impact on the Aboriginal people of the Mackenzie Valley, and that these people were not ready and willing to participate, and maximize opportunities, from the project. Ultimately, the Inquiry recommended a 10-year moratorium in which time all outstanding land claims should be settled, new programs and institutions established, and more research done to understand the social and cultural relationships that exist in the affected communities (Berger 1997, Usher 1993). The Berger Inquiry gave rise to a valuable discussion about northern development (Gamble 1978). During and subsequent to the Inquiry, a wealth of research was conducted to understand the socio-economic systems present in Northern communities, including the evolving interactions between communities, *denewá ts'ı̄ı̄* (the traditional economy) and *ası̄ı̄ náts'ehdı́ hó ası̄ı̄ óts'erele* (the market economy), as well as social impacts and cultural ecology (Angell and Parkins 2010).

A combination of factors including declining fur prices and jobs available as a result of industrial development led Dene and Métis to increasingly seek sources of income from outside the fur trade to maintain their way of life. Reliance on *eghálats'eda t'á sǫ́ba ts'eretsı̄* (the wage economy) increased (Asch 1988). The *eghálats'eda t'á sǫ́ba ts'eretsı̄* entails generalized commodity production of *ası̄ı̄ náts'ehdı́ hó ası̄ı̄ óts'erele* (market goods) – as distinct from the *denewá ts'ı̄ı̄*, wherein people produce goods for their own use or subsistence (Berger 1988; Miles 1987). Whereas in *denewá ts'ı̄ı̄*, economic life is not centered around commodities, under *eghálats'eda t'á sǫ́ba ts'eretsı̄*, “the entire economy becomes a commodity economy” (Amin 1976, 60).

The second defining feature of *eghálats'eda t'á sǫ́ba ts'eretsı̄* is the labour relation, with Dene and Métis labour time measured by money, and subject to pressures for increasingly efficient and specialized production (Asch 1979; Berger 1988; Heller 2011). Wage labour generates income for Dene and Métis to support subsistence activities. However, at the time of the Berger Inquiry, as today, many expressed concern that if wage employment becomes the only way to make a living, *denewá ts'ı̄ı̄* would be overwhelmed and transformed (Berger 1988).

Fortunately, this fear did not come to fruition, and pressures for *denewá ts'ı̄ı̄* to be abandoned in favour of *eghálats'eda t'á sǫ́ba ts'eretsı̄* were resisted via the innovations of Dene and Métis *nę́né t'áadets'enı̄tǫ* (mixed economy).

## Néné t'áadets'enı̄t̄o in the North today

In the aftermath of the Berger Inquiry and with the help of contributions by scholars such as Michael Asch, Peter Usher and Melville Watkins, a more nuanced understanding of today's néné t'áadets'enı̄t̄o (mixed economy) in the North came to be developed that accounted for the "overlapping or mixed economic forms" now integral to the Dene and Métis way of life (Berger 1988, 175).

Today, néné t'áadets'enı̄t̄o involves a distinctive economic form that blends, within a household and among kin networks, traditional productive activity such as náts'ezé (hunting), ɬezets'ehłə (gathering), and dats'eza (fisheries), with income from a range of cash-generating activities and cash from social transfers" (Abele 2009b, 39). Families and communities survive by distributing specialised tasks among members and sharing the products as needed, whether it be subsistence goods or cash income. Household income is thus a combination of wages, transfer payments, commodity sales and in-kind income (Abele 2009b; Usher 1998). Dene béré (country foods) and other harvested goods continue to be shared, as is some cash income in the case of supporting ne k'ə edeghálats'ereda through the purchase of necessary equipment (e.g. snowmobiles, outboard motors, gasoline and ammunition) (Abele 2009b), and also trade goods (especially food items) now purchased with money rather than furs (Asch 1977).

Today's néné t'áadets'enı̄t̄o represents yet another adaptation by Aboriginal peoples of their traditional productive practices and social relations to opportunities they have encountered. It requires a plurality of cash-based and non-commodified production, with risk distributed and certain "protection from the discipline of the market, and – a notable feature given the modern structure of the northern economy – from the boom and bust cycles of the resource frontier" (Abele 2009b, 40).

In today's néné t'áadets'enı̄t̄o, incomes and opportunities present in the wage-based ası̄ı náts'ehdı há ası̄ı ɔts'erele (market economy) are used to support subsistence activities, traditional land use, connections to land and the social networks of denewá ts'ı̄ı (the traditional economy) (Wolfe and Walker 1978). Dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) of the land is also considered a valuable asset in land-based waged employment. Income takes many forms in this economy, through either subsistence ne k'ə edeghálats'ereda; commodity production; wage-based employment income; and



Credit: Doug Urquhart

transfer payments and social assistance (Usher 2003).

The subsistence activities of denewá ts'ı̄ continue to play a large role, though in a modified way, with its basis still in Aboriginal peoples' knowledge, skills and traditions (Abele 2009b). Acknowledging the many changes in institutions, waged work opportunities and consumption patterns, among numerous other shifts in northern life, Aboriginal néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄ endures today. However as Abele observes, the "precise shape, extent, and dynamic nature of the contemporary mixed economy and its connections" to such shifts and factors are matters for further investigation (2009b, 41), toward which this project represents a contribution.

The importance of the social interactions for néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄ has been reflected in recent discussions of Aboriginal "social economies" in the North (Abele 2009b; Simmons et al 2014; Wenzel 2000). Kúukare ełeghats'eredı (sharing) food is a practice vital to the social economy, and thus the culture of Aboriginal communities in the North. It plays a key role in distribution of resources throughout the community to those who, based on socioeconomic status, may not otherwise benefit or play a role in subsistence náts'ézé (Wenzel et al 2000, Condon 1995, Chabot 2003; Collings 1998; Condon 1995; Harder and Wenzel 2012; Wenzel et al 2000). Income, whether cash, dene béré (country food) or in-kind labour, are shared through the community through social connections (Harder and Wenzel 2012).

Increasingly néné t'áadets'enı̄tq̄ involves depending on "super-hunters," people in the community who devote a greater amount of time to ne k'ə edeghálats'ereda, harvest far more and supply significant amounts of dene béré to their community (Chabot 2003, Condon et al 1995). Typically the more active the hunter, the more food they share, likely due to the fact they they will be returning to the land to hunt more frequently than others (Condon et al 1995). Not only suppliers in the networks for kúukare ełeghats'eredı (sharing) of dene béré, the more active hunters also receive dene béré from others, illustrating the reciprocal and social nature of this practice. Kúukare ełeghats'eredı (sharing) of dene béré is an important social adaptation that



Credit: Doug Urquhart

supports access to food sources regardless of social or economic standing, and also strengthens community bonds.

## Best of both worlds

Since *néné t'áadets'enı̄t̄o* today is defined by the interactions between *denewá ts'ı̄lı* (the traditional economy) and *ası̄ı náts'ehdı há ası̄ı óts'erele* (market economy), there is a fine balance that must be struck between the two. Access to money through wage labour plays a significant part in determining individual and family roles within the community. In many communities, access to income typically means individuals have money to buy equipment and supplies, therefore increasing their ability to participate in traditional activities. The most active hunters frequently have regular and often well-paying *egháeda* (jobs) (Chabot 2003; Condon 1995). These super-hunters, those who harvest *dene béré* (country food) for others in the community, are central to *kúukare ełghats'eredı* (sharing) of *dene béré* and tend to both give and receive more *dene béré* than others. Their role in these networks is not necessarily due to access of equipment for *náts'ezé* (hunting), but because they choose to do so due to the fact that they have both the financial means to share *dene béré*, and the means to obtain more *dene béré* (Dombrowski et al 2013a).

Furthermore, when looking at the household level, if a spouse or other family member has access to wage-based employment, this allows other family members to pursue traditional activities (Usher 2003). Again, kin relationships are a key part of the social linkages representative of *denewá ts'ı̄lı* (the traditional economy) and this can translate to *kúukare ełghats'eredı* (sharing) of resource on a household level that will allow the family to access both traditional and wage-based incomes. These networks for *kúukare ełghats'eredı* have also adapted over time to include the sharing of *móla bere* (store-bought food) which is based on those that can afford to share these resources and rely heavily on direct kin relationships (Collins 2011; Dombrowski 2013b; Harder and Wenzel 2012). However, these social interactions and transfers of income can only go so far, and those who are



Credit: Doug Urquhart

at the periphery of the denewá ts'ı́ı (i.e. do not hunt and cannot rely on kúukare ełghats'eredı to meet their needs) and have not benefitted from wage labour opportunities are most vulnerable (Ford et al 2013).

Money is therefore an important aspect of néné t'áadets'enıto today. However, there seems to be a point at which denewá ts'ı́ı and the ası́ı náts'ehdı há ası́ı óts'erele (market economy) are not able to co-exist, once that balance swings too far in one direction. If a person spends too much time at a eghálaeda (job), they are less able to practice traditional activities. These occasional hunters, constrained by eghálaeda schedules, tend to hunt less often, conduct shorter trips, target the easier to hunt species, and in general, consume less dene béré (country food) (Chabot 2003; Condon et al 1995). This makes these individuals more dependent on ası́ı náts'ehdı há ası́ı óts'erele for food and other goods and disconnects them from traditional practices. Conversely, without adequate income, supplies for náts'ezé and other equipment cannot be purchased. This can limit involvement in denewá ts'ı́ı and for some, may make them prone to food insecurity and other social issues.

Dene and Métis peoples are connected to the land, and the health of the land influences the health of the communities (Parlee et al 2005). However, the relationship with the land is changing as individuals depend less on the land for their livelihoods, and more on the ası́ı náts'ehdı há ası́ı óts'erele (market economy). The loss of connection to the land has in some cases contributed to loss of identity, loss of connection to communities and a sense of “spiritual homelessness” (Christensen 2013; Cunsolo-Willox 2010; Keys Young 1998). These issues, combined with issues resulting from changing socioeconomic factors within communities (including changing domestic roles and routines due to wage-based employment) have culminated in both alcohol and domestic abuse issues, suicide, depression and the emerging issue of homelessness in larger NWT centres (Berner and Furgal 2005; Christensen 2013).

Although life in settlements has added health and social infrastructure into communities, research has indicated that some people felt they were healthier when they lived off of the land (Lambden et al 2007; Parlee et al 2007). It is possible that land-based activities provide a crucial sense of cultural continuity that mitigate the impacts of change. Therefore, striking the balance between jobs and being on the land is critical for long-term health and wellbeing of the communities of the Sahtú.

The purpose of this review is not to simply list the negative issues associated with the transition away from denewá ts'ı́ı as there have been many examples of how development has positively impacted traditional activities through high paying eghálaeda and flexible schedules that allow for time on the land (Usher 1989, Kruse 1991). However, there are areas of concern that need to be addressed as the influence

of eghálats'eda t'á s'oba ts'eretsi (the wage economy) grows. Moving forward, néné t'áadets'enjto will be important for the overall sustainability of communities in the North (Nuttall et al 2004) – not only for the health and wellbeing of the communities, but to maintain social and cultural identity (Usher 1982).<sup>7</sup>

### Note on food security and néné t'áadets'enjto

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations 1996). In Canada's North, particularly in Aboriginal communities, moderate to high food insecurity has been reported. Statistics are not available for the Sahtú Region, but statistics from other Northern regions are alarming: between 43% (Inuvialuit Settlement Region) and 68.8% (Nunavut) of households, are facing food insecurity – significantly higher than the national average of 8% (Rosol et al 2011).

Past decades have seen a transition in diets of Aboriginal communities moving away from country foods to food purchased from stores (Kuhnlein et al 2004; Kuhnlein and Receveur 1996; Kuhnlein and Receveur 2007). This change is having a negative impact on the health of these communities as purchased food often provides less nutritional value and more energy in the form of carbohydrates and fat than traditional diets, and has been linked to increases in diet-related health issues such as obesity and diabetes (Gagne et al 2012; Government of the NWT 2008; Kuhnlein et al 2004; Kuhnlein and Receveur 2007; Receveur et al 1997).

As m'ola bere has become an increasingly important component of Northern subsistence, it has come at a significant financial burden on families. This is typically due to transportation costs to these remote communities, including the Sahtú where road access

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<sup>7</sup> In Phase 2 of the project, the Project Team intends to consult and integrate the considerable literature on the social, cultural and political implications of mineral resource development for the mixed economy, as the focus in Phase 1 has been on oil and gas development. This will include the series of *Communities and Diamonds Annual Reports*, published by GNWT-ITI. As well, GNWT Education, Culture and Employment has just released a *2012-14 Sahtú Oil and Gas Exploration Needs Assessment*, which will be reviewed in Phase 2.



Credit: Doug Urquhart

*Best of Both Worlds*

is only available in the wintertime. This has an impact on the quality and availability of fresh fruits and asǰ ts'enehshə ghq shéts'eyə (vegetables) that community members have access to, as well as affordability. The Nutrition North subsidy program has sought to address these challenges. Results of recent changes to the Nutrition North program have yet to be assessed.

Lack of nutritious food options, and a lack of dene gháonetę (education) in healthy eating and food preparation, also plays a role in the overall food security in the North (Council of Canadian Academies 2014). Food security is an issue that has been mitigated, until recently, through the traditional and cultural activities of denewá ts'ǰǰ (the traditional economy) hunting and kúukare ełeghats'eredı (sharing), and is therefore strongly tied to the health of edegotseredı.

# Sahtú Region Overview

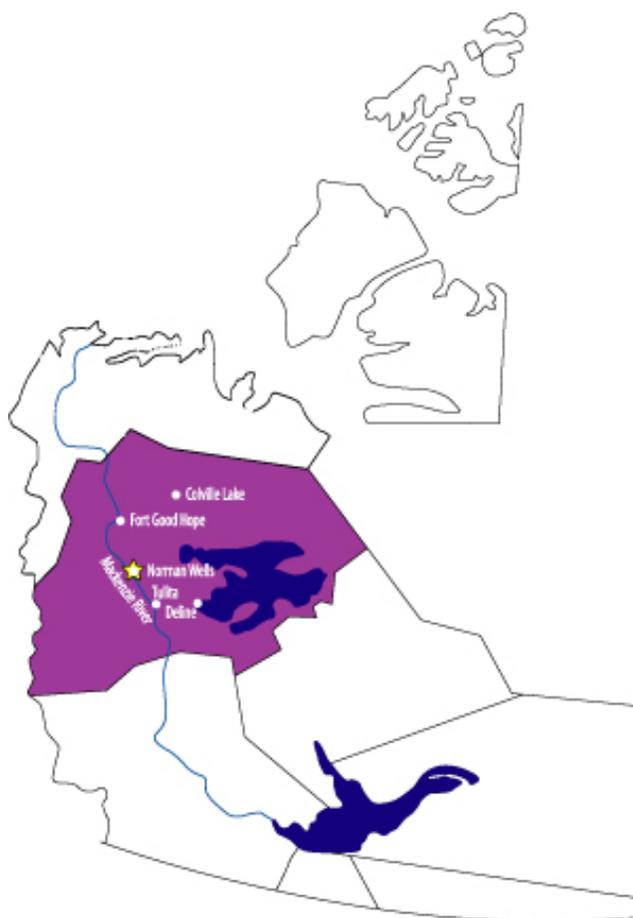
Here a brief introduction to the Sahtú Region and its people is provided in order to give some context to the results of the present project. Information is included on the geography, demographics, language and culture and political organization of the region. For more detailed information on the region and the communities of the Sahtú, the reader is referred to *The Sahtú Atlas* (Sahtú GIS 2005).

## Geography and demographics

*“The Sahtú region is a place rich in cultural heritage, breathtaking landscapes and natural resources” (Sahtú GIS 2005).*

The Sahtú Region of the NWT covers 283,171 km<sup>2</sup>, bordering the Yukon Territory on its western side, the Beaufort-Delta region to the north, the Deh Cho region to the south, and the North Slave region and Nunavut to the east. It encompasses five communities – Colville Lake, Délı̄ne, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells and Tulít'a. Three communities – Tulít'a, Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells – are situated along the Mackenzie River (*Deh Cho* or *Duhogah*), Délı̄ne is the only community located on Great Bear Lake (*Sahtú*, from which the region takes its name) and Colville Lake is the most northerly community, located at the edge of the barrenlands.

The Sahtú region accounts for 6% of the NWT's population of 43,349 (Government of the NWT 2012). Of the 2,680 Sahtú residents, 1,979 are Aboriginal and 701 are non-Aboriginal, the majority of the latter being located primarily in Norman Wells. Based on statistical estimates for 2008-2012, the population in the region is stable, with no significant increases or decreases, but with



some changes in its demographics. Population figures do not, however, account for the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people who come to the Sahtú to work on a seasonal, ełehda eghálats'eda (rotational) or łáhtare dene heréht'é (part-time) basis.

**Colville Lake**, or K'áhmbamítúé, is the smallest and most isolated community in the Sahtú, with a population of only 157 (Aboriginal 139, non-Aboriginal 18) in 25 households. Colville Lake has experienced the largest annual average growth rate (2.9%) in the Sahtú since 2001 and is the only Sahtú community with an increase in the rate of growth in the population 15 and under.

**Déliņę** is located on the world-famous Great Bear Lake, the fourth largest lake in North America, and ninth largest lake in the world. It has a population of 559 (Aboriginal 518, non-Aboriginal 41) living in 115 households, with only a very minor decrease in population between 2008 and 2012 (average annual growth -0.1%).

**Fort Good Hope**, or Rádeyılıkqé located north of Norman Wells on the Mackenzie River, has a population of 559 (Aboriginal 499, non-Aboriginal 60) occupying 130 households. This community has experienced a minor decrease in population from 2008 to 2012 (average annual growth -0.5%).

**Norman Wells**, or Tłęgóhłı, the Sahtú's largest community, is the commercial and administrative centre of the region, and serves as a regional transportation hub and the region's primary service and supply centre. Norman Wells is very different from the other communities in the region, being the only community with a majority non-Aboriginal population (Aboriginal 322, non-Aboriginal 516) living in approximately 200 households. The Sahtú's only producing tłeh (oil) field has been operating at Norman Wells since the 1940's which has resulted in this community having the highest average level of income in the NWT. It is currently experiencing increased activity due to the Canol shale tłeh play and mining investment.

**Tulít'a**, located south of Norman Wells on the Mackenzie River, has a population of 567 (Aboriginal 501, non-Aboriginal 66) in 125 households. Along with Norman Wells, Tulít'a is currently experiencing a boom in activity related to the Canol shale tłeh play and mining initiatives in the near vicinity.

Across Canada, almost half the Aboriginal population is aged 24 and under. In the Sahtú, 39% were 24 and under in 2012, while 61% were 60 and older. One important observation about the Sahtú is that between 2001 and 2012 there was a decline in the average annual % growth in the population aged 15 and under. This decrease in the rate of growth of the younger population could possibly have some effect on the future labour force. Conversely, in the same time period, the average annual % growth in the ʔqhda kə (elderly) population was increasing in the Sahtú; rates range between

0.2% and 5.8% for the four communities, except Norman Wells, where this growth rate was 12.6%. However, even without including this figure for Norman Wells, the trend for the region still shows an increase in the ʔqhda kə population.

The composition of households is also changing. In the past, it was common for several generations to live in the same household. In 2012, however, of the 600 households in the Sahtú, fully one-quarter were lone-parent families, with a range between 32% in Tulít'a and 15% in Norman Wells. In addition, the average number of Sahtú households with 6 or more people decreased significantly from 23% to 7% in the period 2001 to 2012, except in Colville Lake where the rate is still 29%. These are major changes in the way families live. When extended families shared the same home, there were more opportunities for intergenerational transmission of dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) and skills.

Another indicator of social change is the decline in the rate of home ownership. In the past, almost all Aboriginal people built and owned their own homes, especially when they lived year-round out on the land. As people moved into communities, some built homes, while others began to reside in social housing. At first, this housing was provided free of charge, but over the years, a rental program has been instituted and housing costs have risen. Many people who live in social housing today are supported to some extent by government subsidies. In 2012, home ownership rates in the Sahtú communities were: Colville Lake 86%, Fort Good Hope 57%, Tulít'a 41%, Norman Wells 38%, and Délı̄ne 37%. With the decrease in the number of people who own their own homes comes an increase in dependence. The effects of this change merits further study.

## Language and culture

The language of the people of the Sahtú is North Slavey, or what community members refer to as Dene language. It is part of the Athapaskan language family that stretches across North America from Alaska to the southern United States. Fluency rates vary greatly across generations and communities, with ʔqhda kə (elders) retaining the greatest fluency levels. The accelerated rate of language loss in the younger generations is of great concern, but many efforts are being made to ensure language maintenance. People in the region are developing some literacy skills in the Dene language using a Roman orthography developed in the 1970's and 1980's, while ʔqhda kə often still prefer an older syllabic writing system.

There are several dialects of North Slavey. Although speakers of any dialect may be found in each of the communities, in general, most residents of Tulít'a speak either the Willow Lake (K'áálq), Mountain (Shúhta), or River (Dəoga) dialects, the people of

Déłıne speak the Sahtú dialect, and residents of Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake speak the Hare (K'ásho) dialect. Norman Wells is home to speakers of all the dialects. Some Dene and Métis in the region speak more than one Dene language, or more than one dialect, and most speak English, although some are unilingual in their Dene language. In addition, some people speak and/or understand some French. ʔqhda kə learned this language, for the most part, during time spent in Catholic residential schools, and some younger people are learning it in school.

Culturally, the Dene and Métis of the Sahtú still actively participate in traditional activities such as hunting, ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı (trapping), dats'eʔa (fisheries), ʔezets'ehłə (gathering) and denewá káraʔa ts'ę ası́ yáhólı (traditional crafts) production. Cultural practices, values and customs are still strong and some traditions, such as hand games and drumming, are particularly popular. However, increased access to various types of media over the last few decades has resulted in a younger population with far less first-hand experience on the land and greater reliance on and attention to communications across community, territorial, national and international borders.

## Political overview

The following brief description is intended to provide the reader with a general sense of the political context in the Sahtú Region. Many past and current developments on the political front have and will continue to shape the economic development of the region.

In 1921, Treaty 11, which encompasses the Sahtú, was signed, establishing a formal fiduciary relationship between the Government of Canada and the Dene and Métis of the region. In 1982, the federal government adopted the *Constitution Act of Canada*, affirming, in Section 35, existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.

In 1993, the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, a modern-day treaty, was signed by the Government of Canada and the Dene bands in the four communities where they are found, the exception being Norman Wells, and by the three Métis locals, which are found in Norman Wells, Fort Good Hope and Tulít'a. Almost all Aboriginal residents in the Sahtú are beneficiaries, but a small minority did not sign onto the agreement, preferring instead to require the federal government to uphold Aboriginal and treaty rights established by Treaty 11 in 1921. These individuals are not entitled to got'áots'erehwhí (benefits) under the land claim.

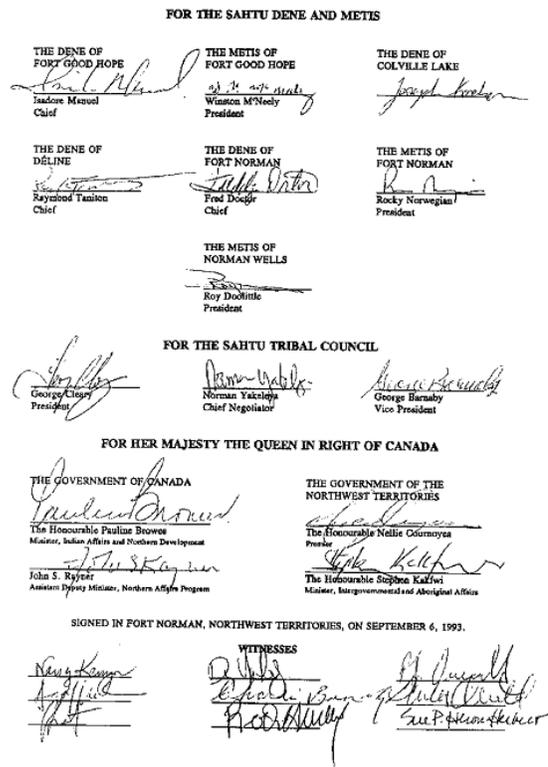
The land claim provided financial compensation, land and other economic got'áots'erehwhí for beneficiaries, and established a number of designated Sahtú organizations such as the Sahtú Tribal Council, the Sahtú Land Use Planning Board, the Sahtú Land and Water Board, the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board, along with

four Dene and three Métis land corporations, which formed the Sahtú Secretariat Incorporated in 1994. The Sahtú Dene Council represents the four Dene First Nations in the region. The Claim creates three districts – the Tulít'a District is comprised of Tulít'a and Norman Wells, the Fort Good Hope District is comprised of Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake, and the Délı̄ne District encompasses the community of Délı̄ne.

The signing of the land claim agreement set the stage for the development of self-government in the Sahtú region. To date, one community, Délı̄ne, has achieved a self-government agreement (April 2014), and Tulít'a, Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake are currently undertaking similar processes.

In the Canadian Parliament, the Northwest Territories is represented by one member, currently the Honourable Dennis Bevington. In the NWT Legislative Assembly, the Sahtú has been represented since 2003 by the Honourable Norman Yakeleya of Tulít'a, one of twenty-two members. The Government of the NWT has about 350 dene heréht'é kə (employees) in the Sahtú, responsible for social and health services, dene gháoneté (education) and employment, highways and transportation, economic development, land and environment, community government, culture and heritage. Some of these services and programs are now delivered ełehé eghálats'eda (in partnership) with local and regional organizations, including numerous boards. On April 1, 2014, the new *NWT Devolution Act* came into effect, resulting in the transfer of numerous powers to the GNWT, including increased powers for the administration of lands and resources. Lands in the Sahtú are governed by either the Government of Canada (Crown Land), the GNWT (Territorial Lands) or by Aboriginal claimants (Sahtú Private Lands).

Municipal governments are responsible for local services such as water, sewage and garbage, road construction and maintenance, fire protection, by-law enforcement and community planning. These local governments provide a major source of employment for community residents.



Signatures on the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement.

## Transportation

In the past, Dene and Métis travelled by many modes of transportation –by dogteam, canoe, mooseskin boat, and scow. People regularly covered hundreds of kilometers on foot and, in the winter, by snowshoe. Today, most of these modes of transport are still in use, but there is also a plethora of cars and trucks, motorboats, skidoos, ATV's and even bicycles.

When I used to go out with my Dad, we would walk all over the land, and I learned patience. – Michel Lafferty

All Sahtú communities have air transportation, both scheduled service and charters. Colville Lake has the least frequent service. Costs are high, especially for air freight - \$2.00+ /pound from Yellowknife. All communities are supplied by truck in the winter when ice roads are built.

Three communities – Tulít'a, Norman Wells and Fort Good Hope are also supplied during the summer by barges traveling along the Mackenzie River as well as by winter roads. The extension of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, which has recently been initiated, will increase access to these communities along the Mackenzie River.



Credit: Norman Simmons

## Denewá ts'ı̄ı̄ (Traditional economy) indicators

As noted several decades ago by Usher and others, large portions of denewá ts'ı̄ı̄ remain relatively “invisible” for the purposes of quantitative economic analysis. The portions that involve the sale of commodities are easier to track. For this reason, the proportions of people producing furs, subsistence foods, and náats'enelu hé ası̄ı̄ yáts'ı̄ı̄tsı̄ı̄ (arts and crafts) in the Sahtú Region are useful indicators of the health of denewá ts'ı̄ı̄.

### ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı̄ (Trapping)

Fur production is one component of the denewá ts'ı̄ı̄ (traditional economy) for which up-to-date and some detailed statistics are easily accessible. ***This section is based on data available from the Traditional Economy office of NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment.***

Furs trapped in the Sahtú, especially n̄hwhəwá (marten pelts), fetch some of the highest prices at international markets. In 2012/13, the total value of furs from the Sahtú sold at auction through the Mackenzie Valley (MV) Tsáwá Gogha (Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur) program, was approximately \$750,000, an all-time record. This does not account for furs that are kept by trappers and their families for personal use, or those sold on an individual basis. In 2012, 106 Sahtú trappers participated in the MV Tsáwá Gogha program, and harvested 3,944 furs. Colville Lake represents the community with the highest involvement in ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı̄, followed by Fort Good Hope and Délı̄ne, then Tulıt'a, with few trappers in Norman Wells. The average age of trappers has decreased considerably in recent years, which is a reflection of younger people becoming more involved in ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı̄ activity. This may be the result of the Take a Kid Trapping Program, operated through NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, in which ts'ódane kə (children) and ek'ónə kə (youth) are taken on ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı̄ trips as part of their school program.

Across all five Sahtú communities, there was a decline in the number of trappers from 1989 to 1999 (). This decline has halted in recent years, based on 2004 and 2009 data, and a reversal in trend is in fact becoming evident. More people are ʔehdzo got'ı̄ne in 2009 than in 1994. Although the overall numbers of pelts harvested have not dramatically increased since 1992, despite yearly variability (), the main driver in this turn-around of the industry has been global market demand and the development of the MV Tsáwá Gogha program. Both of these



Credit: Doug Urquhart

developments have led to an increase in the value of pelts from the NWT sold at auction over the past 10 years (Figure 3), increasing from \$750,000 in 2002 (program inception) to \$1.5 million in 2011, helping to make *zehdzo ats'ehzi* a more viable economic pursuit in the NWT. The Sahtú region has been very active in the MV Tsáwé Gogha program accounting for approximately 27% of the total for the NWT.

Figure 1: Persons 15 and over who trapped in previous year (%) (source: NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, October 3, 2013 presentation to Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)

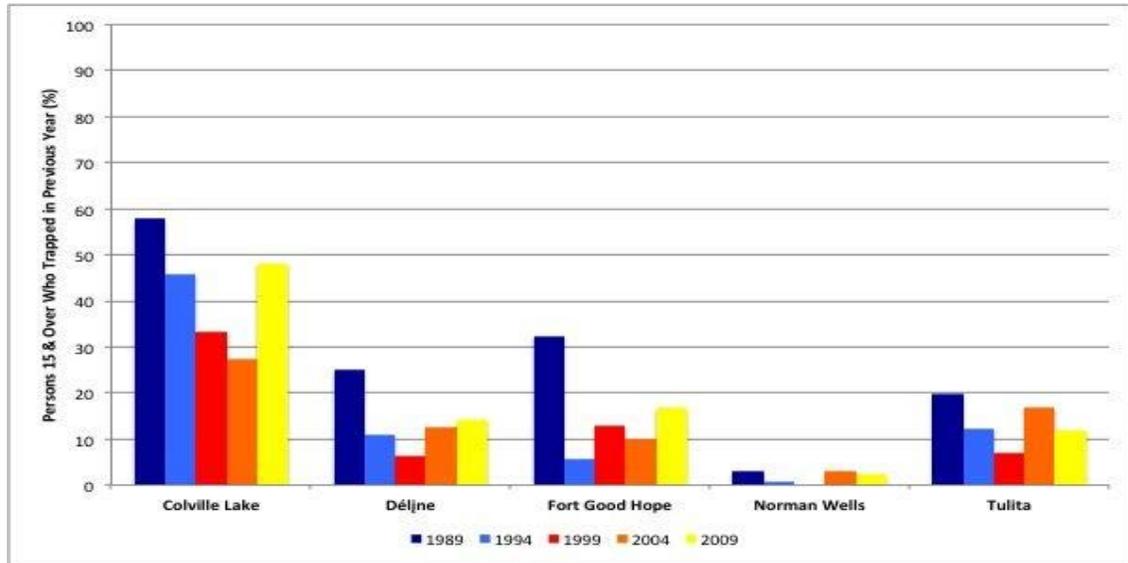


Figure 2: Number of pelts harvested in the NWT (source: NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, October 3, 2013 presentation to Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)

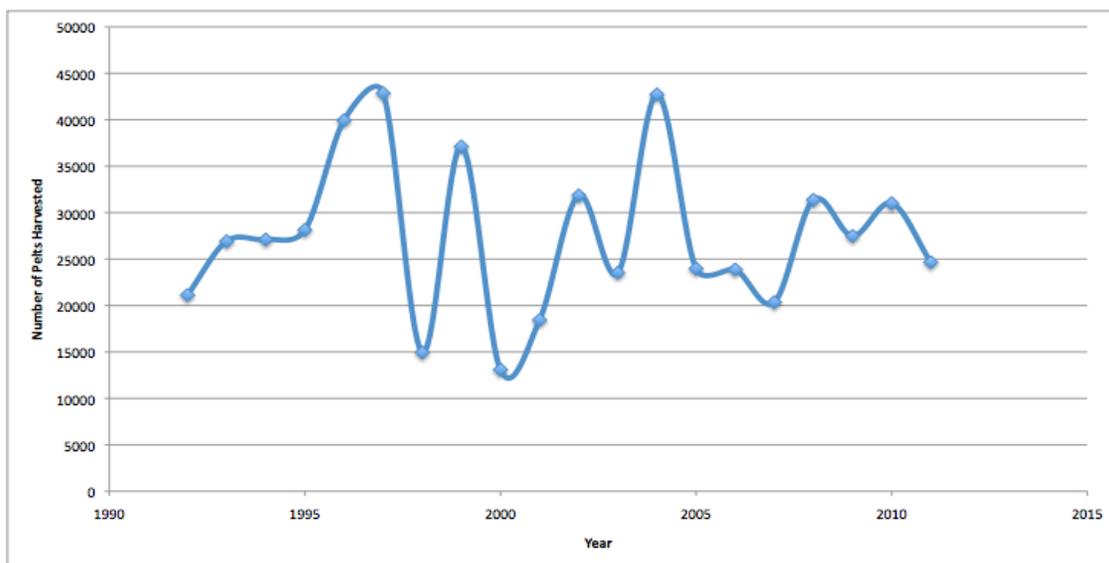
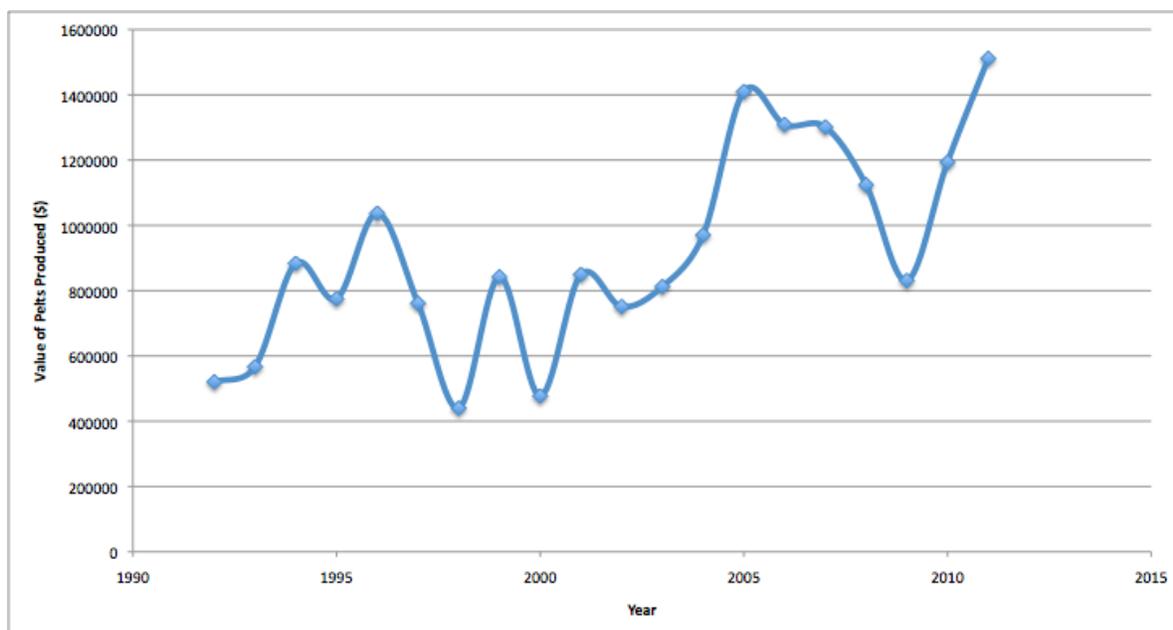


Figure 3: Value of pelts produced in the NWT (source: NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, October 3, 2013 presentation to Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)



### Dene béré (Country foods)

According to 2008 data from the NWT Bureau of Statistics, in about 75% of the households in the Sahtú (excluding Norman Wells, where the percentage is considerably lower), dene béré makes up at least 50% of the diet and almost every household relies to some extent on dene béré. This varies among the communities, with Colville Lake reporting the highest numbers (94.3%), and Norman Wells the lowest (29.3%). The ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı harvest study, currently in the analysis stage, will provide more detailed information about harvest quantities and patterns. Examples of more in-depth efforts to measure the value of country foods are provided in Appendix F.

Research conducted by NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment (John Colford, personal communication, January 2014) attempted to calculate bé réti t'á dene béré ghq shéts'eyə (food replacement value) for dene béré, based on the number of households in 2008 where at least 50% of the food consumed was dene béré. The values were adjusted to reflect the cost of living in each community. Bé réti t'á dene béré ghq shéts'eyə was estimated to be in the neighbourhood of \$9 to \$10 million a year for the NWT (the data is not broken down by region). This does not include any of the other households where country foods constitute less than 50% of the diet. It is reasonable to assume that almost every household in the Sahtú consumes country food.

## Náats'enelu hé asıı yáts'ıhtsı (Arts and crafts)

Náats'enelu hé asıı yáts'ıhtsı production has been a cultural practice in many communities throughout the North. Asıı hólı óts'erele (commercial arts and crafts) is valued by tourists and others, as well as fellow community members, and contributes to overall household income (Jarvenpa 1977; Usher 2003). In some Inuit communities, soapstone carvings sold by community members was worth over \$300,000 in 1984, the most profitable activity outside of wage labour, accounting for 5.7% of community income (Quigley and McBride 1987). It is likely that communities which rely on other crafts have not been so successful. Studies have noticed a decline in participation in náats'enelu (sewing) and crafts from the late 1970s through the 1980s (Kruse 1991), and that asıı hólı óts'erele has declined as a source of income due to the reliance on wage-based opportunities (Usher 2003). However, one study determined that although numerous ts'éku kə (women) were active in the production of denewá káraza ts'ę asıı yáhólı (traditional crafts), few sold externally to a market, therefore undervaluing the economic contribution (Tobias and Kay 1994). Exploring options to increase asıı hólı óts'erele while understanding its significance, not only to the economy but the spiritual, social and cultural got'áots'erehwhı (benefits) should be better understood.



Credit: Lori Ann Lennie

## Eghálats'eda t'á sôba ts'eretsı (Wage Economy)

All types of employment – whále gogha dene heréht'é (short-term), whá gogha dene heréht'é (long-term), láhtare dene heréht'é (part-time), dzene táonéht'e eghálats'eda dene heréht'é (full-time), seasonal, ełehdą eghálats'eda (rotational) – exist in the Sahtú Region. Some Sahtú residents also work outside the region, for example, at the Diavik and Ekati diamond mines in the North Slave region. Some people from the Sahtú who live outside the region are not part of the Sahtú workforce.

Employers include government (GNWT/municipal/Aboriginal), Aboriginal organizations (land corporations, boards etc), industry, private sector, and non-government organizations. In addition, many people are self-employed. The number of Aboriginal-owned edegha eghálats'ereda (businesses) has increased significantly in the last few years. The Aboriginal Business Directory 2013 compiled by the Northern Aboriginal Business Alliance lists some of the edegha eghálats'ereda in the Sahtú communities, excluding Norman Wells, but many self-employed people are not included – xaré denı t'á asıı hehtsı (artists), xaré asıı hehts'ı (craftspersons), trappers, and so on.

The Sahtú region represents 5% of the NWT's income. Norman Wells has the highest average income of all NWT communities - \$79,441 in 2011 compared to the NWT average of \$56,030 and the Sahtú average of \$47,622. At the same time, the average income in Délıne, Tulıt'a and Fort Good Hope was between \$30,000 and \$36,000, with roughly 38-42% of individuals reporting less than \$15,000 income, compared to 17.6% in Norman Wells. Further details can be found in the following tables. No data are available for Colville Lake.

Figure 6 shows relative levels of reliance on wage income in the five communities of the Sahtú Region. Figure 7 illustrates the Average Personal Income for the time period of 2006 to 2010 for four of the communities (due to the small population of Colville Lake it is typically excluded from financial data collections as part of the NWT Census). Typically, average incomes in Délıne, Fort Good Hope and Tulıt'a have remained in the \$30,000 range over these past 5 years. Average incomes in Norman Wells are much higher, typically around \$70,000. Of note is the lack of increase of incomes over this 5 year period. Excluding Délıne and Norman Wells, it appears that income has been stagnant within these communities. As inflation and other costs have been rising over this time period, it appears that incomes have not been keeping up.

Across the Sahtú region, 83.1% of non-Aboriginal people in the work force were employed in 2009 compared to 49.8% of Aboriginal people.

In all communities except Norman Wells, ts'éku kə (women) have higher employment rates than deneyu kə (men). However, it is important to note that the definition of “employment” does not include those who are active in traditional pursuits, the majority of whom are deneyu kə (men).

Income from employment is actually lower than what is presented in the preceding figures, because these figures include income from sources other than employment. This income comes from a number of federal programs that provide benefits across Canada including Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement, child tax credits, and GST credits. Old Age Security is not indexed to the regional costs of living across the country, even though the cost of living in the north is far greater than in southern Canada.

Territorial income security programs include Income Assistance, NWT Child Benefit/Territorial Workers' Supplement, NWT Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit, Senior Home Heating Subsidy, and Student Financial Assistance.

Figure 4: Persons working more than 26 weeks per year (%) (source: NWT Statistics 2012)

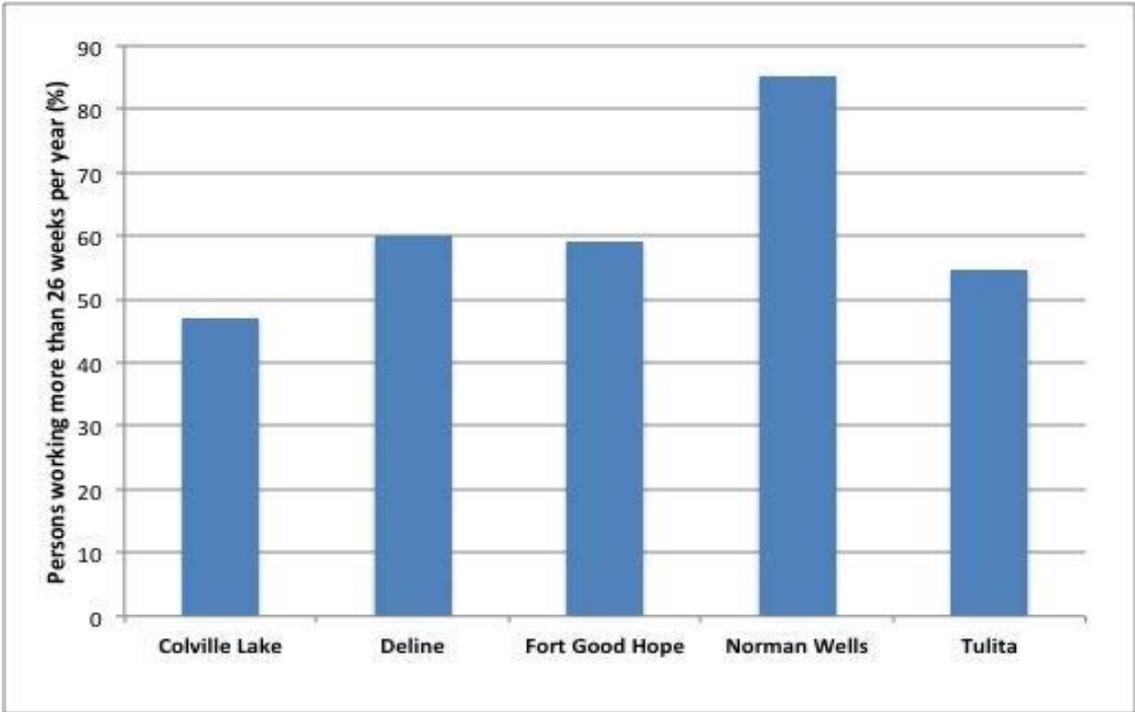
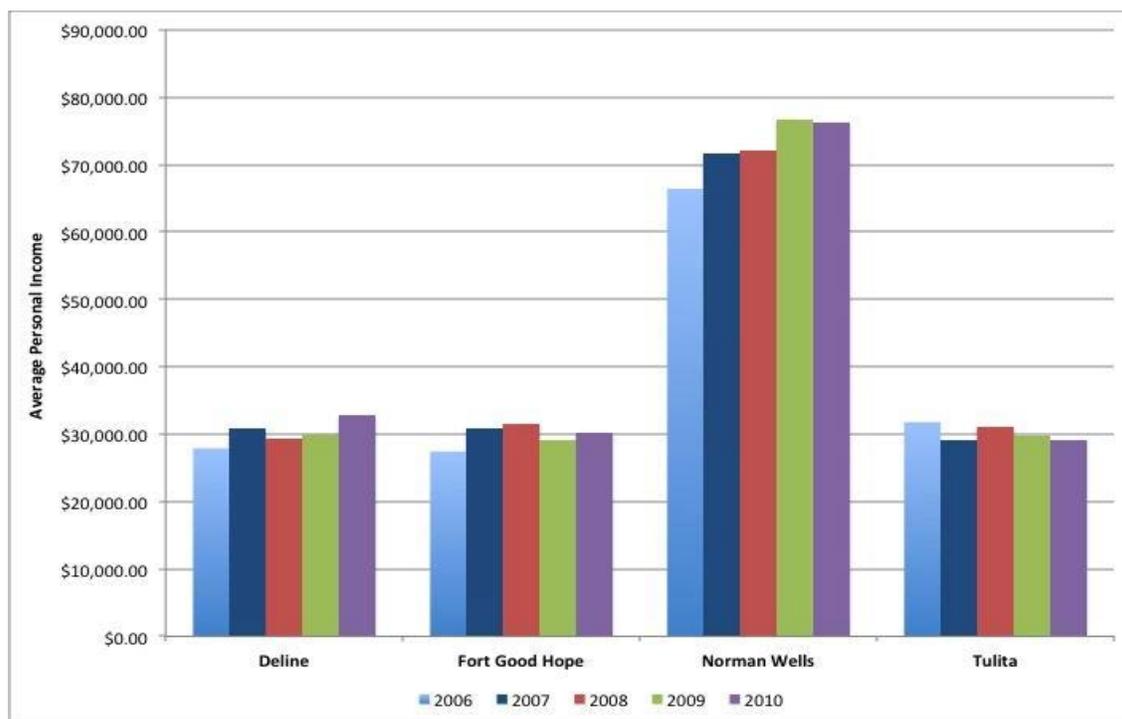


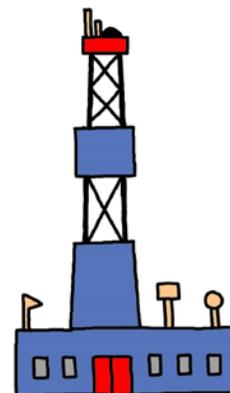
Figure 5: Average personal income (source: NWT Statistics) 2012



### Tłeret'ó hé t'eh got'jñę kə (Petroleum industry)

The Sahtú has one of the NWT's few producing tleh fields, and ships over \$500 million in tleh annually via the Norman Wells - Zama Lake pipeline. Norman Wells and Tulít'a, are experiencing a boom in shale tleh exploration in the region.

Currently several companies – Husky, ConocoPhillips (CPC), MGM, Imperial have exploration licenses for shale tleh. No definite plans are yet in place to move into production. A number of factors will influence this decision. First, land use and water permits must be secured. The SLWB has already granted a number of permits and some test wells have been drilled on the west side of the Mackenzie River. They are currently reviewing applications from Husky and CPC for expanded hydraulic fracturing. An earlier application in 2013 by MGM resulted in the proposal being referred to an environmental assessment, so MGM's plans are currently on hold. The results of CPC's and Husky's preliminary wells will be known soon and will be a major determinant in the future of these activities (Káálq-Stantec Limited 2013).



Credit: Doug Urquhart

## Mining

Chihong Canada Mining Ltd, Selwyn Resources Ltd and the Tulít'a District Land Corporation have undertaken a joint venture to develop the Selwyn deposit in Howard's Pass on the Yukon border, across the Mackenzie River from Norman Wells and Tulít'a, with what is expected to be one of the largest undeveloped zinc-lead deposits in the world. The Tulít'a District Land Corporation is a partner.

Tungsten, uranium, emeralds and other minerals have also been discovered in the Sahtú region.

## Results

The workshop, focus group and interviews conducted for this project brought together a rich body of knowledge and experience from a variety of perspectives. The key messages from the engagement activities are discussed in this section, along with illustrative quotes. It should be emphasized that this is a *preliminary analysis* of engagement results. Another more detailed and well-rounded analysis will be provided as part of the second phase during Year 2 of this project.<sup>8</sup>

The starting point for the community-based discussions was an assessment of denewá ts'ı́ı (the traditional economy), since this is the starting point for understanding the historical evolution of today's néné t'áadets'enı́ı (mixed economy). This meant that the bulk of these discussions were focused on the denewá ts'ı́ı, both developing a description of it, and assessing its status. The quotes provided here are an indication of the intensity and breadth of these discussions. Deeper understanding of the role of denewá ts'ı́ı begs further research and analysis in Year 2.

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<sup>8</sup> Expanding on the note made in the Literature Review, the Project Team acknowledges that a focus on gender issues, including discussion of women's and men's roles and activities in the denewá ts'ı́ı, eghálats'eda t'á sǒba ts'eretsı́ and néné t'áadets'enı́ı, is an objective of Phase 2. This would include questions around access to on-the-land activities for women and girls. In terms of the eghálats'eda t'á sǒba ts'eretsı́, further analysis of income distribution across gender and household care and responsibilities is required, i.e. access to and uses of household income by both men and women.

## Denewá ts'ı̨ı̨ (Traditional economy): A Way of Life

Through Phase 1 of this project, we have learned that people of the Sahtú demonstrate exceptional skills and dene náoweré (knowledge) in traditional pursuits, and this creates a wide variety of opportunities. The traditional Dene/Métis way of life can meet not only people's physical needs – the provision of dene béré, water, clothing and shelter - but also meet their need to preserve precious dene náoweré, values, beliefs and customs.

When you find out who you are and where you're from as a young person, that's a life-changing moment. It gives you ground to stand on. It's a sense of pride. You can become a leader. – Lisa McDonald

Most of my friends like trades kind of work, like carpentry and all that skills. Yeah. But some of my friends like going out into the bush. And they want to do these cultural things. And they want to get help.

In town there are a lot of things going on in my mind. And I do all these other things. And then I forget what to do. And then when I go out to the bush, everything comes to me as skills and just getting more organized. And I know what I ought to do in order to survive. – Mitchell Naedzo

Denewá ts'ı̨ı̨ in the Sahtú is based on the Dene/Métis values of kúukare ełeghats'eredı (sharing), got'áots'erehwhı (mutual benefit) and conservation of resources. It is seen as a way of life, an identity, a set of relationships between people and with the land, the water, the air and the wildlife. It encompasses a spiritual connection that cannot easily be reduced to words.

We believe that the lake has its own force – a Water Heart. – Alfred Taniton

A lake to the Dene people is a living thing, a living force. So we have our own customs on how to respect it. The women and the men have their ways. And some families take their names from the lake, so they are special names. They are our history. – Frederick Andrew

The Dene/ Métis concept of self is inextricably interwoven with their pursuit of a



Frederick Andrew

livelihood. At least two participants objected to the term traditional “economy”. They did not want to think of their way of life in terms of dollars and cents, and objected to being characterized as producers and users of resources.

As Aboriginal people, we are so rich in what we have. But’s it’s demeaning when you want to think of it on a cash basis. Give it the respect it deserves and start trusting, because it has worked for hundreds of years. – Lisa McDonald

Living our traditional way of life is not an 'economy', not 'a job'; it's a lifestyle; it's our survival instinct. It's who we are. – Archie Erigaktuk

The Dene and Métis role as stewards of the natural world and as beneficiaries of its many riches engenders a sense of responsibility and spirituality that is not necessarily an essential element of the concept of economic development. Fears were expressed that industrial activity is and will continue to jeopardize traditional pursuits and the very sense of being Dene or Métis. There is consensus among community participants that means should be found to ensure that it will be possible to successfully hunt, *dats'eza* (fish), trap and harvest and that the environment and wildlife remain healthy and adequately protected. Even though they participate in *eghálats'eda t'á sóba ts'eretsi* (the wage economy), their way of life has always been their safety net through times of boom and bust, which have come and gone numerous times in their



Elders Charlie Neyelle and Frederick Andrew demonstrate hand game techniques while young Jaryd McDonald and Archie Erigaktuk watch intently.

homeland. The importance of denewá ts'ı́ı (the traditional economy) to Dene and Métis of the Sahtú Region was apparent to one industry representative interviewed for this project.

I really feel like we shouldn't allow industry to disturb the land. That's the caribou's home. Caribou have healing power. It's like somebody is stepping on our plate of food! – Richard Kochon

We have to find a better way to sustain ourselves and prepare ourselves for what they call the 'boom'. It comes in and once it's gone, it's gone. And we are the ones who have everything to lose, right? We have managed our own 'economy', as you call it, by Dene laws and rules for many years. – Archie Erigaktuk

When you stop working, you can fall back on the land, on the traditional lifestyle. You can still support your family even if you don't have a job. – Russell Kenny

From what I've experienced, the traditional economy seems to be very important to the elders — they appear to be the ones who remain the most connected to traditional practices and way of life. It is evident to me that the elders are highly respected in the communities, and therefore, what they value, others also value. Over the past few years, when I have visited a few of the Sahtu communities, we usually have country foods, such as moose, caribou, and fish, that has been provided by local hunters. Community

members are also wearing and selling items such as moose hide moccasins, mitts, vests, and other beautifully beaded items. These observations tell me that there is still a traditional economy at work in these communities. It is important, but I expect this varies from person-to-person. – Sandra Marken, ConocoPhillips Canada



Richard Kochon

The extensive discussions about dene gháonetę (education and training) throughout the project (see the “Workforce readiness” section below) were indicators that there are significant challenges in maintaining denewá ts’ıı (the traditional economy) as a vital sector. Maintaining this traditional way of life does not, however, mean that everyone is expected to return to the way things were in the past. The traditional way of life for Dene and Métis people is now, and always has, evolved to adapt to the various impacts it has encountered. This is a healthy sign; it shows how adaptable and resilient the Dene and Métis people can be when confronted with challenges. Indeed, the development of the mixed economy is a prime example of such innovation.

The various activities of the traditional way of life are difficult to analyse as individual economic components, because the Dene and Métis understand the complex of traditional endeavours in a holistic way. The following discussions are an effort to capture specific relevant factors affecting each component, without negating the larger meaning and import of denewá ts’ıı (the traditional economy) in its totality.

Denewá ts’ıı in the Sahtú region consists of a wide variety of activities, including but not limited to: ʔehdzo ats’ehʔı (trapping), náats’ezé (hunting), dats’eʔa (fisheries), harvesting tseh ts’eréhk’ó (firewood), berries, sap, denewá nárídı (traditional medicines), and náats’enelu hé asıı yáts’ıhtsı (arts and crafts). Several of the activities are hybrid, since they are structured as for-profit edegha eghálats’ereda (business) enterprises and/or wage labour. Two of these, environmental monitoring and mólaretı (tourism), are included here because of the fact that they are specifically built on skills and capacities required for denewá ts’ıı.

Nine key denewá ts’ıı activities were discussed with participants: ʔehdzo ats’ehʔı (trapping), náats’ezé (hunting), dats’eʔa (fisheries), dechı ats’eh’ı (forestry), asıı yáts’enıhshé (agriculture), náats’enelu hé asıı yáts’ıhtsı (arts and crafts), ʔewó t’áadenakwı (hide tanning), and more recent pursuits such as environmental monitoring, and mólaretı (tourism). There are a number of other relevant seasonal

and year-round eghálaeda (jobs) that bear mentioning because they have potential to draw upon dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) and traditional skills. These include environment-related eghálaeda with government (e.g. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada, NWT Environment and Natural Resources, the Sahtú Secretariat Inc. and District or local Land Corporations); eghálaeda with co-management institutions including ʔehdzo Got’ıne ʔots’é Nákedı and ʔehdzo Got’ıne, the Sahtú Land and Water Board, and Sahtú Land Use Planning Board; eghálaeda in the media, including community radio and shó ts’ehtsı (filming) on-the-land activities; and trades. Detailed discussion of these and other options is not within the scope of this document.

## ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı (Trapping)

Within the traditional sector of the economy, ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı is one of the major contributors.

The main support program available to those involved in ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı is the very successful and widely envied Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program operated by NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment.<sup>9</sup> There are a number of edegots'eredı gogha got'áots'erehwhı (economic benefits) to trappers through this program including: guaranteed fur advance, prime fur bonus, grub stake program, international asıı óts'erele (marketing), and subsidies for shipping furs to market. The program also includes workshops on fur handling, trap handling, and trapper recognition for the highest achievement in a number of areas. The Fur Institute of Canada's rewards program for outstanding trappers is very well received in the Sahtú Region as a means of validating trapping as a vocation, and encouraging people to participate actively and in a professional way.

Ek'ónę (youth) Corey Kochon, who participated in the Délıne workshop identified ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı as his sole source of income, and his intention to continue pursuing ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı as his sole means of making a livelihood in the future.

I just want to continue to be a trapper. But it's the gas. It's so expensive, even though the RRC helps with one or two barrels of gas in the fall. – Corey Kochon

Some of the barriers to involvement in ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı identified by project participants are: the cost of equipment and repairs, cost of gas, supplies and clothing, the age and health of ʔqhda kə (elders), the lack of established on the land camps, and the lack of promotion of ʔehdzo ats'ehʔı as a viable edegots'eredı gogha dene ghágót'á (economic opportunity). One of the important barriers is the lack of opportunities for ʔqhda kə to pass on traditional skills to ek'ónę kə (youth).

It's really hard for young people to get into trapping. It costs thousands of dollars. Like the conibear traps are so expensive, even if the RRC orders them and they come on the barge and they sell them to us. It's still a lot. – Michel Lafferty

Generally those who are self-employed in traditional pursuits, such as trappers, hunters, gatherers, are not considered “employed” or “self-employed” for the purpose of labour market and employment analysis. If

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/programs>



these people were to register as self-employed, they would be counted in the employment statistics of the region. In addition, if they were to file a self-employment tax return, they would benefit from a variety of tax deductions related to the purchase and depreciation of equipment such as skidoos, boats and motors, the cost of supplies such as ammunition, traps, gas, tents, hunting gear, food, and the use of a portion of their home or shop for edegha eghálats'ereda (business).

## Hunting and gathering

Another major activity in the Sahtú region is hunting and gathering. Hunting includes hunting of big game such as caribou, moose, and Dall sheep, as well as rabbits, ptarmigan, grouse, ducks and geese. Fort Good Hope and Délı̨ne each now have a mobile meat processing unit that will encourage safe preparation and storage of harvests, and possibly some small initiatives in commercial sale of locally-sourced meat to commercial operations in the Sahtú (e.g. food services for exploration camps, and hotels).

Some concerns were expressed by those interviewed about the decline in caribou and the fact that people come from other regions to hunt caribou in the Sahtú. There is concern that added pressure due to increased activity in the Sahtú region will exacerbate impacts on existing herds. A concern was also expressed that some of the caribou taken by the people from other regions is being sold, especially as drymeat, even though this is illegal.<sup>10</sup>

It was the caribou who made their own laws. This was passed on from ancient times, passed on and on. That law is still here with us today. We still take care of the caribou law.  
– Charlie Neyelle

All of the people interviewed commented on the added got'áots'erehwhí (benefits) of consuming dene béré, including better physical and mental health, a more active lifestyle, more family and community cohesion, and a greater sense of pride and identity. These are got'áots'erehwhí that cannot



L-R Angus Shae, Charlie Neyelle, Joe Blondin Jr.

<sup>10</sup> While we are not aware of similar research and cons of selling country food from the

be reduced to a dollar value, although the decline of health and wellbeing that accompany the loss of dene béré and related activities can result in considerable health care costs.

Our traditional food is natural, it's healthy. Now in the stores, the food is out of date, it has all kinds of chemicals, and sodium and gluten. They put drugs in cows and chickens. And there's all the candy. That's where our sickness comes from, like diabetes and cancer.  
– Charlie Neyelle

It's good to go out on the land. You are your own boss. And people like that because that's our way of life. You can make a good living. You can bring ten kids out there and they can eat all they want. – Richard Kochon

Some of the barriers identified with respect to participation in hunting and gathering are the same as those for ʔehdzo ats'ehʔl (trapping), such as the cost of equipment and repair, cost of gas, age and health of ʔqhda kə, lack of on the land camps, and lack of opportunities for ʔqhda kə to teach traditional skills to the younger generations.

Some community participants support the establishment of a quota for the sale of wild meat, such as caribou, on a commercial basis. But many are opposed. At the moment, because it is illegal to sell wild meat, and because under the new *Wildlife Act*, penalties for doing so will be greatly increased, this initiative does not appear to be a viable avenue for economic expansion.

Our Elders in the past told us never to sell wild meat or fish to make money. Show respect for it. You get a blessing for listening to the elders. – Alfred Taniton

Another barrier that has been identified is the lack of bé k'ák'enehta (food inspectors) in the north. Should commercial sales of wild meat become a viable edegots'eredí gogha dene ghágót'á (economic opportunity) in the future, the training of bé k'ák'enehta would provide one of the necessary elements of that activity.

There are numerous supports in place for hunting and gathering, including NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment



Alfred Taniton

initiatives such as the Community Harvesters Assistance (CHAP) Program and the Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development (SEED) Program.

Harvesting plants is another activity that contributes to denewá ts'ílí (the traditional economy). People regularly harvest berries, sap and some medicinal plants in the summer primarily for personal use. Any endeavour to sell berries commercially would require special cultivation, but the Growing Forward 2 Program, an agreement between the federal government and NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, could potentially fund the necessary research and development of such an operation. Only one initiative to harvest k'ítú (birch sap) was identified, but on a very minor scale, and it is not known whether this activity is continuing. One participant mentioned that someone was selling spruce gum, which is used by Dene as an adhesive, as well as for treating wounds, colds and sore throats. However, they felt this was inappropriate – perhaps because traditional medicines have a special spiritual place in Dene culture, and consequently believe that they should not be made into an item for sale. However, if supported by communities, this is an option that could be explored further. The book *Aboriginal Plant Use in Canada's Northwest Boreal Forest* (Marles et al 2009) contains detailed assessments of potential commercial value of numerous plants that are available in the Sahtú Region.

The possibility of ne k'ə edeghálats'ereda (harvesting) for the production of teas, as in other regions such as Nunavut, is one possible economic activity that could be explored. This type of product could be sold commercially, with less rigorous inspection requirements than those for wild meat.

### Dats'eza (Fisheries)

Fishing in the Sahtú is a vital component of denewá ts'ílí (the traditional economy) in the Sahtú Region. Current harvest statistics do not separate dats'eza for subsistence from dats'eza for sport so it is not possible to estimate the value of this activity to denewá ts'ílí. Suffice it to say that the people of the Sahtú depend on łue (fish) as a major part of their diet, and on the activities related to dats'eza as an essential element for maintaining their traditional way of life.

No s'oba gha dats'eza (fishing for money, or commercial fishery) exists in the Sahtú, although there are lakes that have been identified by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as being viable s'oba gha dats'eza locations, and Fort Good Hope is currently undertaking a feasibility study for a small s'oba gha dats'eza operation. There is a mobile łue/meat processing plant in Délıne, which could be used in s'oba gha dats'eza, but it is currently used only for household production of meat and łue products.

To operate as a sport dats'ęza outfitter, people must be able to meet the requirements for licences, insurance, proper equipment (boats, motors, safety equipment), and guide training. They must also have adequate skills in edegha eghálats'ereda (business) and administration. These are areas of training that are sometimes offered at the local level, but that could be enhanced.

Some participants identified a concern about mercury in łue in the Sahtú. This, of course, is an issue related not only to sόba gha dats'ęza, but also to local consumers. Some studies are underway regarding mercury in the environment, and the increased release of mercury due to permafrost melt as a result of climate change. Some abnormalities in łue have been found, including a type of trout with a larger jaw, but the reasons for these occurrences need further study. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is working closely with the community of Délįnę on continued research and monitoring on Great Bear Lake and this work provides some seasonal employment and on-the-job training in the community.

In the Deh Cho region, a relevant report entitled “A Return to Country Foods” (2013) details how community members have been engaged in helping identify sources of healthy łue, understanding how contaminants move up the food chain, and how this information is useful in making choices about what types of łue to eat. It also examined how messages about łue and water advisories should be communicated to the communities in a way that does not create undue alarm. The project reinforces the got'áots'erehwhí (benefits) for health of consuming dene béré (country foods) as well as the positive social impacts of participation in this traditional pursuit.

There are a number of programs that support dats'ęza including those in the Growing Forward 2 agreement.<sup>11</sup> A number of eghálaeda (jobs) are available in this field that involve the use of traditional skills in wage employment, including eghálaeda with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in their łue research and monitoring activities, especially on Great Bear Lake. These eghálaeda include: navigator, boat operator, guide, camp personnel, water quality monitor, and research technician. People with traditional



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<http://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/pdf>

Credit: Doug Urquhart

skills are well-suited to this kind of work because their contribution of local knowledge is highly valued, and may also appreciate the seasonal nature of the work.

### Dechı ats'eh'ı (Forestry)

Harvesting also includes dechı ats'eh'ı. Forest products are used extensively for tseh ts'eréhk'ó (firewood), and for building small structures such as cabins, sheds and teepee frames. There is no commercial dechı ats'eh'ı in the Sahtú except a few individuals in each community who cut tseh ts'eréhk'ó for sale. In some cases, this tseh ts'eréhk'ó is sold at a very high price, perhaps because the costs associated with dechı ats'eh'ı are relatively high as well. There are no large forest areas in the Sahtú, but NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment has supplied each community with a portable sawmill, most of which are sitting idle. These could be used to produce smaller dıkále (dimensional lumber or building materials) such as 2 x 4's, although the production of dıkále for larger buildings is likely not a viable edegots'eredı gogha dene ghágót'á (economic opportunity). Creating community woodlots where individuals can work and purchase tseh ts'eréhk'ó is one possible economic endeavour.

A lot of young people, they want to work, they want to make their own money but they don't have the tools. Like they want to sell wood but they have no skidoo, tools or supplies. – Dora Blondin

Another edegots'eredı gogha dene ghágót'á (economic opportunity) is the manufacture of furniture, small tools such as axe handles or ice scoops, wood boxes, sleds for ts'ó dane kə (children) and teepees, and wooden toys. The production of toboggans is one area that could be explored, especially because many people are now building their own sleds that are komatik-style (used by Inuit), that apparently do not work well in the bush, or they are buying prefabricated sleds from suppliers outside the Sahtú at high costs due to freight rates.

Another area that could be explored related to dechı ats'eh'ı is the development of biomass heating systems, such as pellet stoves and boilers, however this activity would require an assessment to determine whether it is cost effective and environmentally feasible. The Growing Forward 2 Program identifies funding for the



expansion of alternative energy sources as one of its priorities. Several programs are available through the Arctic Energy Alliance for people and edegha eghálats'ereda (businesses) that install energy efficient heating systems and appliances to reduce energy consumption.

Many people in the Sahtú have, for many years, been employed as seasonal fire-fighters , ɁɁhbe ɁɁ gok'ánahta eghálats'eda (a summer job) that has provided the cash for families to purchase the equipment and supplies needed for traditional pursuits. In recent years, fire attack policies have changed somewhat so that there is sometimes less employment available in this field. However, this also depends on the extent of the fires that arise in the region, with some years requiring many more man-hours than others. Traditional knowledge of the land and its vegetation makes an important contribution to the fire management process and it is a skill gained through traditional pursuits that is transferable to the wage economy.

### Asíı yáts'eníhshé (Agriculture)

One area that offers a possible edegots'eredí gogha dene ghágót'á (economic opportunity) is the development of community asíı yáts'eníhshé and asíı ts'enehshə kó (greenhouses). Dene and Métis people in the past have had asíı ts'enehshə (gardens) and some still do, but on a very minor scale. Root asíı ts'enehshə ghə shéts'eyə (vegetables) in particular have been popular, but not the production of a wide variety of other asíı ts'enehshə ghə shéts'eyə.

Under the Growing Forward 2 Program, a number of new initiatives support the development of community asíı ts'enehshə and asíı ts'enehshə kó. Several programs such as Take A Kid Harvesting, and the Community Harvest Program make increased funding available over the next few years. The NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment SEED program is also available for people interested in exploring this avenue on a commercial basis. This could encourage local asíı náts'ehdi há asíı óts'erele (market economy) and perhaps the



Doug Whiteman, owner of Green Enterprises in Norman Wells, right, has, with the help of fellow farmer Brian Lickoch, successfully grown 9,000 potatoes on his two-acre lot this summer. Credit:

Guy Quenneville. Source: [www.nnsi.com](http://www.nnsi.com)

local trade network within and between communities. Sahtú communities have already started to take advantage of these gonezó edegha k'eguza gogha elets'életse'ehza (incentives) for asıı yáts'eníshé.

However, in Norman Wells, one agricultural operation that produces potatoes for commercial sale was flourishing until the federal government replaced the Food Mail Program with the Nutrition North Canada Program. Under the old program, individuals could receive a subsidy when ordering food through the mail from outside sources. Under the new gonezó edegha k'eguza gogha elets'életse'ehza, the subsidy is paid to local retailers to reduce the costs of certain food that are considered “healthy.” This list of foods excludes a large number of items previously subsidized under the Food Mail Program, and some people feel that retailers do not always pass on the savings they receive to consumers. However, in the Norman Wells case, the revised retail price of potatoes has had a negative impact on the sale value of locally-produced potatoes.

### Náats'enelu hé asıı yáts'íhtsı́ (Arts and crafts)

Another area of denewá ts'ıı (the traditional economy) that produces some income in the Sahtú is náats'enelu hé asıı yáts'íhtsı́. However, there is very little data to shed light on the economic value of these activities within denewá ts'ıı. Some basic statistical data from the NWT Bureau of Statistics and NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment is available, but it would be misleading to base any conclusions on this limited information. There is a clear need for much more study in this area.

Income from náats'enelu hé asıı yáts'íhtsı́ provides a much needed support for other traditional activities, such as buying gas, supplies and equipment for náats'ezé (hunting), dats'eza (fisheries), and zehdzo ats'ehzi (trapping). Often it is ts'éku kə (the women) in the household who produce náats'enelu hé asıı yáts'íhtsı́. A number of ts'éku kə expressed concern that the importance of náats'enelu hé asıı yáts'íhtsı́ is under-estimated. Náats'enelu hé asıı yáts'íhtsı́ contributes to a strong Dene/Métis identity and a sense of pride, and creates much-needed deneghagót'á (opportunity) for the intergenerational transmission of not only skills for producing articles, but also deneghagót'á to share dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) with young ts'éku kə in particular. For example, a local “sewing circle” involves not only dene gháonetę (teaching) skills for náats'enelu (sewing), but also creates a venue for passing on dene náoweré about producing raw materials such as sinew and hides, traditional zewé t'áadenakwı́ (hide-tanning) methods, child rearing, caring for the sick and zqhda kə (elderly), roles of deneyu kə (men) and ts'éku kə and related customs, kinship, denewá nárídı́ (traditional medicines), and so on.

The NWT Arts Program website operated by NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI)<sup>12</sup> showcases a large number of Sahtú xaré dení t'á asíı hehtsı (artists) in a variety of fields, involving graphic arts, performing artists, traditional xaré asíı hehts'ı kə (craftspeople) but, in some cases, only a name is provided, with no further details on the artist or craftsperson.

The Fur Procurement Program operated by ITI secures tsáwé (beaver pelts) and seal pelts and returns them, tanned, to producers at cost. The SEED program assists edegha eghálats'ereda (businesses) with start-up) and operating costs. However, several participants identified barriers to obtaining this assistance.

If you owe the government money for anything, you can't get help with your arts and craft work. – Gary Elemie

There are incentives to start your own business, but you have to come up with some money yourself first. And then there's the liability. It seems like a lot of doors for our young people are closed before their ideas can even take off. – Lisa McDonald

The NWT Arts Council, managed by the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment, has funded a fair number of xaré dení t'á asíı hehtsı in their pursuits over the years, with grants ranging from under \$1000 to tens of thousands<sup>13</sup>. This department also offers a mentoring program to assist xaré dení t'á asíı hehtsı in developing new or improved skills.

A number of outlets exist in the Sahtú including the Norman Wells Historical Society, which is quite active, and offers a good deneghágót'á (opportunity) for asíı hólı óts'erele (selling things that are made, commercial arts and crafts). There is a small store for náats'enelu hé asíı yáts'ıhtsı in the Grey Goose Lodge in Délıne, but sales there are reported to be very poor, and a strategy should be developed to assist in sales. A number of internet market places have developed through social media and this option could be



L-R Andy Short and Lisa McDonald

<sup>12</sup> <http://nwtarts.com>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nwtartscouncil.ca/awardees.asp>

further explored. Several people commented that they feel it is not possible to make a living strictly from asíı hólı óts'erele.

I wouldn't be able to make a living today just strictly doing art, because I have a full-time job and I'm a grandma. It's really really hard to find a balance with everything that's going on. – Lisa McDonald, Norman Wells

Certain náats'enelu hé asíı yáts'ıhtsı activities merit further study as a possibility for economic expansion, such as the production of clothing items using caribou hair – mitts, mukluks, hats, coats, pants. Aboriginal peoples have known about the tremendous insulating properties of caribou hair for centuries, and scientific research has confirmed that the insulation value of clothing made from caribou hair is even greater than that of military issue and expedition-quality commercially-made clothing (Oakes et al 1995). In most cases, however, caribou hair is discarded and a valuable resource is lost. Local people do, however, keep some ʔekwéwé (caribou hides) with the fur on as sleeping mats, as they are known to provide excellent insulation in cold weather.

A shop like a sewing centre would be jobs for people. If the fur prices drop, they could make clothing out of the furs and sell them for a good price. – Jimmy Dillon



Jimmy Dillon



A number of barriers have been identified by xaré dení t'á asíi hehtsi (artists) and xaré asíi hehts'ı kə (craftspeople), including the lack of traditional materials like hides, furs, and sinew, poor asíi óts'erele (marketing), lack of awareness of asíi óts'erele opportunities, and the termination of the Aurora College Arts and Crafts program. The high freight cost when ordering materials from outside the community was also identified as a barrier. For many xaré asíi hehts'ı, a asíi k'enayə gogha sōba t'á gots'énagodı (freight subsidy) would be a most welcome edegots'eredı gogha got'áots'erehwhı (economic benefit).

## Environmental monitoring

Environmental monitoring is an area of work that is especially promising. Aurora College offers a the BEAHR Environmental Monitor training course, along with the Environment and Natural Resources Technology Program (ENRTP) and several other related courses. Several Environmental Monitor training courses have been offered in Sahtú communities, including Norman Wells, Délıne and Tulıt'a. But it was noted by some interview participants that few graduates have obtained regular employment in a relevant field after completing the program. In some cases, the training is not extensive enough to meet eghálaeda (job) requirements, the southern curriculum is seen as unsuitable, and the number of eghálaeda (jobs) is limited. However, this type of training increases local awareness of and ability to monitor environmental and wildlife conditions and increases participation in stewardship activities. This, in turn, increases the ability of communities to respond to development proposals and initiatives.



Kristen Kodakin and Charles Oudzi weigh snow samples as part of a monitoring exercise. Tets'ehxe BEAHR Monitor Training, March 2014.

A job like environmental monitoring doesn't necessarily require an extensive set of skills, but it can prove to be of help during emergencies that occur. Such as being stranded, knowing the trails or routes, and knowing what to do when encountering dangerous wildlife. Survival skills on the land, which include knowing how to make fire, find shelter, hunting and harvesting, navigation, and preventative procedures when coming across dangerous wildlife territory. Environmental monitoring requires that you occasionally go on the land, so having skills and knowledge necessary for efficient work is an excellent asset. I believe the community should play a bigger role in the decision making whether/if these big industries should be coming in and disturbing the environment. – Dion Lennie

It's an important role as an environmental monitor to help the communities within the Sahtú to see the immediate changes that industries could place in the wildlife and water sources we have. They can explain to the community what has been affected, how they can provide any information that the environmental monitors may have missed, and how they can help each other to preserve wildlife for generations ahead. – Peter Silastiak Jr.

### Mólarétí (Tourism)

The region has some major mólarétí assets including the Canol Heritage Trail, Sahtú (Great Bear Lake), Mackenzie River and Mackenzie Mountains, as well as protected areas (Sahyúé-ʔehdacho National Historic Site and Náats'ihch'oh National Park Reserve). Dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) and skills are especially pertinent in providing unique visitor experiences, as pointed out by the increasingly active NWT Aboriginal Tourism Council. However, at the present time, very few Sahtú Aboriginal people are employed in the mólarétí sector, with one exception being the owners of Drum Lake Lodge. The community of Délı̨ne is making special efforts to address this in a series of ası̨ ǫts'erele (marketing) and mólarétí development initiatives.

We are concentrating on our own economic development stuff. For example, we know for a fact that tourism is something that can sustain us long term. Things like mining or oil and gas, they come and go. They don't stay forever. We're banking on the fact that tourism would sustain us long term. So, we're developing the Grey Goose Lodge, the fishing, the outfitting. Hopefully we can get people back to working in those areas. – Leonard Kenny



Credit: NWT Environment and Natural Resources

## Néné t'áadets'enjto (The Mixed economy)

One important finding from the workshop, focus group and interviews conducted for this project, consistent with the literature reviewed above, is that eghálats'eda t'á sôba ts'eretsi (the wage economy) actually supports denewá ts'li (the traditional economy) in the Sahtú. Many people seek eghálaeda (jobs) as a means of providing the cash needed to equip themselves and their families for traditional activities such as náats'ézé (hunting), zehdzo ats'ehzi (trapping), dats'eza (fisheries), lezets'ehla (gathering) and obtaining materials for the production of traditional náats'enelu há asii yáts'íhtsi (arts and crafts). As well, there are numerous opportunities for those with traditional land-based skills to use those skills in a variety of eghálaeda (jobs) and edegha eghálats'ereda (businesses) within the non-renewable resource sector. Industry representatives pointed out the challenge in preparing Sahtú residents to participate in the workforce.

Seasonal jobs are good; it's always been like that. – Alfred Taniton

I think that many Sahtu youth would benefit from having a better understanding about the oil and gas industry, the job opportunities available within the different stages of activity, and the training that's needed to be employed in those positions. When we meet with elders and community members, they often express a concern about the future of their youth because they are not as strong in the traditional ways, and are often unprepared for wage-economy jobs. – Sandra Marken, ConocoPhillips Canada

### Barriers

A number of barriers to participation in eghálats'eda t'á sôba ts'eretsi (the wage economy) were identified. These include:

- drug/alcohol policies of the company and lack of “employee assistance” with such problems
- family issues (having to care for zôhda kə (the elderly) and sick family members, becoming parents at a young age, lack of day care for ts'ôdane kə (children), single parenting, etc.)
- ełehda eghálats'eda (rotational cycles) (create undue hardships on family members left behind to care for family)
- poor financial management skills
- lack of adequate dene gháonetę (training) or certification

- cultural insensitivity of companies (not recognizing traditional values, accommodating important seasonal periods for náts'ezé (hunting), zehdzo ats'ehꞑ (trapping) etc.)
- the boom-bust nature of work availability
- the way funding is allocated for local employment

It starts with awareness and understanding, for example, learning about how people live, what's important to them, and why it's important. ConocoPhillips believes that this is the best approach to sustainable development. That's why Aboriginal awareness training is mandatory when we work in areas of traditional territory. We can be much more effective when we have knowledge, context and understanding. I feel we can learn a lot during these early exploration years by listening, sharing information, and working together to build a solid foundation for future work. – Sandra Marken, ConocoPhillips Canada

The problem for us to hire local guides and helpers is that we have to put in a proposal for a contribution agreement but we don't get the money for a long time. The RRC's don't have the money to pay people in the meantime. It would be better if they could give us at least part of the money up front. – Russell Kenny



Russell Kenny

Some of the barriers identified that prevent people from becoming involved in contract and edegha eghálats'ereda (business) opportunities include the following:

- lack of dene gháonetę (training) in edegha eghálats'ereda (business)
- lack of capital
- lack of equipment
- lack of bidding skills
- lack of asıı óts'erele (marketing) expertise including online asıı óts'erele
- contractors being exempt from local/Aboriginal hiring policies
- lack of dene gháonetę programs (eg. dene gháonetę for interpreter/translator)

## Opportunities

Currently, a number of contract beghót'á gha beghágót'á (opportunities) exist with industry operating in the Sahtú. These include, but are not limited to:

- environmental monitoring
- surveying
- catering
- driving/hauling
- construction (buildings, camp facilities, roads)
- materials supply
- water/waste (options are being explored)
- interpreting
- cross-cultural research
- community liaison
- maintenance (of buildings, equipment, roads)

## Supports

A number of supports do exist for those who want to set up and operate their own edegha eghálats'ereda (business), get involved in ełehá eghálats'eda (partnerships) or be self-employed. The Access and Benefits Agreements have provisions regarding support for beneficiaries for edegha eghálats'ereda and contract development. NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment offers the SEED program and a number of programs under the Growing Forward 2 Agreement (development of edegots'eredí gogha dene ghágót'á, asıı ts'enehshə kó, and alternative energy sources, etc). The Tulıt'a District Benefits Corporation has Benefits Assistant and Benefits Administrator

positions that maintain a Tulít'a District Business Registry for Tulít'a Dene and Métis-owned businesses, which they make available to industry.

## Workforce readiness - dene gháonetę (education and training)

Workplace readiness involves ensuring that today's and tomorrow's workforce has the skills, competencies and behaviors to succeed in today's and tomorrow's workplace. Life today in the Sahtú Region requires that people be well equipped to face a myriad of challenges in order to make a living. A discussion of workforce readiness for Sahtú gonęné t'áadets'enıto must take into account skills and capacities that enable people to participate in a wide variety of pursuits.

At first glance, the skills required for participation in the traditional sector of the economy might appear to be unrelated to those required in eghálat's'eda t'á s'oba ts'eretsı (the wage sector). However, on closer examination, commonalities can be found. Although these skills might be developed in very different environments, and often in very different ways, many of them are transferable. This becomes clearer when more suitable criteria are used to measure the value of the various types of dene gháonetę in which people have participated. The following discussion aims to identify a variety of skills and capabilities that can be gained through an array of experiences, ranging from the traditional to the most up-to-date, and examines how they contribute to workforce readiness.

One important traditional skill is 'riding the waves' when boating; it's like a life skill too. – Mitchell Naedzo



Mitchell Naedzo

## Traditions in dene gháonetę

Dene and Métis people have always had their approach to dene gháonetę for their ts'óðane kә (children). Not only simple tasks, but also highly technical skills have been taught in these traditional ways for generations. These methods have ensured the survival of the Dene and Métis up to today.

There was considerable discussion of traditional approaches to knowledge and skills transfer during the *Best of Both Worlds* workshop and Tulít'a Elders?qhda kә focus group. It was noted various times that contemporary institutions of dene gháonetę undermine traditional processes in dene gháonetę. Dene gháonetę has become compartmentalized, with ts'óðane kә (children) and ek'ónę kә (youth) removed from their families for a great deal of time. This was especially true when residential schools existed in the north. The role of family members, particularly ?qhda kә, has diminished.

I want to go back on the land and build a cabin and an arbor where we can hold meetings. I want to teach marksmanship, how to build a rat canoe and snowshoes, making knives and chisels, and ice scoops made of birch bark and woven babiche, tanning hides and smoking them with that rotten wood, making sinew for sewing. I decided to go back to get the strength from what my Elders taught me. – Frederick Andrew

Education is the most important thing because that's how Dene pass on survival. In the past, education came not just from your parents, but from other Elders. What we learned from Elders, we never documented it. It's just in our hearts. We trusted in the Elders in the past. – Alfred Taniton

The Elders tell us good stories, for our well-being, for the future. We have to live by the stories. – Richard Kochon

When we're on the land, it's sort of back and forth. They mostly teach me. But I teach them little things that I know, like about work and stuff like that. – Mitchell Naedzo

In traditional dene gháonetę, everyday chores become important teaching moments. Making a fire, sharpening an axe or knife, or chopping wood teaches about safety. Travel on the land becomes a lesson in survival. Story-telling acts as a vehicle for teaching values, beliefs and spirituality. Extended families sharing a living space nurture an understanding of each person's essential role and the importance of strong relationships, caring and mutual respect. Developing an awareness of kinship ensures relatives do not inter-marry.

Traditional dene gháonetę is usually done one-on-one, through hands-on and trial and error. The teachers are the people closest to the learner; they share the same culture, values and beliefs. ?qhda kә play a vital role in transmitting dene náoweré and

demonstrating life skills. Each family member has a specific role that centres on the well-being of the whole group. Learners demonstrate their appreciation through personal engagement, such as kúukare eĕghats'eredı (sharing) a first kill or náats'enelu (sewing) a special article of clothing.

Ways of knowing are based on practical experiences, first-hand exposure and keen observation. Attentive listening is guided by respectful, often minimal, repetition and explanation. The purpose of learning is clear and the relevance is obvious. Success is acknowledged by allowing the learner to perform independently and to carry on to a more difficult task. Boasting about success is discouraged.

According to the participants in the Sahtú workshops and a number of interviews, much of the development of life skills that are the foundation for success in both the academic field and in eghálats'eda t'á sǒba ts'eretsı (the wage economy) are best developed through on the land traditional activities. The demands created by having to survive on the land – if you don't build a fire, you freeze; without náts'ezé (hunting), you go hungry - instill a strong work ethic, develop self-reliance, and create a sense of confidence and satisfaction in one's accomplishments. These activities also contribute to a stronger sense of identity and belonging that help young people overcome the fear of failure. When ek'ónę kę (youth) are on the land, they are in a eĕts'ę náts'edi (mutually supportive) environment, with ǰhda kę, family and friends, so they are more willing to make mistakes and learn from their experiences than when they are in an academic or eghálaeda (job) setting surrounded by strangers who might not be as accepting.

In the past, the Elders taught the youth, but since the school was established here, the children have been taken away from the Elders. We have to put them back together so they can be nourished by the Elders. Now's our chance to put our kids back where they belong! – Jimmy Dillon

Visual education, just watching, is so important to Dene people. – Dora Blondin

Listening and obeying – that's how you can learn. – Charlie Neyelle



Credit: Doug Urquhart

In our consultations, ek'ónę kə repeatedly expressed their desire to learn traditional skills and dene náoweré and feel an urgency to do so before dene náoweré holders pass on. They want to be proud of who they are and develop the confidence, flexibility and resourcefulness they need to survive on the land as well as in eghálaeda (jobs) and academic pursuits.

In order to provide the infrastructure required for the intergenerational transmission of such life skills, the participants in this project repeatedly requested the establishment of adequate facilities on the land.

The focus of these camps could be the development of transferable skills that would prepare ek'ónę kə for challenges on the land, in eghálaeda and in the academic arena. Further development of wellness programs in the Sahtú is seen as another necessary step in order to prepare many individuals for eghálaeda or dene gháonetę. Several existing initiatives were identified: Charlie Barnaby's camp in Good Hope, Melinda Laboucan's wellness work in Fort Good Hope, and a proposal by Northern Ice for on the land camps in Tulít'a and Délįne.

We would rather see people learn how to survive off the land first, then that can lead into different jobs. – Alfred Taniton



Charlie Barnaby at his Hume River camp with students of Chief T'Selehye School in June 2009.

Credit: Leon Turo. Source: [www.nnsl.com](http://www.nnsl.com)

We need a camp on the land, even a tent, so we can take the youth out and teach them everything – life skills, how to survive, where the dangers are, how to cut up caribou and take care of the meat and bones, the names of the caribou parts, the names of the land, making snowshoes, canoes, paddles, tanning caribou hides and moose hides, the tribes of fish, where the fish are, making fish traps, rules for setting up a tent, how to handle your axe and knife, gun safety, how to use the skidoo and sleigh.

We need workshops – youth hand games, alcohol and drugs, anger management, couples' workshops, tanning hides, making handicrafts. – Charlie Neyelle

The achievement of traditional skills is not supported by a system of recognition similar to the system of credits, awards, certificates, diplomas and degrees provided by institutions of dene g'háonetę. Even ʔqhda kə who have exceptional skills and abilities on the land and immense dene náoweré (traditional knowledge), will often say that they are “not educated.”



Practicing a basic survival skill at Piet'anejo. Credit: Jean Polfus

Many traditional skills gained through activities on the land are either not considered or are under-evaluated in terms of eghálaeda (job) readiness or academic requirements. For the most part, traditional skills are undervalued, partly because there is no system for evaluating them. A system that provides an assessment of skills an individual has developed through, for example, life experiences, or even short term courses that have not led to any type of certification, is called a “prior learning assessment”. The development of such a system would be of great got’áots’erehwhí (benefit) to the people of the Sahtú.

Such mechanisms do exist elsewhere. Nunavut Arctic College, for example, runs a full-time program through Piquusilirivvik and provides College credits for dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) and traditional skills such as náts’ezé (hunting) and dats’eza (fisheries), weather observing, child-rearing, arts, language, knowledge of kinship, and conflict resolution. The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment website also includes a link to one successful project in Manitoba involving the assessment of Aboriginal students’ previous learning and skills.

Currently, only two staff, one at Aurora College and one in the GNWT Department of Education Culture and Employment, both residing in Yellowknife, are undertaking training to do prior learning assessments (PLAs) across a variety of fields so that individuals seeking eghálaeda and dene gháonetę can be given credit for previous learning and existing skills. The use of PLA to evaluate a number of skills that help learners achieve the requirements of some NWT high school Careers and Technology Studies (CTS) credit courses has already begun in the NWT, and this initiative could be expanded in the Sahtú if several individuals were to receive the related training.

Help industry realize that people in the north do a lot more in their jobs than down south; they have wider experience because they do everything themselves. They have no support staff to assist. So being qualified for a specific job here might translate into qualifications for other jobs that might seem unrelated. – Ronald Cleary

Aurora College instructor Jennifer Waterhouse and two of her students take in the *Best of Both Worlds* Workshop along with elders Andrew John Kenny and Joe Blondin Jr.



## Institutional dene gháonetę

Over the past half-century, contemporary institutions of dene gháonetę have become a prevalent mode of instilling skills and knowledge in new generations. Community participants were in agreement that young people require both traditional and contemporary dene gháonetę in order to be successful in nęné t'áadets'enıto (the mixed economy).

However, there are a number of barriers that Dene and Métis students face in achieving success in their schooling; these are grounded in cultural difference:

- Unlike traditional dene gháonetę, institutionalised learning is most often second-hand, from materials created by people the learners have never met and are not likely to ever meet.
- The experts are often from other dissimilar cultures with very different values and expectations. The application of the lesson is often not immediately obvious.
- Artificial timeframes are imposed and progress is recorded to determine a pass or fail.

Perhaps most importantly, many formal programs in dene gháonetę result in the development of skills that take the ones who are successful away from their home communities – sometimes by choice and sometimes through necessity. This phenomenon is often referred to as “brain drain” (however, one person interviewed noted that although these people might not be living in their home communities, they contribute to the local economy by sending money to their families in the Sahtú).



Fort Norman Métis beneficiary Laura Krutko was a proud graduate of the Environment and Natural Resources Technology Program at Aurora College (Tebacha Campus) in 2014.

Since the modern school came, there's a separation from our young people. Separation from our way of life. And the government makes the rules, so it's a burden on us and on our Elders and our youth. But we cannot blame the government totally for what happened to us. When the white people came, we believed them and trusted them because Dene are trusting people. Then we realized we are losing who we are. – Alfred Taniton

A number of people that were interviewed indicated that participation in formal dene gháonetę programs is limited by a number of factors, some of which include:

- Problems obtaining adequate funding, housing, transportation and other supports when leaving the home community.
- Cultural discrimination (leading to poor self-confidence, poor academic achievement, a sense of isolation, depression, etc).
- Curricula that do not take northern realities into account.

Tulít'a Adult Educator Nancy Norn-Lennie (2013) comments that:

Discrimination and prejudice also exist. When away from their home communities, Aboriginal people can be misunderstood because of differences in language and culture, which undermines their confidence and sense of pride. As a result, students might feel lonely and isolated, especially when high travel costs to their remote communities prevent them from visiting home for long periods of time.

Some of the same difficulties are documented in a Statistics Canada report entitled *The Education and Employment Experiences of First Nations People Living Off Reserve, Inuit and Métis: Selected Findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (2012)*.

Despite the many challenges that students in the Sahtú might encounter in trying to complete a formal dene gháonetę, many have met with success and have hopes of continuing on to higher levels. The following section looks at some of the related indicators.

All Sahtú communities currently offer dene gháonetę from kindergarten to Grade 12. Although the smaller communities cannot offer all of the specialized facilities that the larger centres can, the fact that students can now complete their high school dene gháonetę in their home community has undoubtedly had a positive effect on graduation rates. From 1986 to 2009, the average percentage of individuals in the Sahtú with a high school diploma or higher went from 34.4% to 55%, an increase of 20.6%, while it went from 51.6% to 69.3% in the NWT, an increase of 17.7%. The increase in the percentages for three of the Sahtú communities – Délı̄nę 27%, Tulít'a 25.3%, and Norman Wells 18.7% is greater than the average NWT increase of 17.7%

over this time period. The 13.2% percentage increase for Fort Good Hope was slightly under the NWT average, while the Colville Lake percentage only went up by 1.5% (which is likely due to small sample size). The percentage of non-Aboriginal people with high school or more in the Sahtú was 91.6% in 2011, drastically higher than the 38.4% of Aboriginal people, which clearly indicates the need for a continued focus on developing the supports needed for Aboriginal students.

Table 1. % of persons 15 and older with high school or more 1991-2011 (credit: NWT Statistics)

|                     | 1991 | 1994 | 1996 | 1999 | 2001 | 2004 | 2006 | 2009 | 2011 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>SAHTÚ</b>        |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| All                 | 48.3 | 50.4 | 57.1 | 54.3 | 55.7 | 52.1 | 48.9 | 55.0 | 52.9 |
| Aboriginal          |      | 35.8 | 40.5 | 35.4 | 38.8 | 33.7 | 34.2 | 40.8 | 38.4 |
| Non-Aboriginal      |      | 84.5 | 91.2 | 90.8 | 90.4 | 91.3 | 89.7 | 91.7 | 91.6 |
| Sahtú Beneficiaries |      |      |      |      |      | 31.6 |      | 38.0 |      |
| <b>NWT</b>          |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| All                 | 59.9 | 63.2 | 63.5 | 66.1 | 64.8 | 67.5 | 67   | 69.3 | 68.9 |
| Aboriginal          | N.A. | 37.6 | 41.9 | 42.5 | 44.3 | 45.1 | 45.3 | 49.2 | 49   |
| Non-Aboriginal      | N.A. | 82.4 | 79.9 | 86   | 82.1 | 86.8 | 85.9 | 87.5 | 87   |

Source(s): NWT Bureau of Statistics -NWT Community Survey and NWT Labour Force Survey; Statistics Canada - Census and National Household Survey (Census)

In reviewing a list of 212 students in the Sahtú region who have received Student Financial Assistance for college, university or technical dene ghaonetę in the last five years, it is obvious that many ek'oneę ka (youth) are striving for academic success. Students are pursuing dene ghaonetę in a wide variety of fields, as listed below:

- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| accounting                      | film                     |
| aircraft maintenance and repair | fine arts                |
| audio engineering               | forestry                 |
| automotive service              | graphic design           |
| Bachelor of Arts                | hairdressing             |
| Bachelor of Science             | health care              |
| business administration         | heavy equipment operator |
| carpentry                       | hospitality              |
| commerce                        | management               |
| communications                  | marketing                |
| computer science                | nursing                  |

|                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| criminal justice                  | office administration        |
| culinary arts                     | paramedic/EMT                |
| design essentials                 | personal support worker      |
| early childhood education         | power engineering technology |
| teacher education                 | psychology                   |
| environment and natural resources | religion                     |
| technology                        | science                      |
| environmental studies & sciences  | social work                  |
| esthetics and beauty              | trades access                |
| fashion design                    | underground mining           |

Some of these programs are only offered in southern Canada, while other programs are delivered through Aurora College campuses at Fort Smith, Yellowknife and Inuvik in the NWT, as well as through community Adult Learning Centres when adequate resources are available. Every Sahtú community has an Adult Learning Centre where students can pursue academic upgrading before gaining entrance to College and University programs. However, Ronald Clearly suggested that students would achieve better success and there would be less attrition in the student population if upgrading were tied more closely to the development of job skills.

In the communities now, the College mostly offers upgrading. They should provide vocational and trades training and college and university courses instead, using the same facilities. – Ronald Clearly

The University of Alberta-accredited Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning outside Yellowknife offers a combination of traditional and academic dene g'háonetę that focuses on developing leadership from a northern perspective. A number of ek'ónę kә (youth) from the Sahtú have successfully completed programs at Dechinta.

In 2013, the Department of Education Culture and Employment, in cooperation with the Sahtú Regional Training Partnership Committee, developed a Five Year Strategic Training Plan based on community consultations regarding dene g'háonetę needs. The Department and the Committee will be reviewing the plan and will monitor its implementation.



Tulít'a student Archie Erigaktuk runs a dog team at Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, Spring 2014. Source: Archie Erigaktuk

The plan identifies specific dene gháonetę needs by community, allowing for local differences and priorities. Some of the courses that have been identified are:

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| guide training                            | food safety                   |
| culture and tourism                       | train the trainer             |
| boat safety                               | janitorial                    |
| firearms safety                           | infection control             |
| first aid                                 | occupational therapy          |
| driver training (all classes of licences) | proposal-writing              |
| computer literacy                         | bookkeeping                   |
| housing maintenance                       | prospecting/geology           |
| project management                        | contaminated site remediation |
| camp attendant                            | chainsaw safety               |
| elder and home care                       | construction safety           |
| urban and community planning              | governance                    |
| cooking                                   | life skills/wellness          |
|   | financial management          |

In response to a motion made in the NWT Legislative Assembly in November 2013 by Sahtú MLA Norman Yakeleya, the Department of Education Culture and Employment is currently developing a Request for Proposals to undertake a full scale dene gháonetę needs assessment in the Sahtú and a feasibility study for a Sahtú Technical Training Centre. This research is scheduled to be completed in the 2014-15 fiscal year. This initiative will create a prime deneghágót'á (opportunity) for industry, government, dene gháonetę institutions and communities to work together towards workforce readiness in the Sahtú and economic development across the various sectors of the economy.

Think ahead. What jobs will there be in 10-20 years? If they want to get the specialized training required for higher level jobs, it will take longer. – Ronald Cleary

A number of supports are available to assist people who want to pursue dene gháonetę. In addition to Student Financial Assistance from the Department of Education Culture and Employment, the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board and the local land corporations offer scholarships. Industry has made contributions to funds for dene gháonetę through Access and Benefits Agreements managed by the land corporations on behalf of beneficiaries in affected community. The federal Department of Employment and Social Development offers a number of programs such as the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), the Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF) and the First Nations Job Fund. These programs specifically respond to the dene gháonetę needs of Aboriginal people.

Several options exist for expanding dene gháonetę opportunities in communities. Mentoring is one method of dene gháonetę that could be explored. The Master-Apprentice approach was specifically mentioned as a means of teaching the Dene language in the Sahtú. Development of Aboriginal language fluency is seen as an essential prerequisite for the intergenerational transmission of dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) and traditional skills. Mentoring would create a greater resource base for dene gháonetę. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment offers a mentorship program for xáré denį t'á asį hehtsį (artists) so it would be useful to examine the success of this initiative and to build on lessons learned.

For trades apprentices, journeymen need to be identified so that they can supervise learners and assist in the achievement of certification. Journeymen are not available in all communities for all trades but 22 apprentices are currently employed in the Sahtú. On-the-job dene gháonetę opportunities could possibly be expanded.

A number of community participants in this project expressed a desire to better understand how they can benefit from the myriad of opportunities that are currently and will, in the future, be available to them. There is a desire to maintain their ability to choose the options they have with regard to participation in either denewá ts'įł (the traditional economy), eghálats'eda t'á sóba ts'eretsį (the wage economy) or a combination of these. They understand that wage employment supports their traditional way of life in some ways, but they are concerned that eghálaeda (jobs) are drawing young people away from their roots and that an effort needs to be made to help them see that traditional activities provide the safety net that has sustained Dene and Métis people through boom and bust periods in the past.

Nowadays, employment is so important. But youth have to seek that for themselves. You take advice from people, you study, educate yourself, collect the knowledge, and that will give you a seed to survive on your own. – Leon Modeste

Workforce readiness planning in the Sahtú must take into account the provision of learning and teaching opportunities that respect the values, customs and beliefs of the Dene and Métis people. Only in this way, can the communities of the Sahtú develop and maintain the skills and capacities that will see them prosper and be self-reliant long after industrial development is gone.

# Recommendations for action

The following 29 recommendations are drawn from the inputs provided by participants in this project through the *Best of Both Worlds* workshop, focus group and interviews. Detailed recommendations from the workshop are included in Appendix C.5. The list of recommendations will be used to inform community-based pilot projects and action planning in Phase 2/Year 2 of this project, and priority items identified by communities will serve as indicators for evaluating the project (keeping in mind that it will be necessary to set clear and feasible priorities for action within the scope of Phase 2). Recommendations are provided in the areas of program and infrastructure development, dene gháonetę (education and training), communication and awareness-building, and research, with a focus on strengthening denewá ts'ıłı (the traditional economy).

## Program development

### Coordination

1. A full time regional coordinator or community liaison is needed to assist communities in proposal writing, program development, communications, information management, and research related to denewá ts'ıłı (traditional economy). This would be distinct from the program administration service currently provided by NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment (Sahtú Region).
2. Support for the Tulít'a District Benefits Corporation Benefits Assistant and Benefits Administrator positions should continue, with efforts ongoing to match up local vendors with opportunities in current exploration programs and others in the wage economy. In addition to the current emphasis on local Dene and Métis-owned businesses and contractors, an expanded focus on individuals within the local labour force could be warranted. A registry of individuals seeking training or employment, and their qualifications, prior learning and interests may assist in the hiring of local employees. This initiative could encompass the whole of the Sahtú Region.

### Nę k'ə edeghálats'ereda (Harvesting)

3. The Mackenzie Valley Tsáwé Gogha (Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs) program has been a hugely successful initiative by NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment, and should continue to receive support, if not expansion.

4. A denewá ts'ı́ı (traditional economy) coordinator could assist trappers in registering as self-employed, helping them gain the tax benefits available to small businesses. Furthermore, these trappers would then be more accurately represented in regional employment statistics.
5. The national recognition program for trappers sponsored by the Fur Institute of Canada is very successful and well supported in the Sahtú Region. A parallel awards program for ʔehdzo got'ı́ne (trappers), hunters, gatherers, individuals producing náats'enelu hé ası́ı yáts'ı́htsı́ (arts and crafts), contributors to dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) research and other forms of traditional pursuits should be established in recognition of denewá ts'ı́ı (the traditional economy) in the Sahtú Region.
6. Ongoing program development should be given consideration, targeted at addressing barriers to involvement in various kinds of ne k'ə edeghálats'ereda (living off the land) – particularly the costs of equipment, gas and other supplies, and with a dual focus on compensating super-harvesters for their contributions, and supporting new/young harvesters.
7. The establishment and support of on-the-land harvesting camps should be a priority. Every community expressed the need for facilities where people can gather to ensure the intergenerational transmission of skills and knowledge. Since the development of traditional, on-the-land skills and an appreciation of the importance of these capacities to the well-being and strong identity of youth were seen to be the foundation for success in relationships, education and jobs, they are an essential tool in the social and economic development of the region.
8. Aboriginal organisations should be supported in obtaining blanket permits for harvesting tseh ts'eréhk'ó (firewood) and logs for building to supply community members and encourage cost-effective heating and building, while maintaining a knowledge base about sustainable harvesting practices.

### Náats'enelu hé ası́ı yáts'ı́htsı́ (Arts and crafts) and ʔewé t'áadenakwı́ (hide tanning)

9. Options to increase sales of náats'enelu hé ası́ı yáts'ı́htsı́ (arts and crafts), while understanding their significance, not only to the economy but the spiritual, social and cultural benefits, should be developed.
10. Xaré denı́ t'á ası́ı hehtsı́ (artists) and xaré ası́ı hehtsı́ (craftspersons) would benefit from certain supports, such as a freight subsidy and joint purchase of supplies, possibly at wholesale rates.
11. The development of community centres for náats'enelu hé ası́ı yáts'ı́htsı́ should be considered. This type of facility would raise the profile of locally-produced goods,

provide a venue for xáré dení t'á asíı hehtsı and xáré asíı hehts'ı to share their knowledge and skills, and make materials and supplies more readily available at more reasonable costs.

12. The possibility of establishing hide-tanning facilities should be examined.

### Environmental monitoring

13. The role of nachits'alə (harvesters) as environmental monitors should be recognized and validated by resource managers, and culturally appropriate means should be collaboratively developed and funding allocated for documenting their observations; this information can be used by local ʔehdzo Got'ıne in their own decisions and recommendations for sustainable harvesting practices, as well as development of research questions.

14. The occupation of environmental monitoring as a form of wage employment should be developed strategically through partnerships that can lead to establishment of internships and dzene táonéht'e eghálats'eda (full time jobs).

### Mólarétı (Tourism)

15. Ways of increasing employment in the mólarétı sector should be explored. Cultural mólarétı could be greatly expanded, for example. This type of endeavour would allow people with dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) to share what they know with visitors and people who come to the region to work, thereby enhancing awareness of and appreciation for the Dene and Métis way of life.

16. Recommended infrastructure to support mólarétı include local museums, or facilities where visiting hunters and fishermen can pay to have antlers, meat and fish packaged properly for shipping.

### Dene gháonetę (Education and training)

17. Experiential learning curricula is needed for schools and Adult Learning Centres that complements the existing Dene Kedə curriculum with an explicit focus on building applied vocational awareness, knowledge and skills, including skills required for both the denewá ts'ııı (the traditional economy) and eghálats'eda t'á sóba ts'erehtsı (the wage economy) of the Sahtú Region.

18. Training and mentorship in setting up and operating a private business should be expanded. Information about financial assistance for would-be entrepreneurs needs to be more accessible and promoted. If these people were to register as self-employed, they would be counted in the employment statistics of the region. Generally those who are self-employed in traditional pursuits, such as ʔehdzo

got'ine (trappers), hunters and gatherers, are not considered “employed” or “self-employed” for the purpose of labour market and employment analysis. In addition, if they were to file a self-employment tax return, they would benefit from a variety of tax deductions related to the purchase and depreciation of equipment such as skidoos, boats and motors, the cost of supplies such as ammunition, traps, gas, tents, hunting gear, food, and the use of a portion of their home or shop for business purposes.

19. Trappers and craftspersons, for example, could be assisted in learning how to file self-employment tax returns in order to take advantage of tax breaks on the costs of equipment, supplies and use of their home as a business location. People who are self-employed can also take advantage of purchasing goods at wholesale rather than retail prices.
20. Prior learning assessment skills need to be fostered among educators and employers. This type of system would provide a formal method of acknowledging and accrediting skills and knowledge that people have gained through traditional pursuits as well as through short-term courses that have not been officially recognized. Through this type of system, people could obtain credits that would help them meet the prerequisites for further education or jobs. Comparable systems that exist elsewhere could be examined as a basis for developing such a system.
21. Environmental monitor training should include follow-up support for students successfully completing courses to document experience and complete necessary testing; once a pool of certified monitors is available, this certification should be recognized in hiring competitions.

## Communication and awareness-building

22. More information on the contribution of denewá ts'ı́ı (the traditional economy) to the overall health of the region needs to be available. Many people do not understand that, although Dene and Métis participate in eghálat's'eda t'á s'óba ts'eretsı (the wage economy), it is not always the central purpose of their involvement; many participate out of a desire to earn income to support traditional pursuits and to maintain their traditional way of life, customs and values. The reliance of Dene and Métis on traditional foods is often underestimated. Based on the unpublished research by NWT Industry, Tourism and Investment (John Colford, personal communication, January 8 2014), loss of country foods from the diet of Aboriginal people in the NWT would result in the need for approximately \$10 million/year in additional income to purchase the

equivalent amount of food. The health and social benefits of continued access to traditional foods are immeasurable.

23. Information on all of the support programs for traditional pursuits needs to be more accessible and better publicized. There is a myriad of programs available but many people did not know about them. Part of the problem is that some of the people who would be best positioned to take advantage of these programs are older and have limited English language skills. Word of mouth is a better vehicle for communicating this information.
24. Means of promoting knowledge and skills related to denewá ts'ı́ı̄ should be developed – these can include materials added to the website associated with this project, a poster series, and booklets describing methods of production (eg. dene béré recipes, medicines, different kinds of wood for harvesting, sustainably harvesting and preparing different harvest animals for food or materials). Some of these materials can be produced in collaboration with students at schools.

## Research

25. Deeper understanding of the role of denewá ts'ı́ı̄ (the traditional economy) within the larger economy begs further research and analysis. There is also very little data to shed light on the economic value of denewá ts'ı́ı̄ activities. Some basic statistical data from the NWT Bureau of Statistics and ITI has been discussed in this document, but it would be misleading to base any conclusions on this limited information. There is a clear need for more study in this area. This project represents a first step in contributing to this research gap, but more detailed documentation is recommended.
26. Further assessment of the contribution of dene béré (country food) harvesting to household income, as well as the much broader benefits (health, cultural, social, spiritual) these foods provide, is warranted. Few comprehensive attempts to evaluate the contributions of dene béré to families and the mixed economy have been undertaken since the studies of Peter Usher in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Usher 1976).
27. The contribution of náats'enelu hé ası́ı̄ yáts'ı́ı̄tsı́ı̄ (arts and crafts) to denewá ts'ı́ı̄ (the traditional economy) needs further study. Very little information is available about this activity and its importance to maintaining a traditional way of life, dene náoweré (traditional knowledge), skills, customs and values.
28. The value of dene náoweré (traditional knowledge) in néné́ t'áadets'enı́ı̄ (the mixed economy) needs to be studied. Many people participate in denewá ts'ı́ı̄ (the traditional economy) by contributing dene náoweré to research projects and

consultations on a wide variety of topics. This activity contributes to the maintenance of Dene/Métis identity and way of life, and to its inclusion in the development of appropriate policies and practices in communities, governments and industry. It contributes to the economy of the Sahtú through the payment of honoraria and wages as well as use of community facilities and services, but no information exists to assess its impacts. This gap has a negative effect on the research economy, in that communities perceive that benefits of research flow only outward to sponsoring agencies and thus may not welcome research initiatives.

29. A terminology workshop with speakers and language specialists from each of the three districts of the Sahtú Region is recommended to develop the Dene language concepts related to the mixed economy and appropriately translate these into English. Such a project will be crucial for developing culturally appropriate educational and communications materials and bridging cultures in future dialogue regarding research, planning, and program development. Crucially for this project, the terminology research will provide a more robust conceptual toolbox as a basis for completion of Phase 2.

## Conclusion

This discussion document is a preliminary attempt to capture information from communities, government and industry about how Sahtú gonǵǵǵǵ t'áadets'enǵǵǵǵ can be sustained and enhanced, taking into account its strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and barriers that must be addressed. Phase 1 of this project has deliberately focused on denewá ts'ǵǵǵǵ in order to support the particular mandates of the ǵǵǵǵ Got'ǵǵǵǵ Gots'ǵǵǵǵ Nákedǵǵǵǵ and their ǵǵǵǵ Got'ǵǵǵǵ co-management partners – and in recognition that other initiatives are underway examining workforce readiness for eghálat's'eda t'á sǵǵǵǵba ts'eretsǵǵǵǵ (the wage sector). It is hoped that the current research can shed some light on how the goals and aspirations of the people of the Sahtú can be realized to ensure productive, healthy, self-reliant and sustainable communities.

There is much inherent strength within Sahtú gonǵǵǵǵ t'áadets'enǵǵǵǵ. This is true not only because of the region's rich environmental resources – renewable and non-renewable - but also because of the wide diversity of skills and knowledge of its people and because the region affords many choices for making a living. Maintaining

an economic climate where people can continue to be able to exercise these choices requires the concerted efforts of all – individuals, communities, governments, non-government organizations and the private sector.

Since 2011, the flurry of activity related to the Canol Shale Oil Play brings new potential for industrial expansion, and mining investment is on the rise. The jobs that come with industrial development have been welcome. However, our research has indicated that special measures will be required to maintain balance with denewá ts'ı́ı́ (the traditional economy) so that néné t'áadets'enı́tq (the mixed economy) will remain robust, and will outlast industrial development cycles. This approach fits well with the NWT's Economic Opportunity Strategy (Government of the NWT 2013), which advocates economic diversification.

Sahtú residents who participated in this project universally advocated an approach that supports a diverse economy because they have experienced the boom and bust of industrial development in their region and know that they must keep other doors open as well. Although many have chosen to participate in the many opportunities for wage employment, they understand that traditional pursuits are vital, not only to their economic stability, but also to their health and wellbeing. This is their safety net. Passing on their traditions, customs, values and beliefs through their traditional pursuits enables Dene and Métis people to establish a strong identity and sense of pride that are seen as the foundation for success in all other areas of their lives.

Whenever I'm out on the land, living off the land, I feel like that's my home. I just feel better out there seeing the animals and laying in the grass, sitting on the moss, cutting wood, getting up early, starting a fire, working hard. – Jaryd McDonald

A unique approach is required in planning for the future of the economy of the Sahtú. It is a complex challenge to channel and coordinate the objectives of the diverse interests at play in the region so that they are complementary and mutually supporting. The relationships between the different sectors of the economy need to be better understood in order to ensure that communities can move forward in a healthy, self-reliant, sustainable way.

Phase 2 of this project will further supplement the research presented in this document toward developing an Action Plan for Sahtú gonéné t'áadets'enı́tq. It is hoped that this two phase project will lead to long term actions so that Sahtú communities can benefit from the many, varied opportunities that their future holds.

We have to come together as a region, work together. Unity for the next generations. – Archie Erigaktuk

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