



## **Tłı̨cho Government**

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Ernie Campbell  
Environment and Natural Resources  
Government of the Northwest Territories  
Box 1320  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

July 4, 2013

Re: GNWT Management Proposal – Limited Resident Harvest of Bull Caribou from the Bluenose East Herd

Dear: Mr. Campbell

The Tłı̨cho Government has received your letter dated May 24'13 and its attached management proposal regarding the reinstatement of Resident Harvesting of Barren ground Caribou.

As you are aware, the Tłı̨cho Government has been working closely with GNWT-ENR since 2009 in a collaborative manner and in the spirit of co-management following the precipitous decline of the Bathurst Caribou. The Tłı̨cho leadership has made very difficult choices that have been met with criticism and concern from the Tłı̨cho public, however these decisions and sacrifices have been sustained to maximize the chances of a better future for the Bathurst caribou.

We have carefully considered your management proposal for the reinstatement of resident harvesting of the Bluenose East caribou. The Tłı̨cho Government is opposed to the reinstatement of resident hunting at this time for the Bluenose-East herd.

We appreciate that some NWT residents want to hunt and if circumstances were different, we would welcome NWT residents having the challenges and experiences of harvesting caribou. That said, any decision to reinstate resident hunting in this precipitous time for the caribou in the NWT must be made in light of both the future of the herd and the sustainability of aboriginal hunting that is so connected to our well being and way of life.

The decline of the Bathurst caribou has brought numerous challenges to our people and affecting our way of life. Indeed, the stress on our people about the reduction in numbers of the herd and the possibility of recovery is real. Wekweèti is restricted to

only 150 Bathurst caribou and the other three communities must now go towards Whati and Gamèti to access the Bluenose East caribou. It seems highly plausible that the harvest of Bluenose East caribou has increased since the decline of the Bathurst caribou as the Thcho and others Aboriginals have become more dependent upon it than previously. We have seen an increase in other Aboriginal hunters harvesting the Bluenose East caribou, generally North of Gamèti. This increase in hunting has brought with it different concerns.

We understand that in 2010, a calving ground survey was conducted of the Bluenose East herd which showed that the herd had increased to 122,000. This was good news that the Bluenose East herd was beginning to recover. We understand that another calving ground survey was conducted in June of this year, and we are looking forward to the results.

The Thcho Government is of the view that opening the Bluenose East harvest is not the correct step to take at this time because:

- 1) Given the Bathurst restrictions and concerns of Boreal caribou population in the NWT, an increase in harvest may cause further decline of the Bluenose East herd, ultimately leading to further restrictions on our people and other Aboriginal groups in the future which could have potential negative impacts on our Aboriginal and treaty rights.
- 2) As this year has shown, the Bathurst can and do mix with the Bluenose East caribou North of Gamèti. If this occurs again in the future, the possibility of accidental harvest of Bathurst is possible, further affecting the Bathurst population, which will also have potential negative impacts on our Aboriginal and treaty rights.
- 3) For safety reasons, any further increase in harvest in the area of Gamèti is cause for concern. As there is a fairly limited spatial and temporal distribution that the Bluenose caribou are accessible, a further increase in hunters may have safety implications for hunters and community members who are out on the land.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on your management proposal.

In Thcho Unity



Grand Chief Edward Erasmus

cc. Jody Snortland Pellissey, Executive Director, WRRB

