

PETER ARROWMAKER: An agenda has been passed around to everyone in the room. This workshop is set up to educate people but at the same time; the floor will be open for anyone that wants to say a few words. The chief of the host community, Charlie Jim Nitsiza will speak first followed by the Grand Chief, George Mackenzie.

Agenda item number three and four will be explained by Bertha Rabesca- Zoe. She's going to take us through the steps on how the workshop will precede tomorrow and what time it's going to begin but today, the meeting will close with a prayer but before that, Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza wants to address the delegates, Chief Charlie Jim?

CHIEF CHARLIE JIM NITSIZA: Masi, welcome everyone, elder, elderly ladies and the youth, Some of you have traveled hundreds of kilometers to be here, either by planes, skidoos or vehicles so most of you must be tired.

The meeting will be short today but I want everyone to know what will take place at this workshop in the next two days. The other leaders will tell you the reason why we are all here and tomorrow will be a busy day for everyone at this meeting.

Caribou and wildlife is important not only to us but to others as well. Wildlife has always been a big part of our diet and now the caribou population is on a decline as I'm sure most of you have heard by now.

We are going to hear from the people who have a close relationship with the caribou, the hunters. After presentations

by the members, the Tł'chǫ Government will make a decision on what should be done to save the caribou. The other regions are waiting to hear what we have chosen to do at this workshop. The Government of the Northwest Territories and the First Nation leaders held conferences across the north as far as Inuvik.

Some of us will tell you later in the workshop what some of the people said at these hearings on the Bathurst caribou herd. One of the workshops was held in Yellowknife.

The Tł'chǫ had their own hearing in Behchokǫ recently. Now we are doing the same thing in Whatì which will take a better part of the next two days. At the end of this workshop, the Tł'chǫ Government will come away with clear directions on what to do about the caribou management plan. That information will be shared with our other regions. We're at a critical stage where we need each other to keep the caribou from becoming an endangered species.

I'm glad all of you could make it to this important meeting for the next two days. Let's have a good meeting and come up with answers to resolve the problem facing us before we go home, masi.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza, Grand Chief George Mackenzie?

GRAND CHIEF GEORGE MACKENZIE: Masi, Mister Speaker. We asked everyone to be at this meeting to listen to what the elders have to say and what they think about the proposal from the territorial government.

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We met with some of the aboriginal Members of the Legislative Assembly in Yellowknife some time ago. The comments the MLA's made to us were, "meeting with your elders and listening to their advice to make a motion is good" that came from the territorial government members of the legislative assembly.

We're here to listen to the Tłı̨chǫ people and based on what they want us to do, the Tłı̨chǫ Government will draft a motion and do our best to save the caribou without hurting Tłı̨chǫ people and their traditions.

The other regions are waiting and watching to see what kind of a decision we come up with but they said they will support us and abide by any terms the Tłı̨chǫ Government comes up with to protect and save the caribou.

Once again, I just want to say thank you for coming to this meeting, masi.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Grand Chief George Mackenzie.

We talked about what we were going to do at the workshop in Behchokǫ, most of you were there. We discussed some ideas and then came up with answers on the best way to deal with the problems we are now faced with. Most of you are familiar with what the Tłı̨chǫ Government wants to do to protect the animals.

The Tłı̨chǫ Nation will spend the next two days talking about the caribou herd. We have been talking about the caribou herd everywhere, at home, in the offices and with friends so this is not a new

issue but our question is, "what should we do and how should we handle this?" That has been on our mind for awhile now so we are asking you to help us find a way to save the caribou.

The Tłı̨chǫ people were at the first caribou workshop in Yellowknife and then we went to Inuvik with some elders for the second workshop on the herd. We were not the only ones that had concerns about the caribou herd's declining in population. The Gwich'in, Inuvialuit and other regions suggested options they wanted the Tłı̨chǫ Government to consider.

Like I said, the caribou will be on the agenda tomorrow and Friday. We need to pass a resolution before we leave on Friday so the leaders could start working on the problem right away.

Anyone that wants to speak will get the opportunity to do so when the meeting begins tomorrow. This workshop is run by Bertha Rabesca-Zoe. She's going to talk today for a short time about the information the Tłı̨chǫ Government has and the research that was done on the herd and then the official meeting on the Bathurst caribou herd will begin tomorrow.

BERTHA RABESCA-ZOE: We talked about caribou for two days in Behchokǫ last month and we documented all the concerns that were raised at that meeting. The territorial government had released information that the caribou population in the Tłı̨chǫ Nation is on a decline so they drafted up a management plan that they think will save the caribou.

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There's seven different species of caribou in the Arctic but the caribou that migrates in our region are called the Bathurst Caribou.

The territorial government adopted a caribou management plan two years ago and that plan describes how the caribou will be managed, who will be responsible to take care of the herd, where the funds will come from and which organization will monitor the migrations, all that is included in the draft but their paperwork is not complete yet.

When the territorial government held their workshop last December in Yellowknife, they introduced a set of guidelines written by the territorial government's Department of Environmental Natural Resources.

A copy of the caribou management plan was sent to the Wek'eezii board of the Tłı̨chǫ Government. The Tłı̨chǫ Government went over the draft and the leaders had some concerns about the territorial government proposed caribou management plan and we are here to tell you what they are:

For one thing, the Government of the Northwest Territories told our government to review their draft proposal, accept it and then make a motion to support the guidelines laid out in the draft. Then the territorial government ministers said they will begin implementing the proposed guidelines as soon as the Tłı̨chǫ Government passes a motion to support the management plan. But we can not do something just because the other government wants us to, so that is not acceptable.

The lawyer working with us, Rick Salter, will talk next about the details of the draft proposal that was sent to the Tłı̨chǫ Government on the management of the herd. We don't understand what authority they have to try to control the resources in our country. We have a constitution which protect us under our self-government agreement pertaining to wildlife in the Tłı̨chǫ country which the leaders refers to; when they deal with different organizations and governments.

There's about seven or nine conditions in the proposal that the territorial government sent to the Tłı̨chǫ leadership. I will not go into details on each one of them but there are three items in the draft proposal that go against the Tłı̨chǫ constitution.

The territorial government wants to prohibit the public from hunting on the winter road to Whatì, Gamètì and Wekweètì and if the Government of the Northwest Territories wants to implement laws in our claimant area; the Tłı̨chǫ Nation is suppose to be notified first but that never happened. The Tłı̨chǫ Government was never notified in advance on what the territorial government intended to do until the day we received the draft of the caribou management plan. So we need to hear what the Tłı̨chǫ people want to do about the "no hunting" policy proposed by the territorial government.

Another condition attached to the proposal is: the Government of the Northwest Territories wants to monitor how many people hunt and how many animals are taken. They want to send a wildlife officer from the Department of Renewable Resources to monitor each

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time our people go on these hunting trips.

There are ten outfitters in the Wek'eezhìi territory that are allotted fifteen hundred caribou permits a year. The territorial government wants to cut that back to three hundred and fifty a year. It's a proposal so it's not a policy yet. The territorial minister responsible for the permits said his department will issue seven hundred and fifty tags to outfitters for this fall, year two thousand and seven and that too was done without talking with the Tłı̨chǫ Government first. We need feedback from the delegates on this as well.

The Wek'eezhìi board of the Tłı̨chǫ Government will hold a hearing on the caribou management plan proposed by the territorial government this March in Behchokǫ. So the Tłı̨chǫ Government invited all of you to this workshop because the leaders need direction from the delegates to deal with the territorial government's intentions. We also want to hear suggestions on how we should proceed with the document in front of us.

The Tłı̨chǫ Government looked over the proposed management plan from the territorial Minister of Renewable Resources briefly. We are going over the draft again to see what might become a problem for the Tłı̨chǫ people if Renewable Resources decides to implement the restrictions to protect the caribou. We still need time to figure out what we're going to do with their proposal.

The territorial government has its own constitution on wildlife which the Tłı̨chǫ Government has not yet looked at. We haven't looked at how this regulation

will affect our relationship with the federal, territorial and Nunavut Government which includes the regions around us. We need your help with the motion that will be sent to the territorial government on what the Tłı̨chǫ Nation wishes to do with the management of caribou in Wek'eezhìi. I wanted to talk about the purpose of this workshop in Whatì.

Our government has its own constitution under the land-claim and self-government agreement which the leaders refer to each time they deal with different political organizations. The territorial government was part of the political organization that signed an accord with the Tłı̨chǫ Government when we ventured out on our self-government initiative. Now their actions show that the Government of the Northwest Territory doesn't recognize our constitution under the Tłı̨chǫ agreement.

The territorial government's Natural Resources Board went bypassed our government and made decisions on how many tags the outfitters could receive without consulting us first which isn't right. It was supposed to work in partnership with the Tłı̨chǫ Government but it's not working out that way. The Government of the Northwest Territories signed an agreement to collaborate with the Tłı̨chǫ Government on how the wildlife is supposed to be managed but that was not the case here. The territorial government is supposed to meet with us each time they make decisions about resources on our land. They are aware of the consultation policy that exist between the two groups but that seems to have been forgotten.

The Premier of the Northwest Territories met with the Tł'chǫ leaders not too long ago and in his own words, the premier said "he wants his government to work with the Tł'chǫ Government" but it seems like the territorial government has its own agenda which doesn't correspond with our accord. So the chiefs sent a letter to the premier stating their dissatisfaction with the territorial government because it's not living up to their end of the agreement to work side by side.

I am now going to wrap up my presentation and Rick Salter will talk to you next, masi.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Bertha Rabesca-Zoe. Our lawyer, Rick Salter, will speak to the delegates next.

RICK SALTER: Masi, Mister Speaker, Mister Chairman, Grand Chief, Members of the Assembly and the Tł'chǫ, hello everybody. Masi for allowing me into your country. Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza, I worked with your people for fifteen years, the first time that I ever spoke to your people was here in Whatì, what these elders said to me fifteen years ago was we have to protect the caribou. They said that was the most important thing for the Dogrib, for the Tł'chǫ, was to protect the caribou. You may remember, at that time we had a committee of elders whose job it was to try to protect the caribou.

When we had that talk fifteen years ago, I remember that there was four hundred and eighty-five thousand Bathurst Caribou in the herd and now we're told there's one hundred and fifty thousand.

The elders told us when you negotiate the land claim agreement, make sure that you put things in this agreement that will help us protect the caribou; sometime it's easy to forget the simple things. Sure, we have self-government and all kind of complicated arrangements have been made in this agreement but I can tell you, for the negotiators, John B. Zoe, James Wah-shee and Eddie Erasmus, it was absolutely crucial and Ted Blondin was in the same mind that we had to put things into this agreement to protect the caribou and we did.

Now, fifteen years later, we are at a sad place because now we have to use the agreement to protect the caribou, Bertha Rabesca-Zoe explained to you what the steps are that you have to go through but let me tell you something. Protecting the caribou is not the responsibility of the territorial government, they think it is; the responsibility of protecting the caribou is in this agreement and the Tł'chǫ have the full responsibility to protect the caribou because that's in your constitution as well.

The Government of the Northwest Territories can't, even in their assembly come up with laws that they want to put in place that they think will help the caribou unless the Tł'chǫ Government is in agreement with it, that's what this agreement says.

Before they used to have to ask your opinion, what do you think? What would you like? Now it goes one step further, it's not just what your opinion is and what you like but it's what do you agree with. So now the Tł'chǫ Government has to make some decisions and the reason the chiefs want this workshop is really only one reason. They believe the Tł'chǫ

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know what the right thing to do is, I believe that too. I read the government's plans, I read what people have said but now we want to hear what the Tłı̨chǫ have to say about it and what should be done about it and then your government, your chiefs will make it happen.

We're going to have lots of chances to talk this over during the next few days. But as Bertha Rabesca-Zoe said we are going to listen very hard. Your knowledge about your country and the caribou is what's going to save the situation. You tell us and we'll go do what has to be done. That's what we want to happen over the next three days, we want you to tell us, we want you to talk, and nobody should be shy. We've got three fabulous women here who are going to help these groups during the workshop talk about what they think should be done and what is the cause of the problem.

Forget what the territorial government says, what the government wants to do, we can read that, we want to know what you think and what you say should be done because the Tłı̨chǫ not only own all of Tłı̨chǫ lands but you are responsible for all Tłı̨chǫ harvesting throughout all of Mowhì Gogha Dè Nı̨ı̨tl'èe, not just Tłı̨chǫ lands, it's throughout all of Mowhì Gogha Dè Nı̨ı̨tl'èe, that's what we promised Alexis Arrowmaker.

Alexis Arrowmaker said it had to be all of Mowhì Gogha Dè Nı̨ı̨tl'èe, the same lands that Chief Mowfi identified in nineteen twenty-one so when you think about the caribou, don't just think about Tłı̨chǫ lands, you think about all of Mowhì Gogha Dè Nı̨ı̨tl'èe. Then we'll talk about how we deal with the people

outside of Mowhì Gogha Dè Nı̨ı̨tl'èe and even within Mowfi who are also aboriginal people. You have the responsibility throughout the Mowhì Gogha Dè Nı̨ı̨tl'èe, you're not limited to your Tłı̨chǫ lands so we are excited about this workshop because we think it will be a very important step in starting to solve what has become a serious sad problem the territorial government had allowed to have happened.

The territorial government was watching over the Bathurst caribou herd and look what happened but now you're part of the solution, the agreement says so. It's all in there and Bertha Rabesca-Zoe told you about ways in which the government doesn't yet properly respect this agreement but we'll deal with them.

We just need your information, your instructions and your guidance on what to do and I know that the grand chief, George Mackenzie and the other chiefs will do the right thing, masi.

APPLAUSE

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Bertha Rabesca-Zoe and Rick Salter.

The territorial government sent a proposed caribou management plan to the Tłı̨chǫ Government. Bertha Rabesca-Zoe and Rick Salter explained the intentions of the territorial government to all of you and I'm sure you understood the presentation because we have good interpreters working with us.

We will meet for the next three days on the caribou situation and both of the lawyers will be with us. Think hard about what the territorial government

plans to do and talk about it among yourselves because the steps our lawyers take eventually is really up to all of you, the advice and directions will come from all the Tł'chǫ people.

Grand Chief George Mackenzie?

GRAND CHIEF GEORGE MACKENZIE: Masi, Mister Chairman, Mister Speaker.

The Government of the Northwest Territories was going to go ahead with their caribou management plan when you think about it, because they have been meeting with us since last year. At our meeting with the territorial government ministers last December, I didn't say much to them because I'm the grand chief. But what the leaders and I said was, we have to consult with the elders before we do anything on the proposed plan. So we are here to ask your advice and instructions and we also told the government that we will meet with them again after we have met with the elders.

The other chiefs and I signed a document that Bertha Rabesca-Zoe read to all of you.

At one of our meetings with the Government of the Northwest Territories, they asked the Tł'chǫ Government for help with money because their budget was being cut. The territorial government gave us their word during that meeting that they were fully committed to working with our government. I said, we heard many times in the past that the government was committed to working with us but nothing was done which I could see, so I said "it sounds good but it's only words". I pointed out some of the facts

about contracts that were awarded to other companies like the winter road project; I said we don't see the territorial government helping the Tł'chǫ Government.

A week after that meeting, Tł'chǫ Government received the management plan on the Bathurst Caribou herd in Wek'eezhìi. What the government planned wasn't right and that too was done without consulting us. They seem to not want to work with us and that's the reason why the aboriginal MLA's said, we are doing the right thing. The aboriginal members of the Legislative Assembly said they were glad when we told them that we wanted to bring the elders together and asked them for direction. They told us that what we intended to do on the proposed management plan could set a precedent.

The Tł'chǫ Government has a constitution which the territorial government doesn't recognize and at times they don't treat us as equal which isn't right.

The elders are going to talk at workshops tomorrow so it would be good for them to think hard about how they think we should resolve the caribou problem, masi.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Grand Chief George Mackenzie, Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza from Whatì?

CHIEF CHARLIE JIM NITSIZA: Masi, Mister Speaker.

We will continue this discussion tomorrow and it would be good for everyone to think of what the lawyers have said today about the Bathurst

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caribou herd. The herd is very important to the Tłı̨chǫ Nation and the territorial government wants to restrict the people by introducing a law of a “no hunting zone” on the winter roads to the communities linked only by the ice road during the winter months.

The territorial government made a decision without talking to us first and the “no hunting zone” on the winter road came into effect this year. People who live in isolated communities like Whatì depend on wildlife for food. We have always hunted on the winter roads in the past and now the territorial government said we can’t hunt on the winter roads anymore.

It’s very important that we have a good discussion on this starting tomorrow because what is said at this meeting will be used in the motion at the end of this meeting.

The outfitters were allowed three hundred and fifty tags a year but that has been changed to seven hundred and fifty. The territorial government went ahead and made these changes without telling us first. We need the elders to think about what the territorial government is doing, for one thing, more caribou are taken because the outfitters now have more tags to hunt with. We have our own constitution which gives us authority under the Tłı̨chǫ law. The Tłı̨chǫ citizens voted and accepted the land claim and self-government package after the negotiations were finished. We do have a government status but then, why is the territorial government treating us like we don’t have a constitution? Our people have lived under non- Tłı̨chǫ policies for years and now we don’t have to anymore because we have an

agreement with the federal government. The Government of the Northwest Territories was at the table when Tłı̨chǫ leaders were negotiating the land claim and self-government agreement. It signed our agreement so we, the Tłı̨chǫ and NWT government could work side by side as equal partners.

Our constitution was signed by all three governments but since then, the territorial government made decisions twice that had a negative impact on our people. This is our country but last year, the territorial government gave the winter road project to a company outside of the Tłı̨chǫ Nation, what I’m saying is that the territorial government is not working with us.

Caribou is our main livelihood and now the territorial government is trying to introduce a regulation to make hunting difficult for us which is something we don’t approve of. I want all of you to think about the changes that the territorial government wants to make and speak on it at the workshop tomorrow. Let’s make a decision that will benefit the Tłı̨chǫ people today and the young people of the future so think about it, masi.

PETER ARROWMAKER: I went over the agenda and the grand chief and chief of Whatì spoke to all of you. They both insist that you think about what the territorial government plans to do to protect the herd. The leaders are asking you for direction on what they should do about the problem facing them.

The workshop on the caribou will begin tomorrow but we haven’t said what time the meeting will start. Lots of people arrived today for this meeting and I think

most of them must be tired so we should set a time for the meeting tomorrow and begin closing this one.

CHIEF CHARLIE JIM NITSIZA: Let's start the meeting at ten tomorrow morning.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Let's begin at ten in the morning because we have to wait for the delegates to arrive at the meeting first. This is a very important meeting because we are talking about our culture and tradition, we have been hearing about the changes the territorial government wants to make to caribou hunting in Wekeèzii for sometime now. So let's get started early, Grand Chief George Mackenzie?

GRAND CHIEF GEORGE MACKENZIE: Masi, Mister Chairman. I think we should tell the elders we are going to break into groups for the workshops tomorrow because it's the elders that will do most of the talking. We are not going to form one large group and talk? Will there be separate groups that are going to have their own discussion? We just need to know because some of the presentations could be longer than others.

PETER ARROWMAKER: We are following the agenda and I think the decision to make changes should be up to the chiefs. The suggestion was that the workshop be done in groups and then each one will submit a report to the larger group after everyone gets back together. But how the workshop is organized tomorrow is up to the chief and the delegates, Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza?

CHIEF CHARLIE JIM NITSIZA: I think what the grand chief is saying is that, we should have tables set up at the workshops tomorrow so they can sit and make them comfortable.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza, Grand Chief George Mackenzie?

GRAND CHIEF GEORGE MACKENZIE: Bertha Rabesca-Zoe, I think you should tell the elders and the member how we are going to conduct the workshop tomorrow. I don't think we should make more changes to the agenda. We'll go with your suggestion for group sessions.

BERTHA RABESCA-ZOE: Many people are here for this meeting so let's talk about how we are going to run the workshops first thing in the morning because we want to meet with our staff that had just arrived. But we thought groups of ten or twenty can get together and one person can take notes of the elders' suggestions and another can speak for the groups when we get back to the meeting. At the same time, the elders can add more ideas to the main group after we all come back from the group sessions if they want to. But right now Rick and I need to meet with our staff this evening and talk about how we are going to precede with the group discussion tomorrow.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Bertha Rabesca-Zoe, Chief Charlie Football from Wekweètì.

CHIEF CHARLIE FOOTBALL: Masi-cho, Mister Speaker.

I wanted everyone to know how important this meeting is so to show our appreciation to the delegates for speaking, let's show them by applauding and yelling words of encouragement.

There are a lot of people at this meeting and I'm sure someone will report back to the territorial government on how excited we are to resolve the caribou situation and that could send a message on how well we come together in time of crisis. That's all I wanted to say, masi.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Chief Charlie Football of Wekweètì

When the tables we are using now are sent back to Behchokǫ, maybe we should arrange the other tables like we had them in Behchokǫ and let the elders sit in front like we did at the workshop but that's up to Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza, Grand Chief George Mackenzie?

GRAND CHIEF GEORGE MACKENZIE: Masi, Mister Speaker, Mister Chairman.

I was told supper will be ready at five so I think we have time for one of the elders to speak before we break, it will get us started first thing in the morning. There were lots of elders that wanted to speak on the caribou in Behchokǫ but not all had the opportunity to talk. I was just now approached by Jimmy Martin from Behchokǫ, who wishes to speak, he didn't get that chance at the last workshop so let's listen what he has to say, let him sit here.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Grand Chief George Mackenzie, lots of people have come here for this meeting

and we have about one hour before we break so if some elders want to talk, that's fine because this will open the floor for discussion as soon as the meeting starts in the morning. Jimmy Martin will now speak to the delegates before we break.

JIMMY MARTIN: Masi to all of you, I'm glad the leaders are doing something about the caribou problem we have in front of us. I wanted to say a few words on it for sometime now. We have lost many of the elders so there aren't many of them living with us anymore.

Caribou was our main source of food when I was a young man. Caribou hunting back then was hard physical work but we needed caribou to survive and that was when Jimmy Bruneau was our chief. Tł'chǫ weren't the only first nation to depend on caribou for food, so did other First Nations living outside the Tł'chǫ country. We ate the meat to keep us strong and used the hide for clothing, nothing was wasted. The hide kept us warm even in the coldest temperature, it also kept the babies and the children warm too, it provided for large families with fur caribou parkas which kept everyone warm and it kept the men warm when they went hunting. I remember when I was old enough to go hunting with my dad, mom made a fur-covered caribou hide parka for me and she had one too. Every family that followed the caribou during their migration had a fur covered caribou parka.

We, the Tł'chǫ survived the tough years only because we had caribou around us. Caribou was and still is an important part of our lives and we will always protect them. We don't abuse the animals and

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we killed only enough to feed our families.

I want to talk about how the caribou reproduces to ensure the population doesn't go down. It's getting warm now and the cows are carrying their fetus. The herd will migrate to the Arctic to have their babies which is around the middle of the summer. These are the stories told by our parents and their parents on how the caribou survive year after year and how the caribou protect the calves after they are born. All the young men used to gather at Chief Jimmy Bruneau's house to listen to our elders tell us stories about the caribou and its reproductive cycle. I want to pass down these stories to the young people while I'm still in good health.

But first I'm grateful to be here and a chance to talk to all of you. My father used to tell me that when the herd migrates the bulls kept the females in the inner circle to protect them from being attacked by the wolves. The caribou are part of the food chain and if the wolves didn't take down a caribou, they didn't eat. So wherever you see a caribou, you will see a pack of wolves, my dad use to tell me that and so did Chief Jimmy Bruneau.

The bulls were usually killed by the wolves because they are on the outside circle of the herd so when the statistics came out and the report said the bull population is declining, I believe it. We have names for caribou at different stages of their growth, baby caribou, then young caribou, then adult caribou, we had names for females before they reach the age of three and then we had a different name after they were old enough to produce a calf. We call baby

caribou "tsia" for the first year of their life and when they turn two, we call them "whii tsia" and we call them young bulls at the age of three when their meat turns a bit tough so we identify caribou by their age, from tsia to a full grown bull, we had names for each year of their growth and that's how dad use to educate me on the caribou recycle pattern. What I'm telling you now is not my stories but stories passed down from our ancestors such as Chief Jimmy Bruneau; he used to talk lots about how the animal population never changes.

There were always abundance of the young ones migrating south first and a person can see them for as far as your eyes can see but our people used to take only what they needed, that was done because Chief Jimmy Bruneau insisted on it.

A single person would take down about twenty to twenty-five caribous but a large families use to kill more and that depended on how many were in the family, caribou is very important to us and what I'm saying is the truth. I paddled with men to the Arctic with a canoe from a very young age and I did that every summer until I was in my late twenties.

I am thankful to all of you for trying to resolve the caribou problem we are facing and I'm thankful to have this opportunity to tell you stories that were passed down to me.

Wildlife is a big part of our life; we used every part of an animal, either for consumption, clothing and sinew for sewing. Sinew was used to mend clothing or to make fur-covered caribou parkas. Sinew was also used to sew

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covers for sleds; it used to take three hides from large bulls to make one cover for a sled. Caribou hides were cut and then hand stitched together with a sinew to fit a sled. Dog harnesses were also made with caribou hides. The harnesses were put together with babiche which was made from caribou hides. Babiche is useful to have around.

Dry meat comes from caribou; there are names for different parts of caribou when it's cut into sections to make dry meat. A person cuts off the head first when they butcher a caribou, then the stomach is cut open to clean the cavity and then we skin it and put the hide to one side. After all that, a person begins to butcher the animal by first cutting off the hind quarters, then the front quarters and cuts up the rest of the meat after that. We also cut loin strips from the back and the strips that cover the stomach. So that's how a person butchers a caribou. First we cut the four limbs, and then take the stomach out and so on; a person can usually find a fatty veil that covers the stomach when you shoot a fat healthy caribou. We have a name for it in Tłı̨chǫ dialect. We also take caribou fat.

Hunters sometime leave caribou for awhile after it's taken so they can take blood, after the blood settled in its' cavity, to make soup. Back then there wasn't any store bought soups so we used to make soup from animal broth. A person can make enough dry meat from one caribou to fill two large handmade pack sacks. Bone marrow and fat are simmered over the fire to make lard to eat with caribou meat. Every part of caribou was used for many different things and I'm telling you the truth because I have seen it done lots of time.

When the first herd migrates south, there is just so many that sometimes hunters climb the highest boulders to keep from being trampled by the animals. After the herd passes then we climb down and take enough to share with others. We never take more than we need, we never do that.

Animals are part of the food chain but each species will protect one another from being attacked by other animals, like wolves, for food. My father used to tell me stories about the survival and behavior of different animals. Chief Jimmy Bruneau used to tell us the same stories.

There used to be lots of caribou in our country when I was in my teens. I've seen hunters climb boulders many times over the years to keep safe from being trampled during the caribou migration from the Arctic. There was abundance of them back then. We were also afraid that the antlers could hurt us so we used to climb the highest boulders.

Caribou is important to Tłı̨chǫ Nation; no one should take that away from us. I feel a bond with everyone here. I look to you as my sons, my nephews, nieces and grandchildren.

I wanted to pass this story on to you while I'm in good health, these stories could be used by the young people in the future when a similar problem arises with the caribou, I want the leaders to use this information to protect the wildlife when new regulations are tried to be pushed on us.

I told the grand chief in Behchokò that I wanted to be at this meeting in Whatì to talk about the history of the caribou that

was passed on to me and I am thankful to be here.

We are friends and related each other. We belong to one nation so I'm not sitting among strangers; we care what happens to each other. My nephews and nieces, don't allow tension and pressure create a division among you. Our faith tells us to love one another, I pray when our leaders travel for meetings on our behalf.

That's all I want to say on the caribou, masi.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Jimmy Martin, I like to thank elder, Jimmy for talking to us, I think another elders want to say a few words, Philip Dryneck?

PHILIP DRYNECK: Masi, I'm glad we are to talk about caribou, I'm thankful that the leaders are here to deal with what has been imposed on the Tł'chǫ Nation.

Caribou are very important to us; our ancestors survived because there they had caribou in our country. I remember when our lawyer said the first time he met with the elders about caribou was here in Whatì, I remember because I was here for that meeting too.

The leaders told us then that sometime soon the government will try to control our lives and this is one of those times they were talking about years ago.

When Jimmy Martin made references to climbing the highest boulders to keep safe from the caribou antlers, I remembered. Jimmy is right; the caribou migration wasn't just for a day. There were so many caribou sometimes the migration lasted more than three days and you could see caribou for as far as your eyes could see.

Caribou covered the ground like a carpet on the floor.

My very own family, my parents, sister and brothers followed the caribou up to the barrenlands and then back to the tree line area. They did that until I was in my fifties.

A person couldn't see the slopes because it was covered with caribou when there was a migration from the Arctic. It was like a stream for as far as you can see, that's what we witnessed as young men, I was raised in that environment.

Our ancestors survived before the foreigners arrived because there was caribou in our country, rifles were never heard of. Our Tł'chǫ ancestors used bow and arrows, home-made knives, and spears to take down a caribou but they survived. Dog teams were our transportation back then, some men had anywhere from five to seven dogs to pull a sled.

My brother and I used to shoot close to fifty caribou when the both of us went hunting together during the migration.

The caribou fat was so thick you couldn't see the knife on the other side when a person pushed the knife in to cut off a chunk. That was our life and our people are around today because of the caribou. It's difficult to tell an accurate story when you weren't there in person to actually witness the events taking place. Accuracy is important because stories a person claimed is the truth can be hard to accept. A good story is told as a first person story because a person had the opportunity to see the migration, landscape, trails and the terrain. Using Tł'chǫ names to describe certain things is good in telling about actual events because a person can visualize that picture in their mind.

I'm glad all the leaders are here because the energy they are putting into this meeting is to help the Tłı̨chǫ Government define the wildlife agreement under the Tłı̨chǫ law. It will set a clear understanding of what the Tłı̨chǫ people are entitled to under the agreement and this meeting is also for the children. It is a big job for anyone to challenge another entity but our ancestors have said years ago that we, the Tłı̨chǫ would one day run into obstacles such as this.

The leaders back then always emphasized that it's good to have a leader that speaks Tłı̨chǫ Yati and English, they can speak Tłı̨chǫ Yati or English at meetings, gatherings and community feasts. The elders wanted chiefs, community councils and staff who spoke both languages to work for our government and today we have that.

We have been told today that the caribou population is declining. I've been thinking about that since I first heard about the caribou population going down, I think we are heading for hard times. The Tłı̨chǫ Nation has a big country but Tłı̨chǫ are not the only ones that hunt caribou in Wek'eèzii region. I went on many fall hunts to the barrenlands where I have seen many government employees on these trips and I have seen them hunt on the winter roads. I watched non- Tłı̨chǫ leave caribou meat behind many times on the barrenlands and put only the antlers on the plane. The outfitters are partly responsible for the caribou decreasing in numbers because they make a living from hunting caribou, they should be monitored during their busiest seasons.

We have to save the caribou from extinction so the animals will be around

for our children and their children long after we are gone.

We buy meat from stores that is shipped from factories in the south. We don't know if the packaged meat is good or healthy to eat but we do.

Wildlife in our country eat only berries or leaves and drink clean water from the ponds or lakes, that kind of a diet keeps the animal healthy. Talking about the diets and behavior of different animals educate the young people, that's the reason why I got up to talk.

The elder that spoke before me, Jimmy Martin, was right when he said it was hard work to butcher and clean an animal and then to scrape and tan the caribou hides. We still use caribou hides for clothes today; for example, I'm wearing a pair of moccasins made from a caribou hide.

Our ancestors had fur-covered caribou pants like ski pants to keep them warm and underneath the fur-covered pants, they wore a pair of pants made from a hide after its been tanned to make it soft. There were fur-covered caribou parkas, fur-covered caribou mittens and fur-covered boots. Our ancestors had tough lives and they worked hard so we can be here today. Everybody in the family had to help out, even the little ones that were maybe six or seven years old. No one sat around all day and did nothing, there were chores to be done, harnesses to make for dogs, pulling sinew apart for sewing, cutting hide into thin strips to make babiche, hand-stitch sled covers and if someone didn't want to use tanned caribou hide then fur-covered hide was used. The work was physically hard and the snow was deeper back then.

Caribou was important to our ancestors then; and it still is important to the Tł'chǫ people today, that's why we are here to talk about the proposed management plan from the territorial government. We have our own government and we were supposed to manage and control our land, Chief Mowfi drew a circle on a map and he said that was ours to hunt and live on, he said as long as the sun rises, the river flows, my people will hunt on this land without restrictions.

The territorial government doesn't heed the words of our leader, Chief Mowfi. The territorial government imposed all sorts of regulations on us in the past without consultation. It didn't matter if we agreed with it or not but now things are different.

The territorial government is supposed to meet with the Tł'chǫ Government if they want to suggest changes in the existing wildlife regulations. They were supposed to inform our chiefs and council because these men and women are elected by the Tł'chǫ people and they are our government; that's in our land claim and self-government agreement.

We have harvesting rights in Wek'eezhii, the territorial government can't tell us where to hunt and how many animals to shoot, that isn't right.

Every elected member who sits on the Tł'chǫ Government Board is our official ambassador but it's not recognized as such by the territorial government, it is still trying to encroach on lands that were selected for us by our great leader; Chief Mowfi. The territorial government is supposed to contact us first if they have plans to change existing regulations that is going to have an impact on the Tł'chǫ Nation.

This is a very important meeting and how we proceed to resolve the caribou situation is as equally important so we have to make the right decision that we can live with and our children can live with, we have only two days to do that.

Rick Salter said the Bathurst Caribou has been reduced drastically, that's our main source of food and that will some day become a food source for our children and the generations to come. We have to make a motion to protect the herd before we go home from this meeting. It's crucial that we make the right decision on what has become a problem that we thought the Tł'chǫ Nation would never encounter, masi.

PETER ARROWMAKER: Masi, Phillip Dryneck. Two elders spoke to us today. Our lawyer, Rick Salter, explained why this meeting is taking place. The first workshop on the caribou was in Behchokǫ.

Most of you heard the concerns that were raised at that meeting and the agenda hasn't changed since.

Discussions will continue on the caribou situation tomorrow and Friday. The meeting will begin at ten each morning and it is open to any Tł'chǫ member that wants to speak at that time. So now is the time to think about the information that was passed to you by our lawyers, Rick Salter and Bertha Rabasca-Zoe, on the caribou. You will have a chance to talk more about it tomorrow. Maybe all of you can talk more about it tonight then make suggestions to the chiefs tomorrow because the leaders are waiting for directions from you on how to proceed on this problem. They will need a motion to work on resolving the changes proposed by the territorial government on wildlife.

We are now going to wrap up the meeting for today. It will start at ten tomorrow morning. Our elder; Harry Simpson will lead us in the closing prayer.

HARRY SIMPSON: My friends, this meeting is necessary for our traditions to survive, you heard what is happening to wildlife in Wek'èezhii. We still have two days to talk and we should use some of that time to think about how we can help the chiefs and others find a solution that we can be comfortable with.

My friends, let's say a prayer and ask Our Creator to help us. Sometime people run into problems when they can't comprehend what is happening around them, that's when a person ends up talking about something else rather than what is on the agenda. A person tends to have doubts after what was said during the speech but that is from misunderstanding the seriousness of the problems we run into at times.

Nonetheless, we are here to help the leaders deal with the situation that fell on the Tłı̨chǫ Nation. The leaders and the staff are documenting everything being said at this meeting. They will use it to help guide our nation. I know there are some people that don't think as we do, so I want to bring this to people's attention so they are aware of what we're trying to do.

My friends, I will lead the prayers but I just want to say everything is changing around us, there are fewer and fewer elders every year. We don't have many elders to

turn to for help; we don't even know what to do next to move forward by ourselves. But when we stand united on a necessity such as this, it creates a strong bond among us that is a good thing to have. Let's help one another to help our leaders take the right path, which is very important today.

Special holidays marked on the calendars are far apart, we can't think it isn't; let's ask Our Creator to help us and our nation, babies, children, youth and extended families. They are still angels in our eyes so let ask Our Creator to keep them safe until they can begin to care for themselves.

Let's keep that in mind when we say our prayers. Our elders said long ago that we would run into a situation like this and they were right.

Love the little ones even if they aren't old enough to talk; take good care of them .That's one of the things the elders spoke of all the time, they also spoke of obstacles we will face one day and this is it.

All of you sitting at the table are like my nephews. Listen to the elders when they talk to you about their ideas, listen carefully. That self-discipline will make you assess situations better. Let's ask Our Creator for help and my friends. I feel honored to lead the prayer, Masi.

Harry Simpson began the closing prayer in Tłı̨chǫ yati.

Applause after the prayer was finished.

