

WOLF

TŁİCHQ KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVE



**Culture and Land Protection
Tłıchq Government**

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<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/pack-wolves-vee-lake-yellowknife-1.3400859>

Wolf: Tłıchǵ Knowledge and Perspective

Introduction

In August, 2016 the Tłıchǵ Government together with Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), GNWT, the North Slave Metis Alliance, the Yellowknives Dene First Nations and the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) formed a Wolf Feasibility Study Working Group (the Working Group). The Working Group was formed to identify and assess the technical feasibility and potential effectiveness of a series of different wolf management techniques in the annual range of the Bathurst barren ground caribou herd. Since indigenous knowledge is key to effective wildlife management and associated decision-making, the Aboriginal governments of the Working Group are providing information to ensure their perspectives and knowledge are discussed along with the scientific information. The Working Group will assess if there is sufficient information to make management decisions or if additional scientific or indigenous knowledge research is needed.

This report reflects current documented Tłıchǵ knowledge and perspectives in which wolves live in an environment that includes Tłıchǵ and caribou. In spite of the fact that the Working Group was formed in response to the declining caribou populations, the priority of this report is the Tłıchǵ perspective and knowledge of wolves. As Chief Clifford Daniels, Tłıchǵ Government said,

We are concerned with the caribou, and the well-being of the ... caribou, and the crisis that's being faced here in the North. As you've heard, the caribou are declining. It's really a hardship for our citizens young to old, our communities. Our way of life on the land is being affected. We've heard many reasons why this decline could be happening: predation on the migration route, [includes] the calving grounds to the wintering range. And we've heard it all from all our communities, climate change, as you heard, the low water levels, ice not freezing up as fast, insects in the barren lands, forest fires, and this is nature that we don't really have control of.”¹

Only through in depth consideration, can all these factors be understood in relation to managing caribou populations. Although all are important, this report focuses on wolf information – both written and audio. This search encompassed:

¹ Jay Public Hearing, September 17, 2015: 158

- Archival and academic literature that contained information on Tłıchq perspective on wolves.
- Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board's public registry.
- Mackenzie Valley Environmental Review Board's public registry.
- Tłıchq Government audio recording from previous Tłıchq knowledge projects.
- Tłıchq Knowledge research undertaken by the Whaèhdqò Nàowoq Program, Dogrib Treaty 11 Council.
- All Tłıchq knowledge reports on-line complete through the Tłıchq Research & Training Institute.
- Dene Cultural Institute traditional knowledge reports focusing on Tłıchq knowledge.
- Dr. Joan Ryan's personal notes.
- Published articles, books and thesis.
- Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management.

There would be, of course, more Tłıchq knowledge of wolves being reported if elders and harvesters in all four communities were to be interviewed.

Wolf Context

In 1995, Elder Joe Suzie Mackenzie, explained:

*Wolves, [bears] fox, raven and people are supposed to eat ɬekwò [barren ground caribou]. Raven and fox scavenge on the ɬekwò and wolves, grizzly, and people harvest the ɬekwò.*²

Tłıchq stories tell of Wolf as a powerful, intelligent social-being who, like humans, have leadership qualities in addition to harvesting and sharing caribou meat. Wolf also has the power to both help and cure. If, however, humans neglect to follow the rules associated with the human – wolf relations, wolf power can cause sickness and even death. This perspective is consistent with many indigenous peoples throughout North American and across the circumpolar north.³ The story of Wolf and Raven, told by Joe Mantla of Gamètì on August 5, 1994, exemplifies several of the Wolf's characteristics.

² Legat et al 2014: 29

³ Take for example, i) Karl H Schlesier (1987) *The Wolves of Heaven: Cheyenne Shamanism, Ceremonies, and Prehistoric Origins*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press; ii) Robert Brightman (1993) *Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships*.

At one time Raven, could eat anything. He could hunt animals for food. Then Raven became very greedy. Raven could fly and could see everything, so was very knowledgeable. Others depended on Raven for knowledge of where animals such as the ɔ́ekwò were travelling. Raven was responsible for the survival of others who were restricted to the ground. Raven and Wolf were brothers-in-law as Wolf's sister was married to Raven and Raven's sister was married to Wolf. Both Raven and Wolf were k'òowo (leaders) for their camps. Wolf was a good hunter, so he had many people following him. Even though he killed a lot of ɔ́ekwò, the meat was gone in no time because so many people followed Wolf. Raven was more powerful than Wolf because Raven was considered k'òowodeè (an important leader who knows everything because – in this case – Raven could see everything from the air). He flew and could see everything. He had the ability to provide people with information because he knew everything. There was no food and everyone was starving. It is said that Wolf and Raven would meet and tell stories, everyone listened. Once they met at Wolf's house. They took turns telling stories. Wolf noticed that Raven was happy. He said, 'Raven, my brother-in-law, you are happy yet we are starving. We will starve to death unless we find food. You, who are flying around, do you know where all the ɔ́ekwò are? You are happy about something. What is it? I can hardly make it around, I am so hungry for food'. Raven denied that he knew anything. 'My brother-in law, there is nothing around. We are both in the same predicament; there are no ɔ́ekwò around'. Wolf could not understand why Raven was so happy, so when Raven was telling a story, Wolf went out and told the kids, 'Find Raven's packsack, look in it and see if there is anything there. He may be carrying ɔ́ekwò meat with him. So look'. The kids looked and they found dried meat. After a while Raven said, 'My brother-in-law, it is getting dark, I'm going home. My home is very far.' Wolf said, 'Yes, it is time. It is late.' Raven left.

Wolf told two men with...[the intelligence] to work together. Each had the ability to see a long way so they watched where he went. The men watched Raven travel towards the sunrise. Finally, after one put charcoal

Berkeley: University of California Press; and iii) from Victoria Shelley, Adrian Treves & Lisa Naughton (2011) Attitudes to Wolves and Wolf Policy Among Ojibwe Tribal Members and Non-tribal Residents of Wisconsin's Wolf Range. Human Dimensions of Wildlife 16(6): 397-413:

on his eyes and the other wiped it off, the one with charcoal could see further. He saw where Raven was hiding all the ɬekwò, and he saw that they were contained behind a snow fence. Wolf sent for Fox and told Fox, 'Go and find the fire. Put your tail in the fire, and free the ɬekwò'. Fox travelled to the ɬekwò. When he arrived, he lit his tail on fire and walked among the ɬekwò. The smoke bothered them and they ran away from the smoke even though the snow bank was high and they do not like the snow touching their bellies. That is the reason Fox now has a black tip on his tail. Raven was upset when the ɬekwò ran free. He felt they were his; he had become greedy. Wolf spoke strongly to Raven, 'We are living here together. We are here to help each other and because you are greedy, you are not helping others. I am your brother-in-law. Do you want your sister to starve? Do you want my sister, your wife, to starve?' Wolf and the other people put Raven in a circle and talked to him. They talked and talked to him. They knew they would have to be harsh, as the people almost starved. People who deliberately hide or steal food from others should be excluded from the group. Finally, after listening to everyone, Wolf decided Raven could only eat decomposing food because he had caused so much distress by hoarding fresh meat. Wolf said, 'When the animals die you will eat them. People will live around you and you will eat their garbage. You can no longer kill for food'. That is how Raven lives now. When water is poured outside, Raven drinks the dirty water. When garbage is put out, he will eat it and that is how he survives. Joe continued saying 'What a thing to happen! It is pitiful for a hunter to lose his right to hunt! That is what happened to Raven. It was very 'pitiful', and is very degrading for a great hunter, who had also been an important k'àowodeè (big leader) to lose the ability to hunt because he did not follow social rules'.⁴

Chief Charlie Football, of Wekweètì, told a story at the 2007 caribou workshop in Whatì that emphasizes Wolf character as an important helper. In this case, assisting a woman in distress.

An elderly lady got lost near Wekweètì years and years ago when a group was moving from the barrenland back to Great Slave Lake. She was walking behind a dog-team when there was a snow storm and she got lost. She walked and walked trying to find her people but she didn't. Eventually,

⁴ Legat and Zoe 2000; and Legat 2012: 46-47

she dropped in her tracks weak from starvation when a wolf approached her. The wolf said to her, "granny, what are you doing way out here?" "The old lady said "I was walking behind the sleds when I got lost, now I don't know where my family are, I can't find them so I wandered and got lost" The old lady told the wolf, and the wolf said, "um huh". Then the wolf told the old lady, "let me pack you on my back and maybe you can walk once in a while when you feel a bit stronger." The wolf had a front quarter of a Ɂekwò in his mouth and once in a while the wolf stopped and gave a little piece of meat to the old lady. She felt like this was the first meal she had had and the old lady felt rested for the first time in a long time. She told her family that the wolf would stop and feed her as they kept going and when the wolf and she made it to the lake where her family was camping, the wolf asked her, do you know what lake this is? And old lady said "no". The wolf told her, your family is close to this lake so sit and wait for them. They will find you and now it's time for me to go back to the tundra. My children are waiting for me and I'm worry about them, the wolf told the old lady.⁵

This ... story has been told many times in Wekweètì. No one wants to abuse an animal but no one wants to see an animal suffer so you do what is necessary to help stop the suffering. Now this story is referring to that.⁶

These stories and others stress wolves as powerful, spiritual animals. Throughout North America and the circumpolar north indigenous peoples emphasize respectful behaviour towards wolves as sacred. For the Tłıchq the handling of wolves can cause death, while people with wolf power are often called on to cure, particularly children. As Elder Marie Klugie, from Whatì, shared in 1993.

My father and brother and other men were going trapping; my brother had pain in his legs. Marie's mother persuaded me to go to Joseph's house where they were playing cards to see if Menton was there. I was looking for him because my brother was sick and I needed Menton to talk to the spiritual person (Marie's father) because of his [Menton's] strong voice. By his strong words he would persuade the spiritual person to take action.

⁵ Similar stories of Wolf assisting Indigenous people – particularly women – are found throughout the literature. Take for example. The Lakota tell a story of an injured woman saved by wolves (Hassrick 1964:138-39; Marshall 1995:12-13). Once healed she returned to her people with a valuable set of skills taught by wolves. Lakota have a brotherly relationship with the wolf because they learned their hunting skills from the wolf (Marshall 1995).

⁶ Caribou Workshop Transcript, February 23, 2007: 18

*The spiritual person's power was related to the Wolf. [The spiritual person] asked the family for the gift of a dog in exchange for his healing power. They tied the dog outside his tent. Then he started to sing. My brother was really in pain – couldn't walk. He was placed in front of ... [the spiritual person]. He would sing and tell the people he would circle around him twice. Depending upon how far around he got, it would determine if the boy would be cured. Because he made it around, he told the family his son would survive. About five days later, the boy was walking again. After this happened, if a child was sick they were brought to this spiritual person. These children all got well. He helped a lot of young people in Whatì. ... Marie Madelaine [Nitsiza] said that many children who he helped were cured. He also cured her granddaughter. She was taken to his house and place in his lap. He blew on top of her head and cured her.*⁷

Any Tłıchq women are likely to get sick or die by touching wolves so they and the men in their families are extremely cautious. As Ernestine Martin, the daughter of Jimmy Martin who is the grandson of Mqwhì, said at public hearing in April 2016, my father “taught us, ... we're not ... allowed near a wolf. For him, it was his -- his duty as a father.”⁸

At the 2013 workshop in Gamètì comments emphasized that many Tłıchq hunters have a sensitive spirit so when handling and cleaning wolves the wolf's body odour may cause a sensitive man to be sick.⁹ In 1993 Elder Rosalie Zoe, from Whatì, explained how people with sensitive spirits can be impacted.

*Like here when we are cooking and we can smell something cooking. And when s/he [person with sensitive spirit] inhales that incense s/he would get sick from that. A long time ago that was the only kind of sickness there was These days there are diseases like cancer And also there was no TB or bad colds. It was only the allergies [sensitive spirit] that made a person sick. So a spiritual person would seek for him/her.*¹⁰

Tłıchq at the 2013 Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop agreed the wolf is a great, spiritual animal that can cause aboriginal people to be sick if they are not respectful when handling wolves in the appropriate manner. Several participants mentioned how

⁷ Ryan et al 1993: 322-323. (Paraphrased from translation of Marie Klugie's interview on April 26, 1993)

⁸ Bluenose-East Caribou Herd Public Hearing, April 8, 2016: 222

⁹ Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 49

¹⁰ Ryan et al 1993: 363.

their ancestors would tell them stories to emphasize the sacredness and power of wolf stating that if a rule is broken such as bringing wolf into the community (or the home) or the wrong person harvests a wolf, these actions will negatively impact members of the community – particularly children.¹¹

Transcripts from meetings and public hearings are riddled with comments on wolves venturing close to communities which is of great concern. There are Tł̓chq̓ men who can kill wolves. Charlie Jeremick'ca from Whati, said, *"We know that wolf has a great spirit and we respect it; we know we are able to kill it, but people with children can't take a chance to kill it."*¹² Elder Jimmy Nitsiza, also from Whati, stressed the importance of being careful when he said, *"[Tł̓chq̓] men with children can't kill wolves."*¹³ The importance of following rules was again exemplified on November 7th, 2012 when Margareth Tsathia told the following story in Behchok̓q̓:

*I told this story at ʔewaànit'itì. It is not my story. It is the story of the mother who raised me, she told me this story. When we reached the age of puberty they taught us many lessons. They taught us about all the possible sicknesses or hardships we may experience in the future. She said,: "A man called K'q̓qdzabì's had killed a wolf. K'q̓qdzabì's family had only one blanket. He didn't want the wolf to freeze so he wrapped the wolf in the blanket, brought it home and took the fur off. He covered his sleeping family with the only blanket they had. In the morning his wife Mq̓goò died in her sleep. Even though she was checked by a shaman it was too late. She died because she was affected by the wolf. Then soon her son got sick, he too died and was buried beside his mother."*¹⁴

Charlie Jeremick'ca reiterated, *"[We] believe the animals have a spirit. ... so people will not kill it. [We] need to add TK [Tł̓chq̓ knowledge]: how to kill animals [wolves], how to prepare the animal [wolf]. If you don't do it proper [we] can lose children."*¹⁵ Elder Phillip Chocolate from Behchok̓q̓ explained in more detail how wolf pelts should be tended to:

We elders know about the wolves. When we caught wolves we do not bring in the wolves into the tent. We tie and hang it on to the tree. Only

¹¹ Tł̓chq̓ Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 47-49

¹² Tł̓chq̓ Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 47

¹³ Tł̓chq̓ Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 52

¹⁴ Jacobsen et al 2013: 39-40

¹⁵ Tł̓chq̓ Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 52

the person that knows and has power can skin and work on wolves. And when a person is sick, the man with wolf medicine has to do his ritual to help and heal, and they put it [wolf hide] into the canvas and put in front of the sled with care always in front of the sled where no one can touch it.¹⁶

Alex Black from Behchokò told a story at the 2016 public hearing in April suggests men sensitivity to wolves may be passed within families,

I have learned from my dad from my early days -- in my younger days I learned all that. And then after when I got older because, you know, like my dad had to, you know, show me how to relate to the animal when you meet them out there. ... And even my dad warned us not to bother a wolf if you see it because the wolf, I guess, had some special relationship with the human being. There were some people that, you know, don't really want to go near the wolf or -- because if they do kill it then eventually the animal spirit might go after you¹⁷

Harvesting Wolves

These comments were made in reaction to discussions about culling wolves due to the number of caribou they harvest, and because wolves are coming closer to Tłıchq communities where children can be harmed spiritually as well as physically. Members of all four Tłıchq communities expressed concern during public hearings and during workshops about wolves and their dens around their community.

Locations of dens are often known through stories of travelling trails leading to the hunting grounds. Take for example the story told by Elder Pierre Wedzin, in 1995, when he explained he knows where the wolf dens are because he walked on the tundra with his father and hunting partners.¹⁸

When hunting muskox...I saw six wolf pups. I shot them all.... The six pups just stayed put; they did not attempt to flee.... Wolves do not leave their dens. The mom came back... ... We'd go there every summer and every year, every year since the time that I was able, ... So I knew where the wolf and fox dens were.

¹⁶ Tłıchq audio tape: 1993

¹⁷ Bluenose-East Caribou Herd Public Hearing, April 8, 2016: 170-171

¹⁸ Tłıchq audio tape: PHP-950524

So this is how I know where wolves' dens are at, by walking on the land, watching, no matter how many we trap, we think we kill them all. But by next year when we go back to trap them to the same place, they will be as much as last year again, because the wolves born five to six pups a year, and they followed in their footsteps.

So that's how wolf dens are, they don't ever discard it for a long time, they keep using it over and over again. And at one time this elder, Joe Suzie Mackenzie, was amazed at how dens were made. He studied it carefully when it was empty: there was a separate compartment for sleeping, for urinating, and also for eating.¹⁹

Harvesters spend considerable time on the land, therefore know the location of most dens on their travel routes. Place-names and associated stories provide information as to where the wolves are.²⁰ Names like Dìgatì (wolf Lake), which members of the Tłı̨chq Elders Regional Committee explained is an old name for several places. The story of one such place is named *"because the wolves have dens in the esker and chase the caribou when they migrate across this lake. It is a long lake, with narrows. There is a high esker here, with white sand."*²¹

Wolf Behaviour

At the 2013 Tłı̨chq Wildlife Research Workshop in Gamètì, NT, each of the communities expressed their concerns about wolves changing behaviour and their proximity to the winter roads and how they come very close to the communities, and therefore their children. These concerns also include the number of wolf dens, number of wolves and travelling behaviour of wolves. Behchokq participants mentioned: *"encountering wolves during both the summer and winter months chasing after caribou, along winter roads and close to dumpsites."*²² They also stated, *"Few wolves or wolf tracks were seen in the past; today, packs with up to 20 wolves are seen, usually at night."*²³ Gamètì participants focused on the number of wolves that are apparent around their dumpsites, especially in the summer, and how dogs are often killed by wolves causing additional concern for their community children.²⁴ Wekweètì focused on the large wolf packs they observed in

¹⁹ Tłı̨chq audio tape: PHP-950524

²⁰ Mr. John B. Zoe, Bathurst Caribou Herd Public Hearing, February 23, 2016: 137

²¹ Legat et al 2014b: 16

²² Tłı̨chq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 3

²³ Tłı̨chq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 3

²⁴ Tłı̨chq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 3

March of each year and the number of wolf dens near their community and the community dump. They also inferred wolves-human relation have broken down with wolves losing their fear of humans.²⁵ Stories, from elders audio recorded over the last several decades, guide hunters and trappers to not go near the wolf dens in March when wolves are breeding. Breeding wolves become aggressive and will often kill anything in their path.²⁶

The Whatì participants talked about their concern for community safety due to the large packs of wolves in general and the number around their community dump, especially at night. Whatì participants also noted the change in wolf behaviour and their diminished fear of humans.²⁷

All four communities recommended ways to keep wolves from entering the communities. Whatì's participants discussed reducing the wolf populations through the use of poison.²⁸ Wekweètì's suggested destroying the wolf dens near the community, while Behchokò participants suggested installing fences around the dumps and hiring [Tłıchq] rangers. Gamètì recommended culling with the added precaution that cabins should be built away from the community where those [Tłıchq] men who are able to hunt wolves can safely prepare them for market. These actions will protect children and women from harm.²⁹ These discussion and comments, and those made at other workshops and public hearings, strongly imply the need to have privacy when harvesting wolves to ensure Tłıchq rules are followed without interference from non-Tłıchq.³⁰

The above discussions, concerns and suggestions are associated with timber wolves whose behaviour is changing possibly due to the changing Tłıchq - wolf relations as expressed by a Gamètì participant who said, *"They are hunters; even their smell is powerful – people could get sick from it. In the old days, our ancestors used to handle*

²⁵ Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 4

²⁶ Tłıchq audio tapes: 1980s to 2000s

²⁷ Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 4

²⁸ Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop Feb 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 4; It is interesting to note, that Madelaine Pasquyak, from Gamètì, expressed disagreement with the poisoning of wolves by telling a story from the 1940s or 1950 when poisoning wolves was used to harvest wolves, but her father's dog died instead leaving him stranded for a period of time. See the 2016 Bathurst Public Hearing, February 24, 2016: 102-105 for Ms. Pasquyak's full story.

²⁹ Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 3

³⁰ Take for example, Bathurst Caribou Herd Public Hearing, 2016; Bluenose East Caribou Herd Public Hearing, 2015; Caribou Workshop Transcript, 2007

this situation; right now, we're not prepared for it. We have to use caution."³¹ And, as Elder Joe Rabesca explained in 2016 ,

But if you talk about the wolf, look at the map. It's a huge country. And the wolf are different. I talk to my friend here. I talk to some. The wolf to the west, ... [Those] wolves, they're bigger. And the wolf to the east that follows the caribou are a lot smaller. A lot smaller. The wolf on this side to the west are very aggressive, I know, because -- and they're dangerous too. There's a friend over there, Charlie [Jeremick'ca] that's where he lives."³²

Elder Joe Rabesca had similar concerns in 2010 when he spoke as Grand Chief at the March 2010 Bathurst Caribou Herd public hearing:

Regarding the predations of the caribou, ... like such as wolves, so the wolf population seems to be increasing somewhat -- the treeline wolf, that is. ... I've seen on a trip down to Wekweètì one time, and there we ran into a wolf pack about -- in amount of a hundred and fifty (150). But according to the ENR report, I guess, out in the -- through the dens, you know, they identified there were -- it sounds like it's a low number. But if you were out on the land, you find more wolves. ... We just came out from the hunt from -- out on the Kwet'ootì (Granite Lake) area. There's a lot of wolves out there. I guess they're feeding on some caribou out there as we speak. But we, ...-- we're blamed for over-harvesting, and then there are wastage and all that stuff, and then here I think there's other predators like wolves"³³

The communities are looking for solutions to manage their relationship with both wolves and caribou, and they want to protect themselves and they families. During workshops and public hearings participants suggested each community develop action plans that included monitoring wolves,³⁴ an action reflecting the use of Dene experiential knowledge that consists of observing and experiencing.³⁵ At the 2007 caribou workshop, several people suggested monitoring wolves, and as group reporter, Terri Nasken, reiterated *"The elders want to implement a monitoring program to keep*

³¹ Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 49

³² Bathurst Caribou Herd Public Hearing, February 24, 2016: 60-61

³³ Bathurst Caribou Herd Public Hearing , March 25, 2010: 164-165

³⁴ Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 3-4

³⁵ Andrews 1990; Goulet 1998; Legat 2012; Parlee et al 2005; Rushforth 1992 Caribou Workshop Transcript, February 23, 20 Whatì

an eye on wolves and bears in the Tłıchq Nation because caribou is part of their food chain; they want to know how many caribou are taken by other wildlife.”³⁶

Tłıchq participants agreed it would be helpful to monitor wolves as “*packs of wolves usually follow caribou herds because they are part of the food chain for wolves so we need a good monitoring program for both animals.*”³⁷ Yet they often question the effectiveness of using ENR’s techniques such as, “*wolves are not going to wait to be monitored; they are very smart and fast.*”³⁸ In contrast to periodic scientific monitoring, monitoring based on Tłıchq experiential knowledge – observing, experiencing and sharing stories – is done on a regular and consistent basis by harvesters who know the land.³⁹

The Tłıchq Government depends on both monitoring approaches as they are complementary. In conjunction with ENR, and in response to community concerns, the Tłıchq Government is developing a community-based pilot program based on recommendations from elders. The program to be initiated in the winter of 2016 will follow Tłıchq rules when hunting and trapping wolves within their winter range. The main focus of the community-based ‘Wolf Harvesting Pilot Program’ is to share Tłıchq knowledge as well as supporting and building expertise among those Tłıchq hunters who wish to harvest wolves. The program will work closely with the elders to ensure women, children and men who are sensitive to Wolf power are safe, and the elders will watch to ensure those working with wolves follow key Tłıchq rules of respect towards wolves.⁴⁰

In finding solutions Tłıchq tell stories. During the hearings and workshops most harvesters’ comments and discussions focussed on understanding animal behaviour from the past to the present. For example, in 1997 several elders and harvesters were talking, when Elder Johnny Eyakfwo said,

If there were some other animals or a wolf, bigger caribou would block [the smaller caribou from] it. Because that big caribou have antlers, the wolf is afraid of them, [and] the smaller caribou are unable to defend themselves, so the big animal like a big caribou will shield the little caribou. That is how they move. If it were not so and if the bigger animal were not with it[the

³⁶ Caribou Workshop Transcript, February 22, 2007: 15

³⁷ Johnny Simpson,: 9

³⁸ Tłıchq Wildlife Research Workshop February 20-21, 2013, Gamètì, NT: 47

³⁹ Report on a Public Hearing Held by the Wek’èezhì Renewable Resources Board 22-26 March 2010 5-6 August 2010 Behchokò, NT: Appendix F

⁴⁰ Joint Proposal on Caribou Management Actions for the Bathurst Herd, 2016-2019

young], [the wolves] would easily kill it. That is what we learned from our elders [and by walking the land].⁴¹

In 2007, Johnny Simpson explained *“Wolves can get aggressive when they are hungry, and [currently] they have had human contact many times so they’re not easily frightened.”⁴²* While on June 4, 2008 Alfred Arrowmaker from Gamètì said,

“Different animals’ habitats are lush at different times. Sometimes the wolves are healthy because their habitat is lush, and sometimes the Ɂekwò [barren ground caribou] are healthy because their habitat is lush – it balances out if you watch over a long time.”⁴³ That’s what my elders told me and that’s what I have observed.⁴⁴

And, Elder Phillip Dryneck, speaking at the Bluenose-East Caribou Herd Public Hearing, April 2016,

“... around August -- August/September, when -- when caribou used to migrate August/September, there used to be thousands and thousands. Caribou has been with us for many, many years. And now that we’re- ... blaming the predators, like wolves, bears. He says that’s -- he says that is not possible, because they always co-existed, even with our ancestors, but there was abundance back then.”⁴⁵

Joseph Judas also commented on the relationship wolves have with other animals at the Bluenose-East Caribou Herd Public Hearing in April: *“... we have a lot of interest in the wolf control system, and then yet, too, because ... the wolves have a good relationship with the ... the animal [caribou]. And somehow, they have a good relationship with other animals, such as grizzly bears.”⁴⁶*

With knowledge of den locations coupled with the hunters’ and trappers’ knowledge of litter size and approximately number of litters/year, they have a keen understanding of population success as well as how wolves are feeding themselves and their young. As Alex Black from Behchokò said, *“if you look at the wolf ... you know, it has a litter ... [of]*

⁴¹ Legat et al 2014a: 32

⁴² Tłıchq Government Official Transcript, Whatì, NT, February 23, 2007: 9

⁴³ This comment is very similar to realizations ecologist, after centuries of policies to kill wolves based on personal fear and predation on cattle. See Jon T Coleman (2004) *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press

⁴⁴ Legat et al 2008: 51

⁴⁵ Bluenose-East Caribou Herd Public Hearing, April 7, 2016: 194

⁴⁶ Bluenose-East Caribou Herd Public Hearing, April 7, 2016: 114

ten (10) or eight (8) or nine (9). ... I have learned from my dad from my early days -- in my younger days I learned all that ...".⁴⁷ This information complements Elder Joseph Judas statement,

*"Sometimes in one year wolves give litter two or three times a year. Maybe even if they kill thirty (30) to forty (40)[caribou each], there's -- it's still a lot. And the numbers in -- in wolves will continue to -- to increase. I'm talking about -- I'm concerned about caribou."*⁴⁸

And as Elder Pierre Wedzin said in 1995, "No matter how many we trap, we think we kill them all. But by next year when we go back to trap them to the same place, they will be the same number as the year before, because wolves have five to six pups per litter, and they follow in their footsteps."⁴⁹

Elder Joseph Judas emphasized, "And so ... if we're going to harvest the wolves, we - we really need to ... know exactly how many numbers that we need to harvest [annually], ... And if we're harvesting wolves annually, is it -- will it show how well; [will] we know that we are helping the caribou?"⁵⁰

Wolf intelligence and skill to access what is required to survive is often noted by Tłıchq harvesters and elders. Throughout past audio recordings harvesters and elders mention, "wolves feed on fish, moose, caribou, muskox, and beaver, and are known to teach their pups on all these food, and teach them how to hunt once they get older, they will even teach their pup, how to catch fish, and beaver."⁵¹ As Elder Joseph Judas Elder explained they are intelligent enough to know when to avoid contaminated food.

When I went to the end of the Lake [Wekweètì] in this area to go trapping I came to the end of the lake here beside the river. There was a caribou lying on the ice of the frozen lake. There were no wolves around or any other animal that killed it. It died by itself but there was a white substance like foam on the mouth. I pulled it beside the land because it was on the ice. I didn't touch it or take it or butcher it, and I drove back home. I told Roy, the renewable officer in the community, about it so he said he would go there and check on it. I told him about it and I left it at that. The next day I wanted to check my traps so I went back there. The caribou was still in the

⁴⁷ Bluenose-East Caribou Herd Public Hearing, April 8, 2016: 170

⁴⁸ Bathurst Caribou Herd Public Hearing, February 23, 2016: 118

⁴⁹ Tłıchq audio tape: PHP-950524

⁵⁰ Bathurst Caribou Herd Public Hearing, February 23, 2016: 117

⁵¹ Tłıchq audio tape: nd

place where I had pulled it. Nothing had touched the caribou, even the wolves didn't pay attention to it. It stayed on its own and wolves didn't kill it. If the wolves killed it they would have ate it but nothing ate it. The whole carcass was just there. The way I looked at it, it was there when I got there the next day to see the carcass, but all around the carcass there were wolf tracks that went around it, like about five wolves, they took off, ... It probably died of something else, like sick. There was like white foam on its mouth."

Concluding Remarks

As is evident from the material presented, the Tłıchq government and Tłıchq community members are walking a difficult path. They are doing so in a thoughtful and culturally appropriate manner to ensure the continued respectful relations with wolves. Solutions and actions being taken are consistent with Tłıchq decision-making though time: community members and leaders define the problem, leaders listen to community members who discuss the issue through stories consisting of experiential knowledge, and leaders give direction on the action to be taken.⁵² The action taken is then watched by community members who tell stories of their observations. This process allows for fine-tuning behaviour, leading to success when dealing with problems.⁵³ This process is similar to adaptive management. For success and acceptance it should not be rushed.

It is important to note that Tłıchq community members seem mainly concerned with the timber wolves who frequent areas around their communities and who are currently becoming more aggressive. Timber wolves are known to harvest caribou along Tłıchq trails. Harvesters state that it is these wolves that are on the increase and are denning close to communities to access food at their dumps. Many community members see the lack of caribou and wolves around the communities as a holistic problem.

The action of culling wolves is particularly delicate due to Wolf power, the number of susceptible Tłıchq people to Wolf power and the need for re-learning when interacting with wolves – both timber and tundra wolves – through hunting and trapping. It is evident that discussions and learning with elders has been requested and is necessary when following the 'right way for Tłıchq'. These discussions will hopefully be ongoing after the pilot project.

⁵² Legat 2012: 227-257: and Legat and Zoe 2000.

⁵³ Legat 2012: 227-257: and Legat and Zoe 2000.

It is clear that the harvesters who do work with wolves want to do so in places away from their community and family home to ensure the well-being of women and children, and to ensure rules associated with respecting Wolf power and its 'big spirit' are honoured. It is also important to understand that it is disrespectful for people – including non-Tłıchq – to ask for specifics, such as names, about individuals who are sensitive to wolves or who have the ability to use Wolf power for healing. For this, as well as other reasons, it is respectful to support the privacy of Tłıchq harvesters when hunting/trapping and preparing wolves.

As many harvesters say, and as is evident from the elders stories in the 1990s, many Tłıchq men have always hunted and trapped wolves. All Tłıchq have heard the stories that contain the rules and information of wolves, and know they must be careful. They must work closely with the elders who can guide their experiential learning about wolves; and the experiential knowledge to be cautious.

It is fitting that the last two stories of our report show the depth of knowledge held by the elders and why the current harvesters want the elders' guidance as they harvest and prepare wolves for market. The first was told by Joe Suzi Mackenzie who in 1995 shared how he explored a wolf den as a way of gathering more experiential knowledge of wolves.

Wolves dens are mostly at, the bottom of the eskers, where little short shrub are around the bottom of the esker, not on esker because they are only made of sand.

And around here in the boreal woods area there are some [wolf] dens too. At one time ...I cut some willow along the way, to dig inside their dens. It is like hotel it was long about 100 feet – like hallway – it has some circle spaces on each side. They even have their own washroom; there is whole pile of poop in there. And there is circle of space that is their bedroom where they have nice dry grass on their floors to sleep on, and supposedly their kitchen where there was a whole pile of bones – rabbit bones.

We can't expect to think that the animal [wolf] just lives in small den and that's it, they do live, and have their own room like us (human) I know this, because I took out my furbearer animal from den and I witness and had seen this, someone once told me he did the same thing. He was right, I did

the same thing too, all these animals are like that with foxes and wolves are living the same as each other in living spaces.⁵⁴

This last story tells of a harvester who followed Elder Adele Wedawin's directions after taking a wolf:

I [Georgina Chocolate] heard this story from my brother, John. John and his friend caught a wolf near the place called Weyiits'atlaa. They brought the wolf back to Behchokò and put it in the shed. Elder Adele Wedawin asked them, "Where did you catch the wolf?" So they told her where, and when she heard Weyiits'atlaa she said, "Burn all the clothes that you were wearing out there because that is the country of the wolves." She told them the story of how two couples went into the cave and how the wolves around that area became their dogs. She said, "We are not to trap wolves in that that area." She told them not to go trapping around that area again.

⁵⁴ Tł̨chq audio tape: 1995

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