

Monitoring the Relationship between People and Caribou

**Modified Version of the Report
Monitoring Caribou: Tłıchǫ Laws and Indicators of Change
Presented
to the
West Kitikmeot Slave Study Society
By
Tłıchǫ Government**

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to **Jimmy Martin**



Photo courtesy of Alice Legat . 2007

Jimmy Martin
cares deeply for Tłıchŧ *nèèk'è* (the place where Tłıchŧ belong).
Jimmy shows his love of caribou, plants, water, travelling trails,
and everything else that exists on the 'land' by sharing his
knowledge through stories.

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Monitoring the Relationship between People and Caribou

Long ago people gathered to discuss how they would hunt for caribou, then one of the oldest elders spoke up and said, “We will make a rule to make a spear out of it’s own bones. We will use it’s own bone and we will make bow and arrows too. And we will make string from the caribou skin. We will use this string to make snares to catch caribou.” That’s how our ancestors first learned to kill caribou; we learned from our ancestors. (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, 00/11/02)



Adele Wedawin. Behchokò

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Summary

This project documents Tłıchǫ laws governing human behaviour with caribou, and the relationships between adherence to the laws and changing caribou populations and migration patterns. It identifies Tłıchǫ indicators of change - specifically those that result from following or dismissing the laws that govern human behaviour. Sources of information include:

- Tapes of oral narratives collected from 1997 to 2001 for the project called *Caribou Migrations and the State of their Habitat*.
- Comments from the Tłıchǫ Regional Elders Committee (TREC) who reviewed and built on the information we gathered from the oral narratives.

This report presents the Tłıchǫ laws governing behaviour towards caribou in the following way:

- A discussion of the overarching law: being knowledgeable as a sign of respecting caribou.
- A summary of more specific laws under one or more categories.

Being knowledgeable is the overarching law. It demonstrates respect for oneself, the *dè*, and the caribou. Being knowledgeable, people have the ability and skill to understand indicators of change. Lack of knowledge can lead to a decline in caribou population, changes to caribou distribution, and a dysfunctional society.

Tłıchǫ are expected to continue learning throughout their lives and to know different types of knowledge, such as the knowledge that comes from observing caribou, and knowledge that comes from the dominant society. Men and women are encouraged to know the others' knowledge.

From the Tł̥cẖ perspective we can trace many impacts - negative or positive - back to human behaviour. The main indicator of negative change is often lack of knowledge. Indicators of caribou behaviour, migration patterns, distribution, population, and the state of their habitat are related to human behaviour.

Elders say since it is the hunters and their wives know what is currently happening with the caribou, they should be monitoring them. They were raised on the land and know about watching caribou. Together, harvesters and elders have the skills and knowledge to monitor the land, including the caribou. The harvesters observe; the elders put their observations into context with past occurrences and experience, while the youth listen and learn.

Oral narratives provide harvesters with knowledge of what happened in the past. Harvesters and elders use oral narratives to think about what changes and what stays the same. Much of the information from oral narratives is useful as baseline information, because it originates from before development. Harvesters observe habitat and distribution, and talk about things among themselves and with elders.

This is only the first step. The Tł̥cẖ have many more laws we need to document – laws for barren ground caribou and laws for other wildlife, including boreal caribou.

Background

The Bathurst, Bluenose East, and Ahiek caribou herds usually winter south of the tree line within Mq̄whì Gogha Dè N̄t̄lèè. T̄chq̄ speakers referred to these caribou as *rekw̄* (barren ground caribou) as opposed to *tq̄dzì* (woodland caribou). In the mid-1990s the T̄chq̄ elders and leaders predicted and discussed there would be a change in *rekw̄* population and distribution.

They considered the problem to be the result of reduced caribou habitat, caused by increased resource development that:

- Restricts foraging possibilities,
- Increases unfamiliar smells and noise, that cause caribou to be confused about where to find lush vegetation,
- Destroys several key water crossings due to pit and road locations.
- Increases air pollution that settles on plants and in water, and slowly destroys wildlife habitat, and

T̄chq̄ elders were and continue to be concerned about human knowledge and behaviour - how that behaviour is responsible for the loss of caribou habitat and a demonstrated lack of respect for caribou.

In 1996 the Dogrib (T̄cho) Renewable Resources Committee named caribou as one of four priorities for research associated with monitoring the cumulative impacts of mining activity. People also called attention to this at the Bathurst Caribou Management Plan (BCMP) meetings and in a statement from the

Environmental Monitoring Advisory Board (EMAB) to the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resource Board (WRRB) on March 2, 2007.¹

During the March 28, 2007 Dene Nation Chief's Caribou Committee meetings, several leaders expressed their community's concerns about caribou. The ratio of wolves to caribou had increased; the caribou showed signs of increased hunger due to diminishing habitat on which they depend.

Between 1997 and 2001 the West Kitikmeot Slave Study Society (WKSS) funded the Tłıchǫ project called *Caribou Migrations and the State of their Habitat*. This project documented Tłıchǫ elders' knowledge of ɬekwǫ – specifically those whose calving ground is adjacent to Bathurst Inlet and whose summer range extends along Deèzhàatì (Point Lake and Lake Providence) and adjacent to ɬek'atì (Lac de Graz). During this project the team documented oral narratives and harvesting information dating back to the early 1900s, and elders' explanations of caribou behaviour and population fluctuations in specific places.

¹ In March 2007 the Environmental Monitoring Advisory Board (EMAB) encouraged the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board to consider provisions in the Bathurst Caribou Management Plan (BCMP). The provisions related to monitoring cumulative effects on caribou that may be due to industrial development activities: Monitoring caribou exposure to human activity such as mines, roads (seasonal and all-weather), exploration activity, hunting camps etc. (BCMP, item 1.3.1); Development of standardized monitoring protocols to detect and address impacts of industrial development projects on caribou behaviour and movement (BCMP, item 1.3.3); and Development of a computer model to evaluate cumulative effects of all land uses on caribou movement and population size (BCMP, item 1.3.4).



Andrew Gon, Amen Tailbone and Romie Wetrade, Gamètì

Courtesy of ©Alicce Legat

The research team included a number of individuals from the four Tłı̨chǫ communities. Bobby Gon, Georgina Chocolate, and Alicce Legat focused on the project for its duration. The team spent time with male and female elders in the communities, and with harvesters in various camps on the tundra and in the boreal forest. When harvesters and elders gathered around the fire the team documented oral narratives, and later interpreted and analyzed the information embedded in the stories.

The *Caribou Migration and State of Their Habitat* report documented caribou migration routes, water crossings, and yearly distribution based on harvesting patterns between the mid 1920s and late 1990s. Older hunters remembered distribution patterns, and these observations provided information on fitness and foraging patterns, and caribou populations over several decades.

Like their ancestors, Tłıchǫ youth are told that if caribou are in the region they will probably frequent specific locations. For example places where people traditionally built *dahmı* (caribou fences) to harvest caribou in the spring and where they found natural water-crossings in the autumn (DT11C, WNK² 2001; Legat et al 1995). Numbers of caribou frequenting these locations suggest distributions patterns for that year to individual hunters. But only after they share and discuss occurrences with other hunters and elders do the distribution patterns become clear.

During the spring of 2006 wildlife personnel from the Government of the Northwest Territories noted a decline in caribou populations throughout the north. Tłıchǫ elders had predicted this in the mid-1990s based on their observations of human behaviour resulting from humans' lack of knowledge of caribou habitat and behaviour (DT11C, WNK 2001).

Given the importance of caribou to the Tłıchǫ people, the Chief Executive Council requested that we develop a caribou project specifically on rules and laws. The Tłıchǫ perspective is that caribou behaviour, populations, and patterns of migration are usually tied to human behaviour.

Project Description

The purpose of this project was to document Tłıchǫ laws governing human behaviour with caribou, and the relationships between adherence to the laws and changing caribou populations and migration patterns.

² Whaèhdǫǫ Nàowo Kǫ, the elders program with Dogrib Treaty 11 Council.

Project Objectives

The objectives of study were to:

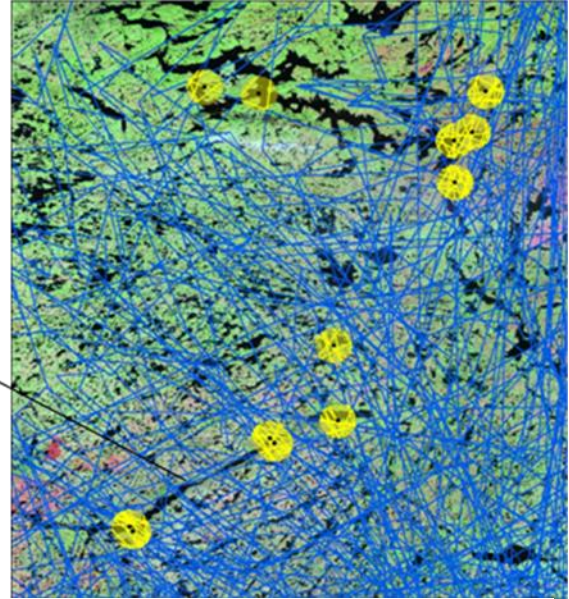
1. Identify Tłıchǫ indicators of change - specifically those that result from following or dismissing laws and rules that govern human behaviour.
2. Compare traditional indicators with scientific indicators in relation to caribou.
3. Rewrite the report submitted to the WKSS in 2003.

As the project progressed we dropped the second objective, even though we consider this work very important. The research team simply did not have enough time to develop a complete list of Tłıchǫ laws and to comprehensively compare the Tłıchǫ and western scientific perspectives. The task of identifying Tłıchǫ laws became somewhat daunting at times for two reasons:

- First, there is no longer a team of people who worked directly with a Regional Elders' Committee. The Whaèhdǫ̀ Nàowo Kò research team is now scattered. Some are Tłıchǫ Government staff while others sit on various boards and committees. We had to work around the demanding time schedule of the Lands Department, Tłıchǫ Government, as well as Boards and Committees to bring the team together.
- Second, the Tłıchǫ term 'nàowo' conceptualizes the English terms 'principles', 'rules', 'laws', 'knowledge' and 'agreement' depending on the context. After discussing with team members and with elders, the researchers concluded that it was impossible to separate 'rules' and 'laws' from 'principles', 'knowledge', or 'agreement' in relation to the Tłıchǫ term 'nàowo'. They concluded that from the Tłıchǫ perspective; without knowledge one does not know or understand the principles for living. Nor does one know the rules and laws governing respectful behaviour towards other beings, including caribou. Without knowledge one does not have the skill to act in a respectful manner or according to agreements that have been made – whether formal or informal, old or new. The Tłıchǫ

concept of *nàowō* has many meanings and for the discussion in this report we will use the most appropriate English term.

Research Methodology



Tłıchų Elders' Knowledge of Harvesting Trails and Scientific Collared Information

This project builds on oral narratives that we documented between 1997 and 2001 for the *Caribou Migration and the State of Their Habitat Project*. Georgina Chocolate reviewed over 500 tapes of oral narratives, and noted the laws governing human behaviour associated with caribou.

Before Georgina reviewed the tapes, the research team, together with the Tłıchų Regional Elders' Committee (TREC³), identified themes the caribou stories contained - themes related to laws that govern behaviour to show respect to caribou. Georgina used these themes to guide her work.

³ Was named Dogrib Regional Elders' Committee who over-saw the Whaèhdòò Nàowō Kò.

1. Laws governing use and storage of caribou meat, hide, and bones
2. Laws governing 'what is not used'
3. Laws governing female behaviour
 - a) Young girl's behaviour
 - b) The hunter's wife behaviour
 - c) Women's behaviour during menstruation
4. Laws governing the hunter's behaviour
 - a) Stalking caribou
 - b) Butchering caribou



Georgina Chocolate and Adele Lamouelle, Behchokò
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On the tapes the elders spoke of laws governing leaders and elders, and parents' behaviour in association with harvesting and using caribou. The elders focused on rules associated with the hunter's wife, women of childbearing age, and menstruating women. They stressed the importance of watching and learning as a young person. They noted that all laws that govern behaviour are associated with respect, demonstrated through knowing caribou.

Georgina completed her review of the tapes and compiled a list of comments on 'laws'. We met with the TREC to verify the list – in Gamètì in June 2007. The verification meeting included Robert Mackenzie, Jimmy Martin, and Elizabeth Michele from Behchokò; Romie Wetrade, Phillip Zoe, Laiza Mantla, and Angelique Mantla from Gamètì; Margarat Lafferty from Wekweètì; and Pierre Beaverhoe and Dora Nitsiza from Whatì.

The TREC agreed with the list of the laws and clarified any misunderstandings with oral narratives. The TREC elders, like the elders on the tapes, stressed that when people ignore the laws the caribou either migrate elsewhere or the caribou spirit chooses not to be re-born, causing a population decline.

During interviews and at the verification meeting the elders made certain comments about the methodology. They said that to extract the laws from the stories and categorize them under various themes takes away from the importance of the oral narratives, and to understanding correct, meaningful, and respectful behaviour.

Based on the elders' comments we revised the categories and the language associated with hunting. The translation of 'stalking the animals' or 'butchering the caribou' was not conceptually correct. Respectful behaviour is more about 'meeting or following the caribou' and 'respectfully cutting up caribou'. For the elders and most Tłchq adults, 'butchering' implies hacking up and leaving blood everywhere.

Tłchq rarely list rules as we have for this project and in this report. Oral narratives should be considered in totality. Like other Dene (Cruikshank 1998; Goulet 1998) and other North American indigenous peoples (Sarris 1993) the Tłchq weave rules into stories that guide the listener. Dene oral narratives tend to meld all that is related to any one concern or occurrence (Basso 1996; Cruikshank 1998; Legat 2007; Sharpe 2001:163). As hunters and elders share their experiences through stories, they consider variables, while weaving the past with the present. These variables could possibly be impacting a situation (Legat 2007).

This report discusses becoming and being knowledgeable as an over arching law to respecting caribou. It discusses the laws under the revised list of themes that reflect the elders' comments. Each category includes quotes from individual elders that represent what other elders said. The TREC verified the list and we are confident that this report provides reliable and useful information.

Study Area

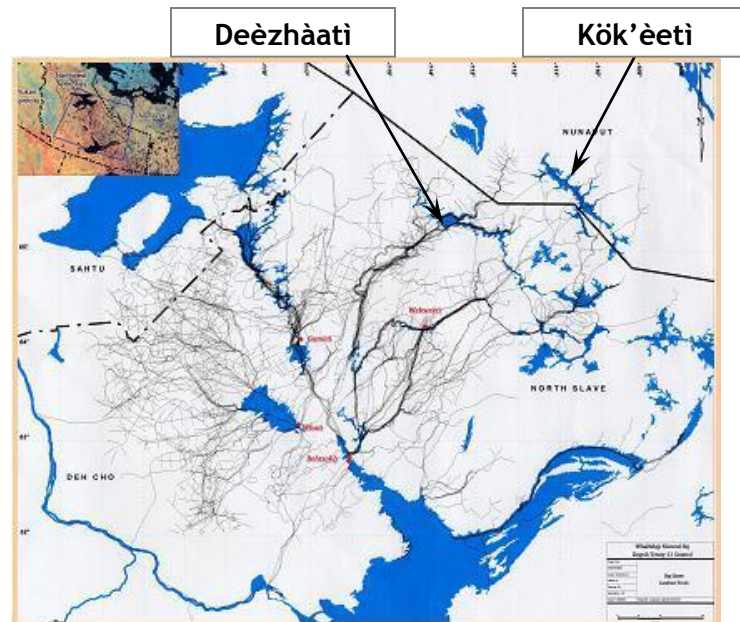
The Tłchq elders interviewed between 1997 and 2001 travelled and lived in the Tłchq *nèèk'è* (the place where Tłchq belong), throughout their lives. People now

refer to much of Tł̥chʔ nḕk'è as M̧wɬì Gogha Dè Ņıtlèè - the area described by Chief M̧wɬì during the 1921 Treaty signing, and in the Tł̥chʔ Agreement (2003:12-14).

Tł̥chq̣ continue to travel these trails – especially hunters and trappers. But also the young and old who are committed to keeping their ancestors’ trails alive and learning through experiencing place. People new to the trails are challenged to think about and realize the value of their ancestors’ oral narratives.

Results: The laws governing behaviour towards caribou

In this report we present Tłı̨chǫ laws governing human behaviour towards caribou in the following way:



Caribou Hunting Trails extending throughout Mowhì Gogha Dè Nùtlèe

- A discussion of the overarching law: being knowledgeable as a sign of respecting caribou.
- A summary of more specific laws under one or more categories.

These laws are only a small number of those that govern human behaviour.

Respecting Caribou: Becoming and Being Knowledgeable

Tłchq elders emphasized the relationship between personal knowledge and the ability to respect the land, of which caribou and humans are a part. Persons become knowledgeable by listening, watching, and experiencing. With this comes an understanding of what skills and actions are necessary to survive – today and in the past.

Male and female elders stressed the importance of watching and learning, as a young person:

When we were young men we used to go along and watch our parents hunt. Because we used to love watching the hunters kill and cut up the caribou that's how we become good hunters too. (Paul Rabesca, Behchokò, 00/11/02)

Elders explained that the laws governing caribou have always been the same.

Since this world was created, we have lived on caribou. We killed and prepared them the same as today. When we kill caribou we skin it and cut it up. We do a good job of it. If we have to drain the blood we do so, that's what we men do. And the women cut the meat to make the dry-meat. That's how we have always lived on caribou (Moise Martin, Behchokò, 00/11/02)

Hard times or not, there are laws for hunters and trappers that they had to follow. Even our leader M̄owhì... (Elizabeth Rabesca, nd).



The importance of being knowledgeable is so basic to success that “long ago the elders used to gather and discuss the most knowledgeable hunter. It was that person who they picked to lead the other hunters” (Jimmy Martin, nd).⁴

Survival was and continues to be important to all people. They are expected to continue learning throughout their lives and to know other types of knowledge, such as the knowledge that comes from the dominant society. Men and women are encouraged to know the others’ knowledge. As Rosalie Drybone and Madeline Martin expressed:

Even though we are women, our parents used to teach us how to kill and cut up and skin a caribou, in addition to cleaning and tanning the caribou hide. We also learned how to set the fish net and how to check the fish net every day. While our husbands were out hunting, it was we women that did the men’s work. (Rosalie Drybone, nd).

⁴ Also see Helm (2000: 183-186) and Legat (2007: 227-256) discussions on leadership.

Long ago we used to travel to the tundra with our parents. We wore snowshoes and walked along side them. We had to watch what our parents did. I had no father at that time; there was only my mother and I. We used a four-dog team as we traveled along with the people. I had to work like a man to help my mother and to take care of her too.
(Madeline Martin, Behchokò, 00/11/02)

Men are also encouraged to know women's knowledge. It is well known that present day hunters, who travel without their wives, continue to mend their own clothing if necessary and make dry meat the way their ancestors did.

Long ago in the fall, the hunter used to canoe to tundra. Only the men went, but they sure knew how to cut up dry meat. They laid it flat on the rock to dry; they learned the meat dried fast that way. Then they would make a dry meat parcel and pack it into their canoe. Because when the caribou meat is dry it is lighter. They would travel as far as Kòk'èetì⁵ to hunt caribou. (Paul Rabesca, Behchokò, nd)

The older hunters are concerned that contemporary Tłchò men snub women's work, feeling they do not have to know how to make dry meat or learn to sew (Elders' discussion 1999)⁶. For the elders and active harvesters this lack of knowledge indicates a lack of respect for other beings.

Some rules associated with being knowledgeable focus on understanding the relationship between all beings, including human beings. Take for example fish and caribou. Caribou distribution is unpredictable whereas fisheries are

⁵ For location see Map in 'Study Area' section.

⁶ During the elders meeting in Whatì in 1999, Robert Mackenzie told how his father delivered his first child when they were caught on an island during freeze up. He explained that if his father had not paid attention to women's knowledge, his wife and daughter probably would have died.

dependable. Before the Tł̨ch̨q settled in their current communities, they moved from camp to camp. Because the fisheries are dependable the Tł̨ch̨q camped by these while traveling towards or waiting for caribou. As both Angelique Mantla and Annie Black explained:

It is all true. We shared the meat amongst everyone, and in the fall we put fishnets in. We dried the fish and waited for the caribou to come this way. (Angelique Mantla, Gamètì, VM-070613)

If there is no caribou they had to move to a good fishing spot and settle there. (Annie Black, Behchok̨, nd)

Current communities are either situated adjacent to well-known fisheries or on waterways that provide access to an important fishery.

Tł̨ch̨q are expected to know something about the relationships between fisheries, the trails of the ancestors, and the trails of the caribou. As Anne Black said:

There are still deep trails - of *whaèhd̨q̨ ɾet̨q̨* (ancestor trails) - even today, which is very amazing. According to our ancestors, it is meant to be that way; we are meant to know the trails we travel to meet the caribou. To me this is the same thing as caribou law. (Annie Black, Behchok̨, nd)



Rosalie Martin and Elizabeth Chocolate waiting for the caribou, Deèzhàati,
©Alicia Legat, Whaèhdòd Nàowòd Kò Collection, Tłıchų Government

Humans should observe relationships between caribou and other beings, and in doing so they become knowledgeable of the signs animals give. Adele Wedawin explained:

There is a saying from a long time ago, that when they see a ptarmigan, that means there will be some caribou nearby, and the caribou will come soon. So we are happy to see ptarmigan. The caribou is a quiet and still animal, it will not even struggle when dying, like when it gets caught in a snare it will just fall and die right on the spot. The caribou will never attack or bite a human being. That's how it gives itself to the Tłıchų (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Jimmy Martin explained during the verification meeting:

When we see raven flying around, it gives a message when there is caribou close by. When suddenly the raven flips to one side, it means that it had thrown down the parcels.⁷

⁷ This type of behaviour by ravens indicates that the hunters will soon be packing bundles of caribou meat.

Shortly after that there will be some caribou. That still goes on today; that is a caribou law. (Jimmy Martin, Behchokò VM-06/06/11)

For humans to be seen as knowledgeable they must also be seen to think about the numerous variables influencing the behaviour of caribou. As elder Adele Wedawin explained:

Hunters looked out for everything, like for the signs of the weather. They watch the clouds and the sunset. The hunter will know if it will be the best time to go caribou hunting; it depends on how the clouds look. The sunset will tell them how to prepare for next day (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02).

Jimmy Martin made a similar point:

When caribou migrate they go by the wind (to help them decide which way to go), and at the water crossing, it depends on how the water flows. (Jimmy Martin, Behchokò, CHP-02/03/13).

In relation to knowing caribou and caribou habitat, Adele Wedawin when on to explain that to know caribou is to know the vegetation they depend on and therefore to know that habitat should be protected for caribou use.

When it rains or snows the caribou can continue to get really fat. When it rains, the food *kwetsì* (rock tripe) gets moist and swells. That's the caribou's best food because they get very fat on it (Adele Wedawin, CHP-00/11/12).

Phillip Chocolate also emphasized the relevance of observing the caribou and thinking about how the caribou itself will show people how best to approach an issue. He explained how the Tł̨ch̨q learned to cut up caribou:

Long ago the Tłchq people first noticed how to cut up the caribou. They cut off the head first because that was the part that was moving back and forth. Then they turned the caribou and found it has the slit in front so that's how they slit open the front hide. Then they pull off the caribou hide. Then they noticed that caribou hind leg and forearm can move around too so they cut off those parts. That's how the Tłchq people learned to cut up the caribou. They studied the caribou and the caribou showed them. (Philip Chocolate, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Tłchq are taught from a very early age to watch and learn, and to continue observing and listening to those who know something. As elder Paul Rabesca says:

When we were young men we had to follow our parents, so we would learn to live out on the land. We loved to watch the hunters killing and cutting up the caribou. That's how we learn to become great hunters – we watch. Our elders used to say drink some caribou blood so you will not go hungry or get cold. We drank it either raw or cooked. It doesn't matter. We had to drink the caribou blood, that was the rule back then. (Paul Rabesca, nd)

Most young Tłchq love to learn. This is particularly apparent in the bush and on the tundra hunting caribou, if they are given the opportunity to watch and be challenged. Individuals become knowledgeable and therefore skilled.

I used to teach my children how to cut up the caribou. One time I killed the caribou and my husband only cut the caribou head off. I cut up the rest of the caribou with the help of my children. My children learned how to respect caribou, by cutting up the caribou properly. (Adele Lamouelle, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

They are expected to know what type of caribou to shoot and they are expected to aim at and kill that caribou. Like long ago they liked small female caribou hides because the hide is best for making string and rope that was used for caribou snares. Young female meat is very tasty too. (Matton Mantla, nd)

From the elders' perspective, individuals unable to become knowledgeable were unable to survive in the past and are unable to survive now.

If the young people don't know caribou, how will they treat caribou? We know the laws, so we take good care of the caribou. (Phillip Zoe, Gamètì, VM: 070615)



Paul Wetrade, Gamètì with young hunters
©Madelaine Chocolate, Whaèhdòè Nàowòè Kò Collection, Tłı̨chǫ Government

Most Tłchq express that those who lack knowledge also lack the ability and skill to ‘assist others’, ‘minimize waste’ or ‘dispose of by-products in appropriate ways’. If a person lacks ability and skill, it clearly indicates they lack knowledge.

Laws that govern behaviour towards caribou

The following sub-sections list the laws that govern behaviour towards caribou. If humans don’t act upon the laws, it is a sign they lack knowledge and are emotionally unwell. It is a sign that humans disrespect the ‘land’, including caribou, and that it will therefore probably die. As Alexis Flunki explained:

When we take good care of the caribou and respect its hide, hair, meat, and bones there is always plenty of caribou for us. They come to us easily. But when we don’t take good care of the caribou they will withdraw from us. That is our ancestors’ words, which are true. (Alexis Flunki, Whatì, CHP-000823-1/4)

Romie Wetrade expands on this:

Caribou know if they are respected and will return to people who respect them, but will not go to those who disrespect them. Tłchq ancestors say the caribou are telepathic and discuss how people treat them, and discuss whom they will travel towards. (Romie Wetrade, Gamètì, VM-070614)

Laws Governing Treatment of Caribou

- Caribou should not be hit or clubbed with a stick. It is like clubbing them away from us. If they are, the caribou will not return for years and years. (Nora Nitsiza, Whatì, VM-070613)
- We elders don’t want to keep telling (negative) stories about this great animal – caribou. We want to keep on respecting and taking good care of caribou. We want

to keep this caribou knowledge and give it to our young people so it can be passed to the future generations (Jimmy Rabesca, Whatì, 000823-1/4)

- Caribou should not be discussed in a negative way – like the way the government is talking about them now (about how the population is going down). (Pierre Beaverhoe, Whatì, VM-070613)

Laws Governing Use and Need

Proper use is key to respecting caribou, to its wellbeing and to humans' wellbeing. Share and help each other. Use all that the caribou has to give. Kill only what you need; use all that you kill.

- People should treat caribou with respect because caribou are the ones that struggle to get to us, even though they know they are going to be killed. They are happy to see the people. We people are not the ones to struggle for the caribou (Caroline Beaulieu, Behchokö, CHP-00/11/02)
- Only use what you need, share the rest. (Dora Nitsiza, Whatì, VM- 070612)
- The wife needs to help the mother tan the caribou hide, make some dry meat, pound meat, and pound bones for grease. The wives used to sit in a group together and sew between forty to fifty hides together to make a tent. They would all help each other. Back then the women shared and helped each other, with food, clothing, sewing, berry picking, gathering spruce boughs, gathering firewood, helping poor families, these kind of things the wife needs to do. (Elizabeth Chocolate, Behchokò, nd)
- I used to watch my mother making caribou fat soap. She put a pot of water over the fire and would add some *zedzok'a* (caribou mating fat). She let it boil for a

long time, then she added *letì* (hard ashes from the bottom of the fire) into the pot and mixed it all up together and continued boiling it. Once she finished, she would let it set all night. The next day she cut it into small chunks of soap. When she washed clothes with it, the clothes turned white. (Joe Susie Mackenzie, Behchokò, nd)

- We only killed enough for the whole family; we don't kill more than that. We don't kill caribou for no reason. We only kill how much we need. This caribou travels and struggles to come to us to live and feed on, and we should be thankful for it. But nowadays some people are not respecting and caring for the caribou, it sure looks that way, from the look of it; it shouldn't be like that at all. Sometimes we see some dead caribou lying around, people and hunters should kill only what they need. We know some people kill caribou, but not for food. We know that. I myself think it is disrespectful for caribou to be treated this way. Some people take only what part they want and throw away and leave some caribou parts on the land. Wasting is not right, it is wrong. It shouldn't be like that. They should be treated with love and respect like our ancestors did in the past. (Johnny Nitsiza, Whatì, CHP-000823-1/4)
- We live on caribou; we depend on caribou. Some years there are lots of caribou and some years there are none. It is still the same today. We don't shoot the caribou just for the fun of it, that spiritual animal will know it. Because the caribou is so important to us we had to respect the caribou, and shoot it only if you need it for food and clothing, and always remember to cut it up with respect. (Philip Chocolate, Behchokò, nd)
- Long ago the women had to work with caribou calf hide because the hide was soft and much easier to

sew. All the women and men even children were all raised with caribou hair and hide clothing. They also used to make and raise the baby in a cradle carried on the back that too was made out of caribou calf hide. (Elizabeth Chocolate, Behchokò, nd)

- The oldest female and the wife discussed what should be done with the caribou meat for storage and meal preparation purposes, as well as what should be made with different types of caribou hide. Back then we are supposed to do what we are told - that was the rule. (Elizabeth Charlo, Behchokò, nd)
- We had a law never to throw away any scrap of caribou hide. The hunters can use the small pieces for patching their pants, mittens, coats, and moccasins. Even the smallest pieces of hide should be used for a good purpose. (Liaza Mantla, Gamètì, VM, June 2007)
- I always tell people this story, about how my father used to cut up all the caribou meat, then he stored all the caribou meat between the two big rocks at Gots'okatì. That was my father's freezer, for the whole winter. (Liza Koyina, Behchokò, CHP- 00/11/02)

Laws Governing 'what is not used'

- Long ago the wife made caribou hair blankets, rabbit hair blankets, ptarmigan feather blankets, and duck feather blankets. That's the reason why they used to be really careful and respect how they handled the caribou hair and feathers. And if they don't need them, they had to bury them between the rocks or out of the way places. They had to make sure the hair or feathers don't blow all over the place. They used to have rules for all these things. (Madeline Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- It is law that we should use all parts of the caribou, and put bones and hair in a place where people and

animals cannot walk over them and in places where the wind cannot spread the hair around. (Margaret Lafferty, Wekweètì, VM:070614)

- When I was a young man my father used to have me build a cache in the trees and store all the caribou bones and scraps there. Then he would tell me to spill all those bones in between the rocks, where no one goes. Our parents used to tell us take all these caribou bones by dog team and spill them where no one goes. That's how our ancestors used to respect caribou because the caribou are really important to them – for food as well as for clothing. Matton Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- If a caribou is sick, or if the meat smells bad and the hides are in poor condition then everything should be thrown between the rocks. (Angelique Mantla, Gamètì, VM:070612)
- Never burn any caribou bones or the caribou will not grow from them again. That is a law (Phillip Zoe, Gamètì, VM-070614)



Elizabeth Chocolate of Gamètì taking care of caribou hair, 2000
©Madelaine Chocolate, Whaèhdòò Nàowòò Kò Collection, Tłıchǫ Government

The above comments stress the importance of following Tł̥ch̥ rules and laws for the protection of caribou and the people who depend on them.

Laws Governing the Responsibility of Leaders and Elders

In the not so distant past those who knew the most became the leader of a specific activity, as the following elder's statements demonstrate.

- I have seen a lot of our elders that know about caribou spirit. They would have a dream or a vision of the caribou on the lake. The next day I would go out to that area and sure enough, there would be caribou on the lake, where they had described it. (Moise Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02).
- Long ago the leader and elders would pick the best hunter to lead the hunt. (Joe Suzie Mackenzie, Behchokö, nd)
- Long ago the leader and the oldest elders would choose the best great hunters to go hunting. That was the rule long ago. When the hunter kills caribou the whole town would share the caribou meat among each other, especially with the poor families and elders. It's the same with fish. When the people catch a lot of fish the Tł̥ch̥ people will share among each other, that was the rule. (Joe Suzie Mackenzie, Behchokò, nd)

Laws Governing Parents' and other Family Members' Behaviour

- Our ancestor used to say it is good luck to pack dry meat for the hunters, that's how the caribou are re-born. That's how caribou find each other again. If they are respected they are re-created. That way the hunter gets to kill a lot of caribou. So it was like a rule back then. (Moise Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

- Long ago there was a rule for the parent to give the young hunter a farewell and warning before going for a hunt. They do this so he can become a great hunter. (Elizabeth Rabesca, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- Young woman sew for their husbands, and the mother always told us, “Do not miss one stitch or else your husband will not have luck in hunting”. That is how our mother used to talk to us, they used to look out for everything we did. These were the things the wife needs to do daily. They always have rules for everything back in those days. (Rosalie Tailbone, Gamètì, nd)
- Women should always remind their husbands, sons, and younger brothers to take care and respect caribou, travel safely, and to use their gear carefully and to check their snow shoes every morning. Women should also check their own snowshoes. (Elizabeth Rabesca, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Laws Governing Female Behaviour

Women have a complex set of laws governing their behaviour that demonstrate a respect for the *dè*, and for their own ability. Most of the elders clearly expressed this during the verification meeting.

Women should know men’s knowledge about caribou. They should know how to hunt and fish and cut up the meat and to set the fishnets, just like the man. They have the ability. It is the law to know both ways. (Romie Wetrade, Gamètì, VM-070614)



Bella Zoe's Smoke Tent, Gamètì, 2000

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- The leader Mòwhì said, “women are important”. In the past the women had to work the hardest. They cook, clean up, raise the baby, sew, work on caribou hide; they do all these daily chores. One time Mòwhì took his wife’s hand, and while kissing it, he said, “this hand has done me a great deed by cooking and sewing for me, for that I am very grateful, happy”. People should appreciate and be thankful for each other, that is the law.” (Moise Martin, Behchokò (CHP-00/11/02)

Women obey the rules to show respect for the caribou, and to ensure men are successful hunters and that the caribou will return to the people.

General Rules for Females

- Female elders will often begin by discussing what should be done with the meat for storage and meal preparation purposes, as well as what should be made with different types of hides (Elizabeth Charlo, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- Young women should not step over any part of caribou. (Elizabeth Charlo, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)



Bella Zoe, Gametì, 2000

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- Women should not step over their husband's or father's hunting gear such as their axe, gun, fishing net, and clothing in general, or they will be unlucky in hunting and fishing. Women should not step over their husbands' or fathers' hats or they will get a headache and will be unlucky in hunting. (Adele Wedawin Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

- Long ago the women were not allowed to cut a hole through the dry meat. That was way back in our ancestors' time. That was their law then. (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Rules for Females of Childbearing Age

- The young women were not allowed to walk over caribou blood - that was the rules back then. Only the hunters are allowed and only when they are cutting up the caribou. (Elizabeth Charlo, Behchokò, nd)
- There is a law that the expectant mother is not allowed to eat newborn calf meat when cooked in grease, or the newborn baby will have blisters all over their body. (Adele Wedawin Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- Young women can't eat caribou calf while it is very hot, or they will loose their teeth at an early age. (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- The expectant mother is not allowed to throw calf hoof into the fire or she will have a stillborn baby. These are the rules that originated from long ago. (Philip Chocolate, Behchokò, nd)

Rules for Menstruating Women's Behaviour

- When a teenage girl gets her first menstruation, she is not allowed to watch cooking caribou head or eat caribou head or the tongue, or she will go blind. That was the law. (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- There's a rule the young women who gets their first menstruation is not allowed to go over the caribou blood or meat, or any of the hunters belongings or the hunter will have bad luck. (Elizabeth Chocolate, Behchokò, nd)
- And there was a law the young women with first menstruation was not allowed to eat raw caribou meat

with blood, she really had to hard cook the caribou meat till the blood is all gone then she eats it. And she has to live all by herself in the hut or tepee away from the camp. (Elizabeth Rabesca, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

- The mother used to tell her daughter don't go over your father's hat or he will get a headache; don't go over your father's gun or he won't kill anything; he will be unlucky in hunting. Don't go over your father's fish net or your father won't catch any fish at all. This sort of thing was the rules back then. (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- When the women or the wife get her menstruation when travelling with the family on dog team, she has to walk on the outside of the trail, because she is not allowed to walk on the trail of the hunters, or the hunter would become unlucky. That was the rules back then. (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Rules Governing Hunter's Wife's Behaviour

- Long ago the wife sewed the hunters clothing, packed their hunting bag, make sure their snowshoes were ready on their sled, and the wife packed lots of babiche. The women make sure they are all ready and they are dressed warm. When the wife gives the husband her farewell, she warns him to be careful on their journey. It means that's how the wife is saving their husband lives. That's a law. (Moise Martin, Behchokò, nd)
- Long ago there was hardly any caribou. We weren't allowed to throw away any scrap of caribou hide. They should use everything - used caribou skin for tablecloth, when they are having the feast. These sorts of things are the women rules. (Annie Black, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Laws Governing Hunters

Although men and women had their own roles, their work complements each other. As Laiza Mantla explained at the verification meeting:

- The men we lived with brought the meat home, but they did not touch the meat after that. He hunts and we clean the meat. If you don't know the job, you learn from observing. We learn to clean meat, do hides; we learn to do everything in relationship to meat. We didn't throw any parts away. (Laiza Mantla, VM-079615)

General Rules for Hunters

- At that time there was a rule that men are not allowed eating thighbone marrow or they won't have luck in hunting. (Annie Black, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- At one time men used to bring the caribou meat through the back entrance of the tent, so the caribou blood didn't drip on the floor or spruce boughs. That was the law.⁸ (Adele Wedawin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- The hunters had to make sure they do not wear broken or incorrectly cross-stitched snowshoes. If they do the caribou will take off like lightning. The caribou know if they are not respected. Caribou know if what they provide for us is used correctly. The hunter had to watch out for all these sort of things. (Robert Mackenzie, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

⁸ This made it easier on the women who could not step over the blood – most of the rules are complementary.



Phillip Zoe, Gamètì. Courtesy of ©Tessa MacIntosh

Rules Governing Following and Meeting Caribou

- There is a rule not to wear any caribou hide clothing of woodland caribou when hunting towards the tundra. These two types of caribou are afraid of each other. Our parents used to tell us these sort of things, don't wear woodland caribou moccasin or mitts or carry anything like gun case or shell bag that is made from woodland caribou when you go hunting. Barren ground caribou will know and it will take off so fast. You have to respect both. That's the rule. (Matton Mantla, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- Hunters are not to wear bison clothing either, or the barren ground caribou will run off. (Romie Wetrade, Gamètì, VM-070613)
- First, the hunter has to know where the caribou is, then the hunter prepares to go after it by following the caribou tracks. They shoot what type of caribou they

want, and how many they think they need. (Jimmy Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

- The hunter had to spear the caribou in between the ribs. It was the law to make sure you killed the caribou. If a caribou is wounded, it must be followed and killed. (Paul Rabesca, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- A rule is that the hunter had to approach the caribou against the wind. That way the meat is tasty. But if the hunter approaches the caribou with the wind, the caribou will smell the scent and it will go throughout the whole body. The meat is not that tasty. (Jimmy Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- Long ago hunters called caribou by shaking immature female caribou antlers bones to make sounds. They cut the bone into four inch pieces and pulled the string through the hole of the bones and dangle them together to make sounds like bells. That's how the hunters used to call the caribou. I think I would call that a caribou law. (Jimmy Martin, Behchokò, nd)
- Not too many caribou bulls should be taken. It is the law. If too many are taken there aren't enough to protect the females and the calves. (Jimmy Martin, Behchokò, VM-070614)

Rules Governing the Respectful 'Cutting Up' of Caribou



Paul Wetrade of Gamètì at Deèhzàati

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- There are rules to cutting up the caribou. When the hunter is ready to cut up the caribou, they cut off the head first, then they tear off the caribou hide. Then they cut off one hind leg and one arm then they pull out the sinew along the back. After they turn the caribou to the other side and do the same thing over again. Then they pull out the intestine – everything right out. Then they take the ribs and the back strap. (Jimmy Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- Long ago when I was a young man I used to watch some elders. They had a rule that when they killed the caribou, they put the caribou where no one walked - like in the shade of the tree where they skinned and cut up the caribou. If, like our ancestors, people respect the caribou, then the caribou will respect you back. Our elders used to say this all the time. (Philip Chocolate, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Summary of Tłchq Nàowo (laws)

Three categories of laws governing behaviour are apparent, and relevant to monitoring and managing human behaviour to ensure stewardship of caribou.

1. Assist others and care for them - human and non-human;
2. Minimize waste; and
3. Dispose of by-products correctly.

As Joe Champlain explained:

The spirit of the caribou looks after itself. It knows when it is being respected or not. It knows when we treat it with respect and learn its knowledge. (Joe Champlain, Whatì, CHP-000823-2/4)

Assist Others and Care for Them

Assisting and caring for human or non-human beings is key to survival.

Cooperating and working together is highly valued:

There is a story that tells of an old woman who set out to hunt caribou when her husband was really sick. They were out of food; they had nothing to eat. While his wife was out hunting the husband was back at the tent. He started singing to the caribou. He was singing a caribou song. Then all of a sudden there was caribou standing in front of the old woman. That's how she killed a caribou; she caught caribou in the snare. They ended up with lots of caribou meat. (Madeline Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Here is a summary of other stated rules associated with assisting and caring for others:

- Share caribou and fish with those less fortunate.
- Think about all beings with the same respect– caribou as well as all other humans and non-humans.
- Think about how one’s actions may cause harm or cause unfortunate situations for another being – including caribou.
- Work together for the best possible results.
- Help others prepare.
- Remind others of potential dangers.
- Do not insult non-humans beings by treating them as if they lack intelligence or a spirit.

Minimize Waste: Use, Do Not Abuse

Elders emphasized that respectful behaviour is to know, use, and share resources. Without knowledge of caribou and the language to discuss caribou behaviour, caribou habitat, and indicators of caribou health, people are likely to abuse and waste rather than use, preserve, and share. Those who do not understand and respect caribou will kill without using the meat and hide. As Johnny Nitsiza said:

We only kill enough for the whole family, we don’t kill more than that; we don’t just kill caribou. We only kill what we need. ... We know some people kill caribou without needing it for food. I myself think it is disrespectful for caribou to be treated this way. Some people only take the part they want and throw away the rest. It is wrong. ... We are not allowed to burn caribou bones in the fire. (If we want them to return

we should not burn their bones). The caribou love their bones. Simply stated, caribou will not re-birth if it is not shown that it is both 'needed' and 'respected'. (Johnny Nitsiza, Whatì, CHP-00/08/23-1/4)

To summarize:

- Do not harvest what you do not need, or if you do not know someone who you can share with.
- Store what you do not need in appropriate ways by drying or freezing.
- Know the type of caribou you need.
- Dispose of caribou by-products in appropriate ways.
- Use everything the caribou provides.



Harry Apple at ?ots'ik'è,
©Gabrielle Mackenzie-Scott, Whaèhdqò Nàowòd Kò Collection, Tłchq Government

Indicators

During any discussion with the senior elders they talk about human behaviour – of both Tł̥ch̥q and non-Tł̥ch̥q citizens – and the relationships between behaviour and knowledge. Lack of knowledge demonstrates disrespect of oneself, the *dè*, and the caribou. This can lead to a decline in caribou population, changes to caribou distribution, and a dysfunctional society.

This section discusses some indicators as related to human behaviour and to caribou in poor condition. From the Tł̥ch̥q elders' perspective human behaviour is tied to the wellbeing of all that is part of the *dè*, including caribou. Being knowledgeable is the overarching law. If one lacks knowledge then it is almost impossible to know the more specific laws, or to have the skill to act on those laws.

Indicators: Human Behaviour

During the verification meeting the elders expressed how the inability of humans to follow the most basic laws indicates a problem throughout the *dè*. Lack of knowledge of the relationships between all that is part of the *dè* relates to a disregard for caribou. The caribou will eventually disappear if people do not respect, need, and use caribou appropriately.

From the Tł̥ch̥q perspective, we can identify many human behaviour indicators that demonstrate a lack of knowledge about caribou, and therefore a lack of respectful behaviour towards and respectful use of caribou.

'Bothering' caribou indicates lack of respect and knowledge. As Moise Martin said:

Even the trees look different; the *dè* is changing – like the grass, lichen, and all the plants. And why did the government start counting the caribou. Our creator put caribou on this earth to be free and roam the land. They are not to be counted; (they are not to be bothered). (Moise Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Many elders and active harvesters are concerned with the way the western perspective encourages people to discuss the negative aspects associated with caribou. As Romie Wetrade said:

White people raise animals. So they are always thinking about what to do with them. Tłchq do not raise animals. Caribou migrate all over the land. Because of white people we are now talking negatively about caribou. For me that is not right. Talking all the time about how we will fix it. How will they migrate back to us? What will happen to the young? We should leave them alone and let them be. (Romie Wetrade, VM: 080612)

All elders at the verification meeting agreed that there has been a lot of talk, but few people know caribou. As Elizabeth Michel explained: the best "hunters do not talk about problems with caribou because they know that caribou talk amongst themselves, and they will decide when to return".

The elders also predict that if people continue to use collars, the caribou will probably decide against being re-born. Capturing caribou and forcing them to wear a collar shows a lack of respect. Elders and harvesters expressed their concern that using caribou collars is similar to hitting a caribou with a stick or

club. For the elders and harvesters, a number of human behaviours indicate the decline in caribou. As Caroline Beaulieu and Moise Martin exemplified:

There are hardly any fat caribou around now. Even their bone marrow has no more taste to it. A lot has changed. Could it be because of the wildlife management? It is because nobody does anything or says anything to those Wildlife, Economic Development, and Renewable Resource people. That's the reason why they still put radio collars on the caribou and other animals. And they use a tranquilliser to put animals to sleep that spreads throughout the animal's body, which does not make the meat tasty. (Moise Martin, CHP-00/11/02)

The caribou used to migrate to our land. But now there are mines in the way of their major migration route. That's the reason why caribou mind-spirit is weak – it is too weak to come toward our land now. The caribou feel like there is something in their path, so they turn the other way. The smell of fumes and smoke can blow far on the barren ground, and the caribou can sense that. (Caroline Beaulieu, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Moise Martin indicated that there were problems and commented on his observations during a trip to BHP in 1999:

To me it seems like they (unknowingly) killed all the animals. Like for example, we took a trip to BHP, but we never saw any kind of animal pass by – no foxes, bears, wolves or other animals. We went flying around with the helicopter to three other places. But I had never seen any kind of animals on the land. That was very strange to me. It was the time of year there should be a lot of animals all over the barren ground. But there was nothing in sight. Even the water is not safe to drink any more. What about all the animal food, and the plants and trees that depend on water? (Moise Martin, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)

Here is a summary of human behaviour indicators that impact on the well-being of caribou:

- People choose to put collars on caribou.
- People choose to throw caribou bones and other by-products in the dump.
- Women and men no longer know each other's knowledge and skill when working with caribou.
- Parents no longer have the time to teach young people through example, and to talk to them about how to hunt and how to treat caribou.
- Children are in school all day, and do not learn about caribou from their grandparents. They learn about caribou from non-Tłı̨chǫ teachers.
- Currently the government has restricted our ability to hunt bulls, so people are killing cows. Caribou bulls are taken for their antlers.
- People allow chemicals associated with the mines and other pollutants to affect caribou and make them sick. Hunters see increased numbers of caribou in very poor condition.
- The yellowish colour of snow around Ekati, that is a concern as it melts into the lake. (Louis Whane, Wekweètì, CHP-000823-2/4)
- Because of all the forest fires in our area, there is a lack of caribou vegetation – it was burned out. (Moise Martin, Behchokǫ̀, CHP-000806-1/2)
- The low flying planes stress the caribou (Margaret Lafferty, Wekweètì, VM 07/06/15)
- Young people and non-Dene do not know how to approach caribou, especially when they are on skidoos.

- People choose to leave wounded caribou, rather than follow them and kill them.
- People, especially those from the dominant society, do not acknowledge the caribou's strong spirit. They do not understand or believe the caribou know if they are respected or not.
- People leave hides and other parts of the caribou where they shoot them.
- People throw caribou meat, hides, and bones in the garbage with baby diapers and women's sanitary napkins.
- People are messy - they don't clean up blood that they drop it.
- People no longer save small pieces of caribou hide for patching. Only the hunters still take them.
- More and more young women do not know they should stay away from men's hunting gear, and step over men's clothing.
- People discuss caribou in a negative way – like the way the government is talking about them now.
- People decide how many caribou to kill caribou based on greed, rather than use.

During the mid-1990s the elders expressed their concern that those approving, building, and operating mines lacked sufficient knowledge of caribou and caribou habitat to make decisions about whether or not to construct mines in the vicinity of ?ekati. The elders predicted that to go ahead with these developments would ultimately destroy caribou habitat, pollute the water and air, and lead to a decline in the caribou population. They based this prediction on their observations that those talking about the land did not seem to have any experience, and lacked an understanding of basic relationships between entities.

In an attempt to encourage the leadership to question development, they told stories of Rayrock mine, including how they were told it was safe. They emphasized how dust on plants, pollutants in the water, and smells coming from the mines were all indicators that the caribou would be in decline. Mostly these indicators refer to the animals that remained in situ around the mine, not to caribou. Elders made assumptions about what could happen to caribou based on what happened to their own bodies and the bodies of beaver and fish. The TREC elders agreed “people should know that when the plants die then the animals will die as well”.

Indicators: Caribou in Poor Condition

Reduced population and rapid change in distribution can mean there is insufficient food for caribou to forage, or their habitat has been damaged in some way. Habitat changes can be the ebb and flow of natural cycles, or can be caused by human behaviour.

When caribou habitat is damaged or reduced people often observe the following: sore or broken limbs, damaged hooves, hair in poor condition, foul smelling meat, grainy hides, and weight problems.

Throughout the verification meeting elders spoke of the increased lack of knowledge about how to respect caribou; that the caribou are skinny, moving away, not being re-born, and that their meat smells because of pollutants at the mine sites – air, noise, and water.

- My son Edward shot a caribou that was so thin, and the tongue was partly blue colour with pus.

(Angelique Manta, Gamètì, 02/08 as referenced in DT11C 2003)

- Today the caribou are not fat and tasty. (Philip Chocolate, Behchokò, CHP-00/11/02)
- I see that the caribou tracks are changing direction from the usual trails. It looks like that now, but what about in the near future? What will it look like? (Louis Whane, Wekweètì, CHP-000823-2/4)
- Before when we skin a caribou we only use our hands and our hands feel smooth, just like we put on hand lotion – that's how good the hides used to be. ... Now today, when we skin the caribou with our hands it feels rough, like sand, and when we pull the caribou hide it can rip. It never did that in the past (Louis Whane, Wekweètì, CHP-000823-2/4)
- This change is not just happening to the caribou, it is the same with fish. Like the trout's colour used to be red and tasty, now the colour is pale and lighter. (Louis Whane, Wekweètì, CHP-000823-2/4)



Gots'ak'atì, 1988
Courtesy of ©Alicie Legat

Solutions and Management Actions

Elders and harvesters with whom we worked believe we can find solutions only if we understand the problem. Senior elders emphasize that remembering past occurrences, having knowledge, and continuing to obtain information show how well both caribou and community members are coping with industrial development, climate change, and a variety of contemporary socio-economic choices. (Legat 2007; DT11C, WNK 2001; Parlee and Marlowe 1998, 1999, 2000).

Tł̥chq elders emphasize that without adequate knowledge, people lack the ability and skill to recognize and understand indicators of change. Without knowledge they lack the ability to know if change is part of a cycle, or if the indicators should trigger community concern.⁹ As Behchokò elder Elizabeth Michel explained:

One caribou law is to think about how the caribou migrate by following the weather changes, and thinking about where they might migrate according to the vegetation they eat. In summertime the caribou roam around due to the insects, but in wintertime the caribou stay in one particular area. Wherever the caribou know there will be a lot of food they will stay to feed; there will be at least forty to fifty caribou living in an area for a while (Elizabeth Michel, Behchokò, June 14, 2007)

A 1995 statement made by Amen Tailbone, an elder from Gamètì, expands on Elizabeth's explanation:

⁹ This has also been emphasized by traditional knowledge researchers working on the Sahtu Regional Traditional Knowledge Research and Monitoring Program when giving presentations such as *Communities, Caribou and Ecological Change* (D. Simmons: personal communication, March 2008).

You must know the caribou and observe the caribou and if the caribou does something that is different than you expect, then you must watch them even more intensely so you understand why it did not behave the way you expected it to. (as quoted in Legat et al, 1995)

Questions of 'why' and 'can it be solved' are topics of conversation in most homes in Tłı̨chǫ communities. Here is a summary of solutions people most often expressed:

- Provide places for elders to sit with young people so they can tell them how to respect animals, especially the caribou.
- Invite elders into the schools to teach the children not to put caribou bones and hides or hair at the dump.
- Give young people the knowledge they need to learn to use the caribou properly.
- Allow no more mines where the caribou need to feed in the summer and during the winter.
- Hunt only what people need.
- Do not bother caribou, do not collar or count them.
- Agree that Dene and Inuit set the guidelines for harvesting caribou.
- Agree that Dene and Inuit harvesters do all monitoring.

Elders at the verification meeting remembered Moise Martin saying:

The leadership should designate an island so all the caribou bones can be placed there. It is not right that they are thrown in the dump. It is not respectful. (Moise Martin, 00/06/08 – ½)

The elders thought that the bones and other parts of caribou should be put on an island designated for caribou by-products, and that the island should be away from the community so people do not dump other things there. It was agreed that people take caribou by-products to the island by skidoo in winter and by boat in the summer, rather than putting them at the dump. (CHP-00/06/08-½)

Monitoring - 'Watching Caribou' and Cumulative Impacts

Like any monitoring process - including scientific - Tłıchǫ stewardship depends on the observations and statements of a group of individuals that the people consider knowledgeable. Elders at the verification meeting, like the elders and harvesters in 1999, thought that the hunters and their wives know the caribou best. They were raised on the land and know about watching caribou.

Together, harvesters and elders have the skills and knowledge to monitor the land, including the caribou. The harvesters observe; the elders put their observations into context with past occurrences and experience, while the youth listen and learn.

Oral narratives provide harvesters with knowledge of what happened in the past. Harvesters and elders use oral narratives to think about what changes and what stays the same. Much of the information from oral narratives is useful as baseline information, because it originates from before development. In telling what happened, the oral narrators weave various factors together. Harvesters observe habitat and distribution, and talk about things among themselves and with elders.

Hunters, fishers, and trappers use oral narratives to think about why things change. As they watch and care for the 'land', these observers have a responsibility to talk about how the caribou behave in various locations, what they eat, how they walk, how much they weigh, how the young look, and anything else that seems relevant.

Harvesters observe caribou distribution, which is impacted by the state of caribou habitat. They know when the caribou should be in a certain place at a certain time of the year. They discuss the abundance of lichen, grasses, and sedges; the amount of dust that covers vegetation near the mines; and the degree to which forest fire destroys habitat. They observe and discuss how fish, caribou, and water fowl taste. They watch caribou forage, and observe what they eat and what is in their mouth when harvested. Caribou have a strong sense of smell and harvesters watch to see if caribou migrate elsewhere to find good habitat and why they might do that. Have forest fires destroyed their preferred food? Do the smells from mines and communities create problems for caribou finding lush habitat? (DT11C, WNK 2001)

Their sensitive sense of smell leads caribou to the lush sedge and grass habitats they need to feed lactating females and their young. Elders and hunters recognize that the ability caribou have to smell and remember landscape and habitat is key to their ability to give birth within meters of lush habitat and to find lichen to survive the winter (Elizabeth Chocolate discussing what Kitikmeot Inuit told her at Kòk'èetì). As elders discussed in numerous situations and as Alfred Arrowmaker, an active hunter and trapper, articulated:

Different animals' habitats are lush at different times. Sometimes the wolves are healthy because their habitat is lush, and sometimes the caribou are healthy because their habitat is lush – it balances out if you watch over a long time. That's what my elders told me and that's what I have observed. (Alfred Arrowmaker, Gamètì, June 4, 2008)

The Tł̨ch̨ elders consider the 'land' as being in constant flux; they believe all things are interrelated. They remember and consider their ancestors' stories when they think about cumulative impacts. They consider as many variables as possible, through time and space. Rules and laws governing behaviour towards caribou are embedded in a body of stories that tell of consistency and change over time.

Section 12 of Tł̨ch̨ Agreement stresses the importance of having good information, so people can take appropriate action. Section 12.16 commits the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board to "take steps to acquire and use traditional knowledge as well as other types of scientific information and expert opinion."

Concluding Remarks

This is only the first step towards documenting Tł̨ch̨ laws governing behaviour associated with wildlife and other aspects of the *dè*. The Tł̨ch̨ have many more laws that need to be documented – more laws for barren ground caribou and laws for other wildlife, including boreal caribou.

The research team recognize that we also need to do the work to compare traditional indicators with scientific indicators, in relation to caribou and other

wildlife (the original objective 2 that we dropped). This work is very important. It will help ensure co-management boards and others recognize and understand the relevance of Tł̨ch̨q and scientific perspectives.

Tł̨ch̨q elders agreed with the list of laws contained in this report. They identified an overarching law - the relationship between being knowledgeable and the ability to respect the land, of which caribou and humans are a part. Humans become knowledgeable by listening, watching, and experiencing. Being knowledgeable means humans have the ability to survive – today and in the past. It means humans have the ability to assist others, minimize waste, and dispose of by-products in appropriate ways. If a person lacks ability and skill, it clearly indicates they lack knowledge.

From the Tł̨ch̨q perspective we can trace many impacts - negative or positive - back to human behaviour. The main indicator of negative change is often lack of knowledge. Indicators of caribou behaviour, migration patterns, distribution, population, and the state of their habitat are related to human behaviour. If caribou are in trouble the main indicator may be that people do not know the basic rules of how to treat caribou and do not have knowledge of caribou habitat and behaviour. Loss of habitat can be related to lack of knowledge among humans. If caribou habitat is lush, it is usually inappropriate human behaviour that creates situations that cause caribou to move away from an area.

Traditional educators stress the importance of knowing and using appropriate language when hunting, cutting up, and preserving caribou; and when using what caribou have to offer. Tł̨ch̨q elders and those living in Łutselk'è consider a

lack of knowledge about caribou as an indicator that caribou populations will drop. Peoples' lack of language and lack of ability to discuss caribou are strong indicators that caribou will not migrate towards them - that we need to increase our knowledge of how to 'care for' and show respect for caribou.



Rosalie Gon, Behchokò, 1999
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