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The WRRB is mandated to use the best science available, along with traditional knowledge, in making its decisions. Last month, I sent you two critical documents, one entitled

"The Tuktuk and Nogak Project: Inuit Knowledge about Caribou and Calving Areas in the Bathurst Inlet Region"

By Natasha L. Thorpe

And the second one entitled

"Climate, snow, ice, crashes, and declines in populations of reindeer and caribou (*Rangifer tarandus* L.)

N. J. C. Tyler1 "

The first document can be found on the ENR website, yet was withheld from the WRRB. Clearly, the WRRB is not following its mandate to listen to Traditional Knowledge. This particular paper, which addresses TK about the Bathurst Calving Ground, goes to the very heart of many interveners arguments, and yet the WRRB has refused to admit it to evidence. Archaeological evidence shows the Bathurst calving on the east side of the Bathurst Inlet for at least 6000 years. Now, the scientists at ENR tell us that is not true. The Inuit elders, passing along generation after generation of knowledge, tell us the Bathurst herd calved on the East side of the Bathurst Inlet. And the Tli-cho, and the Dene, and the Metis elders tell us these caribou migrated south, where, for generations, they were harvested by all the First Nations. Now, the scientists at ENR want to call these "the Inuit Herd."

In June, of 1996, Dr. Anne Gunn, here today, split the Bathurst herd into two herds, after following 5 collared caribou for six weeks. Not 6000 years of knowledge, just six weeks.

In August of 2006, the Dogrib and the Federal Government of Canada signed the framework for self government, based on Treaty 11.

The following quote is from the Tlicho Government website:

"Grand Chief Joe Rabesca, who attended the signing on the morning of his father's death said this marks "a very important step for the Dogrib people.

"We've got a long way to go, but I'm committed to finish this."

Premier Don Morin, who also attended the signing, took the opportunity to call on the federal government to ensure the Dogrib claim is a priority.

With 85 claim tables open across the country and because of the "major mineral development in the (Dogrib) region", there should be no reason for delaying negotiations, said Morin.

And because downsizing the territorial government is now a reality, the Dogrib Nation can play a lead role helping other first nations acquire self-government, he added. "

The Tlicho negotiators thought they had negotiated the right to manage the Bathurst Caribou herd. Two months before the treaty is signed, Anne Gunn, working for the government of the Northwest Territories (and therefore, the Federal Government), changed the definition of the Bathurst herd.

Many of the people that negotiated that treaty, are here today. Ask yourselves. Were you told by anyone at that negotiation that the definition of the Bathurst caribou herd had been changed?

Were the employees at RWED changing the Bathurst definition, to preserve their own jobs, and prevent, as Premier Donny Morin says, "the downsizing of the territorial government?"

The second paper, which deals with global warming and caribou populations, directly contradicts ENR's statements about climate change being the cause of this purported caribou crash. If it is the WRRB's mandate to manage the caribou in Wek'heezhi, is it not incumbent upon them to establish, as best as scientifically possible, the cause for the caribou decline, so that mitigating actions can be taken? Only a complete fool, with zero knowledge of caribou management, could possibly conclude that the combined resident and non-resident harvest of 275 bulls could be the cause of this decline. The same is true of the aboriginal harvest. In 1950 the aboriginal harvest was 100,000 caribou. By the mid 1990s, with the elimination of the dog teams, it was down to less than 20,000. Today, with better jobs and education, it down to less than 5000 caribou. Harvesting of Bathurst caribou is not the issue. The splitting of the Bathurst caribou herd is the issue.

I understand these documents were submitted late. The interveners have little or no funding, and many of us are being financially crushed by the actions, already sent to Justice, of the GNWT. We must do all the research ourselves, unlike ENR, with a 60 million dollar a year budget. One would hope the object of the board, acting on behalf of the public interest, is to get this decision right. It has certainly given ENR and the Tlicho Governments plenty of leniency, when they have been late with their submissions or consultations. Why the interveners are treated differently, on such an important matter, is unclear.

Unfortunately, I must come to the conclusion that the Wek'heezhi Renewable Resources Board is basing its actions on politics, and not science and traditional knowledge, as is required. The designation of Dr. Anne Gunn, as the board's "independent expert", speaks volumes on this subject, as does the withholding of collared caribou information by the GNWT.

Clearly, the system of co-management, as envisioned by the signers of the Tlicho Agreement, will not, and cannot, work, without honesty and integrity on the part of the key provider of scientific information, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the GNWT.

The outfitters, the resident and non-resident hunters across the Northwest Territories and around the world, and, the Metis and the Dene hunters, and most importantly, the Tlicho hunters, deserve better than this.

Masi,

John Andre

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