

Tłıchq Community Meetings Discussing the Dìga Harvesting Program – Winter 2020

During the 2020 winter road season, the Tłıchq Government's Department of Culture and Lands Protection (DCLP) organized public meetings in each of the Tłıchq communities – Behchokò, Whatì, Gamètì and Wekweètì –to provide updates on the programs that are run by DCLP including the Dìga harvesting program. The comments made in each community regarding the Dìga harvesting program are summarized below:

Wekweètì – February 3, 2020

The Tłıchq Government's Wildlife Biologist presented on the objectives and updated the Dìga harvesting program; the program was only a couple of days into operation at this point. The meeting was held with the Elders to discuss Dìga harvesting camps and the training being offered to the participants. There were not any concerns specific to the methods of harvesting wolves or the program itself and the comments brought up were mostly about the logistics of the program such as storage of the harvested wolves, opening of trails to the camp locations and snow conditions of the surrounding area of the camps. Being that Wekweètì is the closest community from which the Dìga harvesting program was based, the attendees of the meeting were aware of what was going on with the program.

Gamètì – February 5, 2020

Similar meeting format was used in Wekweètì - each program was presented by the program leads and so the updates were similar. There were concerns regarding the fact that there were no participants of the Dìga harvesting program from Gamètì. In response, attendees were told that advertisements were sent out seeking applicants for the program to each community in the same format, so it was unfortunate that at the time there were no applicants from Gamètì. One elder mentioned that whenever you see a dìga it should be killed because it would be helping the caribou. This same elder mentioned that there are two types of dìga and that they behave differently; they need to be studied as Gamètì has both of them. Another elder mentioned that there need to be more discussion regarding harvesting dìga and that we need to learn more about their behaviour.

Whatì – February 25, 2020

The meeting in Whatì was initially scheduled the day after the Gamètì meeting but due to a demise in the community it was postponed. By this point, there was more to update the community on regarding the Dìga harvesting program, as it would have been a month into program operation. The participants of the Dìga harvesting program had not harvested as many dìga as anticipated. One elder had mentioned that dìga know human tracks and that they do not know snares. Another elder had said that to harvest dìga, you have to go where there are no people and use bait. There was a story on how

200 caribou were killed by ḏiga and the elder who shared this story feels that the ḏiga are killing off the caribou. This same elder said that when he grew up on the Barrenlands he saw many ḏiga and that they are smart just like humans and that they hunt to survive, so it is not just people killing caribou, it's the ḏiga too.

Behchoḵ – March 9, 2020

During the DCLP community update, there were very few people in attendance. One or two from the general public showed up alongside DCLP staff. The program leads for the Ḏiga harvesting program were not available either. We believe that a demise in the community may well be the reason for the lack of participation. It was decided that the meeting would be postponed and rescheduled to a more convenient time for the community in the hopes that there will be more participation. We also note that soon after this meeting, an NWT wide emergency was declared to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and there was no further meeting in Behchoḵ.