

# NOTES FROM THE LAND

CANADIAN PARKS & WILDERNESS SOCIETY-NWT CHAPTER

JANUARY 2020, NEWSLETTER #40

## NWT CONSERVATION NEWS

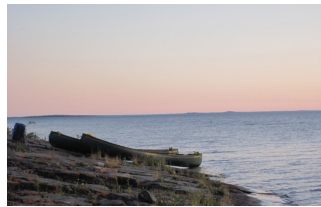


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LOVE THE LAND CALENDAR



*Happy New Year from CPAWS-NWT!*

*As we look forward to a new calendar year and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead we reflect on 2019 as an amazing year for conservation in the NWT. Celebrations for the establishment of Thaidene Nëné and Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta Indigenous Protected Areas and a new NWT Protected Areas Act were three remarkable achievements!!*

*There are so many who contribute to these accomplishments starting with the communities and Indigenous governments who lead the way, federal and territorial governments, NGO's, financial sponsors and you our members and donors who understand that conservation of land water and wildlife is worthy of the time and investment that it takes to realize success.*

*Please take your own moment to share in celebrating the positive outcomes from 2019 - have a toast, share a story about a dedicated person who contributed just recently or long ago, or pause to smile just because there has been some good news for planet earth!*

*Enjoy the Newsletter and all the best to you and yours in 2020!*

## Status of Caribou in the NWT

### An Uncertain Future for Barren-ground Caribou

All NWT barren-ground caribou herds, excluding the Porcupine herd, have been assessed as “Threatened” on the NWT List of Species at Risk. This means that they are likely to become endangered if nothing is done to reverse the factors contributing to their decline. As of fall 2018, population estimates for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East populations are the most concerning, indicating a decline of nearly 50 per cent for the Bluenose-East, and nearly 60 per cent for the Bathurst caribou herd, since the last time the herds were counted in 2015. In November, CPAWS-NWT reviewed a Draft Recovery Strategy for Barren-ground Caribou in the NWT. A recovery strategy is a requirement of the Threatened listing and is intended to define goals and approaches to guide conservation and recovery of barren-ground caribou.

In our submission we highlighted our support for herd specific management plans which take direction from community led caribou conservation planning and reinforced that increased investment in population monitoring is necessary. We identified concern that many essential and important caribou habitats such as calving grounds, post calving ranges, water crossings and migratory corridors are left open to development. Agreeing on conservation solutions for these areas is one tangible way to give the barren ground caribou population a best chance of recovering. The GNWT, who is lead on many aspects of the strategy can demonstrate a serious commitment to barren ground caribou by championing habitat conservation solutions. The due date for approving this strategy is July 2020 though we have submitted that this can and should be done sooner to catalyze progress on the most critical priorities for barren-ground caribou recovery.

### Boreal Caribou: An Opportunity for Proactive Stewardship

In the NWT we still have an opportunity to plan for a future with a thriving boreal caribou population. This can be done without the conflict that has arisen in other areas of Canada because of severe habitat loss, decimated populations and continued encroachment from development; many of the local herds in the provinces are near extirpation. Our situation is better here, but it is far from certain.

Boreal caribou in the NWT are listed as a “Threatened” species under both the Federal and Territorial Species at Risk Acts. In fact the population is thought to be declining linked to habitat loss and fragmentation from human-caused disturbances such as roads, oil and gas extraction and seismic lines.

Population estimates in the NWT suggest that boreal caribou will likely continue to be self-sustaining if development is carefully managed to avoid further habitat loss into the future.

To address this, CPAWS-NWT is currently participating in the development of range plans for boreal caribou in collaboration with the GNWT, Indigenous Governments and Organizations including Renewable Resource Boards. The first of five range plans is in the early stage of discussion for the southern portion of the range where human disturbance is most advanced.

Range planning is an opportunity to ensure that boreal caribou have an adequate quantity and quality of habitat to provide for a stable or increasing population into the future. The range plans should include large intact areas of connected and undisturbed habitat so that boreal caribou can thrive across their entire NWT range.



# Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta – A New Protected Area is celebrated in the Sahtu Region, NWT



Photo: Government of the Northwest Territories

**The Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta (pronounced Tsoo-den-ee-len Too yuh-ta), also known as the Ramparts, is an Indigenous and Territorial Protected Area, located in the Sahtu region of the Northwest Territories, north of the Mackenzie Mountains and west of Fort Good Hope (traditional name is Rádeyílikóé: Rapids Place).**

For the K'asho Go'ine Dene and Metis people of the Sahtu region, Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta is a sacred place, a traditional harvesting area and homeland. The importance of the area is well documented, it has been described that, "Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta is an important cultural and spiritual gathering place for the K'asho Go'ine Dene and Métis. Its diverse landscape, including extensive wetlands and plentiful wildlife make it a very rich land which has, and continues today, to support hunting, fishing, trapping, and other traditional activities."

CPAWS-NWT is thankful for the vision of K'asho Go'ine elders who identified Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta as an important area to protect.

On September 4, 2019, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the K'asho Go'ine signed an establishment agreement for Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta Indigenous and Territorial Protected Area, a celebration was held in Rádeyílikóé on November 26.

The NWT Protected Areas Act and Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta establishment agreement ensures that treaty rights, including harvesting and the requirements of land, resources and self-government agreements continue within the Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta Protected Area. "The protected area represents our way of life. It represents our home," explained Isidore Manuel, one of the leaders behind the project". (CBC North - November 26, 2019)

"Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta is an example of how Indigenous nations are leading efforts to conserve areas of their traditional territories for their own future and for the benefit of all Canadians," says Kris Brekke, CPAWS-NWT Executive Director. Adding that, "We can all celebrate this announcement and give our support to the many Indigenous-led conservation and protected area efforts moving forward in the NWT and across the country". Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta will continue to provide for the K'asho Go'ine as it has for generations and is a positive outcome in the fight against the global climate change and biodiversity crisis.

## Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta Key Events:

- 1993 – The Ramparts is identified as a Sahtú heritage place/site in the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Claim
- 2006 – Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta is sponsored as a candidate protected area under the NWT Protected Areas Strategy
- 2012 – The Final Working Group Recommendation Report is released
- 2013 – The K'asho Go'ine Lands Corporation requests establishment of Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta
- 2018 – Notice is provided to Sahtú Land Use Planning Board that the GNWT is in negotiations to pursue Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta under the NWT-Protected Areas Act
- 2019 – The GNWT and the K'asho Go'ine (including the local Yamoga Land Corporation), the Fort Good Hope Métis Nation Local #54 Land Corporation, and the Fort Good Hope Dene Band sign an establishment agreement for Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta on September 4th

## A Few Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta Facts:

- The protected area is adjacent to the Gwich'in Settlement Area to the west and the Mackenzie River to the east and is about a third of the size of Vancouver Island (10,050 sq./km)
- Boreal forest and wetland habitats provide for several Species at Risk including grizzly bear, boreal and mountain woodland caribou, as well as short-eared owl, peregrine falcon and wolverine
- The area is a "key migratory bird terrestrial habitat site"; it supports over 1% of the national populations of a number of migratory bird populations
- The watershed is an important wetland that filters millions of litres of water per day
- The area has many cultural places of importance including archaeological sites, burial sites and traditional trails
- The NWT Protected Areas Act prohibits industrial scale resource extraction and other large-scale energy projects
- The GNWT and K'asho Go'ine will collaborate to implement the Ts'ude Niljné Tuyeta establishment agreement. This includes forming a management board and preliminary work on developing a management plan

Information sourced from:

<https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/conservation-network-planning/tsude-niline-tuyeta>

## Thaidene Nënë – “Land of the Ancestors” An Historic Celebration in Łutsël K’ë

On August 21, 2019, an historic signing ceremony took place between the Łutsël K’ë Dene First Nation (LKDFN), the Parks Canada Agency and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) for the establishment of the Thaidene Nënë – “Land of the Ancestors” protected area. The agreement commits the parties to a unique co-governance and consensus decision-making approach to stewardship which takes guidance from Indigenous Law, the Canada Parks Act and the Territorial Protected Areas and Wildlife Acts. At the signing ceremony in Łutsël K’ë, LKDFN Chief Darryl Marlowe said: “Achieving the protection of Thaidene Nënë for the Łutsël K’ë Denesuline is a decades-long dream, and is a critical step towards ensuring our way of life can be maintained and shared with all Canadians.”



While serving as Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC MP, the Honourable Catherine McKenna joins Chief Darryl Marlowe of Łutsël K’ë in a photo opportunity following the signing of the Thaidene Nënë Establishment Agreement.

In attendance to speak at the event with Chief Darryl Marlowe were the Minister of Environment and Climate Change - Catherine McKenna, GNWT Minister of Environment and Natural Resources - Robert C. McLeod and Chief Louis Balsillie of Deninu K’ę. The Northwest Territory Métis Nation and Deninu K’ę First Nation signed the agreement the previous day at a ceremony in Deninu K’ę (Ft. Resolution), the Yellowknives Dene First Nation have also signed in support.

Over the course of the past decade, CPAWS has been proud to work with LKDFN to see their vision for establishing Thaidene Nënë to become reality. Kris Brekke, CPAWS-NWT Executive Director said, “It has been exciting to witness how a partnership forged between Indigenous and Crown governments can achieve a conservation outcome for ecosystems and for people.” CPAWS staff participated in the celebration which included a feast, drumming, jigging, square dancing and hand games.

Thaidene Nënë is located around and beyond the East Arm of Great Slave Lake. The 26,376 km<sup>2</sup> area includes a transition zone from boreal forest to tundra and freshwater ecosystems providing habitat for caribou, bear, moose, muskoxen, wolves, fish, and migratory birds. The land and water has sustained the culture and livelihood of the Łutsël K’ë Dene First Nation and neighbouring First Nation and Metis communities for centuries. Thaidene Nënë will also provide economic diversification opportunities that are compatible with cultural and conservation values. The Thaidene Nënë offices and visitor center will be situated in Łutsël K’ë. Employment will include resource management, tourism services and the Ni Hat Ne Dene Park Rangers who will work alongside Parks Canada and NWT Parks staff. Thaidene Nënë contributes significantly to Canada’s efforts to protect 25% of lands and inland waters and is a natural solution to climate change.

*Łutsël K’ë means  
“Place of the  
Łutsel”, or place of the  
Cisco fish*



# A New Protected Areas Act for the NWT



The act will support NWT communities in developing long-term opportunities for a diversified economy tied to protected areas, including culture, education, tourism and recreation.

***“CPAWS-NWT reviewed and commented on drafts of the Act, presented to the Standing Committee on Economic Diversity and The Environment, and submitted written recommendations, which influenced improvements to the act ...”***

The purpose of the Protected Areas Act is to facilitate the establishment of permanent protected areas in the NWT. This new act was created in collaboration with Indigenous governments and organizations, regulatory boards, stakeholders and the public. CPAWS-NWT reviewed and commented on drafts of the Act, presented to the Standing Committee on Economic Diversity and The Environment, and submitted written recommendations, all of which influenced improvements to the act such as strengthening climate change considerations. In all, thirty amendments were accepted as a result of public consultation. These amendments improved the Act to better incorporate co-management, accountability for decisions, access to information through a public registry, and a clearer role for the public in the review and management of protected areas.

The Protected Areas Act requires management plans that provide for protection of biodiversity, ecological integrity and cultural continuity. Industrial development including mining, oil, and gas exploration or development will not be allowed within protected area boundaries. Under the act, the Minister must enter into an establishment agreement with Indigenous governments or organizations before a protected area is established. This requirement sets the stage for collaborative establishment, management and governance with Indigenous governments and organizations that respect all treaty rights, land claim and self-government agreements.

We thank the Standing Committee for their efforts to move this Act forward on a very tight timeline!

## Finding Common Ground: Six steps for tackling climate change and biodiversity loss in Canada

In August CPAWS released a report which discusses solutions for addressing both climate change and biodiversity loss in Canada. These two issues are often treated separately which limits the effectiveness of reversing either crisis.

Rather, there are linkages between the two that must be considered together to ensure that the impact of climate change on ecosystems is minimized to limit biodiversity loss and that the protection of ecosystems contributes to mitigating climate change.

Canada's vast forests, grasslands, oceans and wetlands are part of the climate change solution. These ecosystems support our everyday well-being and, by their existence, have already absorbed greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and helped mitigate the impacts of climate change on Canadians. But, they could do much more. By reducing our industrial footprint on our ecosystems, we could substantially reduce the GHG emissions and biodiversity impacts that result when natural landscapes are changed or degraded.

***Nature-based climate solutions are ecosystem based approaches to mitigating climate change in ways that reduce climate change impacts and improve biodiversity.***

Examples of natural climate solutions include protecting forests, wetlands and grasslands from further loss, improving forestry and agricultural management and restoring native cover such as forest and wetlands.

Solutions that could be pursued in the NWT include protecting watersheds which provide habitat for wildlife and drinking water for communities; or restoration of seismic lines and then limiting the number of access roads left by oil and gas companies.

These are linear disturbances which result in the loss of permafrost and forest cover which increase the GHG burden caused by industry and provide easier access for predators that target boreal caribou.

It is known that boreal caribou populations have declined or have collapsed where linear disturbances are prevalent.

Restoration then planning to minimize future habitat loss from high densities of new linear disturbance would benefit climate change mitigation and biodiversity.

We thank Florence Daviet - CPAWS National Forest Program Director for authoring the report.

### SOURCE:

<https://cpaws.org/cpaws-report-calls-on-federal-government-to-step-up-climate-action-through-nature-based-solutions/>

## **Thaidene Nënë: A Feeling of Being Home Again**

by Phil Mercredi

Visiting Łutsël K'è on August 21, 2019, for the signing of the establishment agreements for *Thaidene Nënë* "Land of the Ancestors" Protected Area and celebration of community achievements was somewhat of an emotion for me; it was reminiscent of returning home. Although I am not a member of the Łutsël K'è Dene First Nation, I am a Denesuline from the Treaty 8 territory of the Fond Du Lac Denesuline First Nation, just over the NWT-Saskatchewan border on the north shore of Lake Athabasca.

The Łutsël K'è topography is very similar to my hometown of Uranium City, SK with huge boreal forest, fresh water lakes, rivers and streams and plenty of hills. There is an abundance of animal species that the Denesuline have hunted, trapped and fished for thousands of years – caribou, moose, bears, wolves, lynx and varieties of fish. The entire region is Canadian Shield country – Łutsël K'è is relatively our neighbour and our lifestyle and language are the same.

The time spent in Łutsël K'è was a reminder of my time growing up in northern Saskatchewan. The air is clean, water pristine and the Denesuline people are very amenable. I am a new member of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, NWT Chapter (CPAWS-NWT) team and upon re-entering the work environment, after a year-and-a-half hiatus, "I was very pleased to learn that I was to be present at the official signing of the final agreements for establishing Thaidene Nënë "The Land of the Ancestors" an innovative co-governance arrangement between Indigenous and crown Governments to create Canada's 47<sup>th</sup> National Park and newest Indigenous and territorial protected area!!"

Upon returning north in the fall of 2018, I learned that a part of my transition was the need for a shifting of priorities. I was finding that thriving on the fringes of a modern-day lifestyle, dependent on money and pursuit of material goods was not holding much interest for me anymore, I needed a change. I felt the need to embrace nature again, a sort of a getting-back to my roots. I enjoy being outdoors very much, when I put good energy in to my walks, I feel happy and at peace – it's become an intrinsic value to me.

The Denesuline perceive Mother Earth as being "alive" and our visit to Łutsël K'è for the next three days and three nights would be an exhilarating experience that reflected this. The CPAWS team decided earlier to camp. *Thaidene Nënë* "Land of the Ancestors" is a big land and water area of remote beauty around and beyond the East Arm of Tu Nedhé (Great Slave Lake).

The flight from Yellowknife to Łutsël K'è takes 45 minutes. I am eager to set up camp as we are told at the Łutsël K'è

*Continued on next page ...*

## LOVE the LAND 2020 Calendar



CPAWS-NWT invited photographers to enter our 9th annual photo contest in expression of their love of the land. We had very pleasing responses and submissions of numerous images featuring different categories including - I love the land, adventure, biodiversity, water, winter and youth. All photographs were of NWT content. Three photos selected by our judges were posted on Facebook, our new cover photo, ``Tobogganing Northern Style`` received the most likes.

The winning entries from the contest reflect the many ways in which residents and visitors spend their time on the land and water. If you have not yet picked up a calendar for your wall or someone else's they are available through our website [cpawsnwt.org](http://cpawsnwt.org) or send us an email at [nwtadmin@cpaws.org](mailto:nwtadmin@cpaws.org). A special thank-you goes out to the Book Cellar who has sold our calendar for the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year!!!

... continued from Page 6

airport that we would be staying at "Hide Camp", a small camping area about one kilometre from the community where tanning of moose and caribou hides are taught annually. Unpacking knapsacks of camping gear and food, we set up our tents, in the early afternoon, the wind picks up. After lunch we take an excursion in to Łutsël K'è and meet some of the Łutsël K'è Dene First Nation staff. I break from our group to do a bit of photography in the community.

In the late afternoon, back at camp, the sky looms with dark clouds and the wind blows noisily through the tree branches and leaves, there are whitecaps out on the lake. Looking at the sky I say to myself, "It's going to be a cold night". Tucking my head into the warmth of my sleeping bag, it brings back memories of my family's fish camp on the shore of Lake Athabasca, our spacious canvas wall tent, fitted with an airtight wood stove, kept our family warm all through the night. The morning reveals a clear sunny sky. After breakfast, we make our way through a bush trail back to Łutsël K'è. The community is quiet with unleashed dogs wandering the town. It contents me to know that I am back in Denesuline territory, in familiar ambiances.

The community is different now from when I first visited it in the early 1970s. At the time, I worked for the Indian Brotherhood of the NWT (now the Dene Nation) as a photographer and beginning reporter. I was a guest at the home of the then Chief Pierre Catholique and his wife Judith. I sat near the fire pit as the chief began gutting and filleting whitefish to grill on the open fire. He starts telling me about the time a small group of federal government officials came to his community, then called 'Snowdrift', to discuss their plan to create a National Park in the East Arm of Great Slave Lake.

Pierre said he understood their vision but felt it inappropriate that a number of officials came into his community to talk of a plan for a National Park; he was the only Dene leader meeting with them. He told the officials that if they want to meet with Dene leadership, there will be as many Dene leaders as there are officials. In an attempt to gain favour of their plan, the federal officials' outreach was rebuffed by the people of Łutsël K'è. At the time, I thought that was a daring move by the chief.

I realize now that Pierre was a catalyst for change in his community. I recall him saying that it is important to move forward together but we also need to be strong as our own communities. Since that time, generations of leaders took the time to be sure that there was equal representation at the table.

Today, the signing of Thaidene Nënë is a reconciliation of that long process and statement of Indigenous leadership which culminated in a partnership between Indigenous and crown governments to establish the Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected Area. Interestingly, I had some witness to both ends of the process.

Our last day at Hide Camp, I take a brief walk up the trail and at the base of a spruce tree I place a tuft of tobacco – an offering of thanks for protection, well-being and good thoughts. We pack up our tents and gear and relocate to James Marlowe's camp at the outskirts of the town. As we leave, I look back at 'Hide Camp' to say Marci Cho (thank you).

I am thankful for the visit to Thaidene Nënë – "Land of the Ancestors" and to the people of Łutsël K'è for their welcoming reception and their vision for protecting a significant area of their homeland for their future and for all Canadians.

# ANNUAL SUPPORT

## IN MEMORY OF BRUCE STEPHENSON ...

CPAWS-NWT extends a heartfelt thank-you to those who donated to our chapter in memory of Bruce Stephenson who passed in November 2018. Bruce worked as a biologist in the NWT Wildlife Division, retiring in 1987. He and his family engaged in many different efforts to protect our NWT environment, through support of CPAWS as a donor and by promoting environmental education through a memorial fund dedicated to his daughter Catherine. We are grateful and will be energized by Bruce and the Stephenson family as we continue to pursue conservation outcomes in the NWT.

Your memberships and donations are crucial to the future of the Northwest Territories Chapter of CPAWS. With your support, our Chapter continues to be part of Canada's only nationwide charity dedicated to the protection of our public land and water, and ensuring our parks are managed to protect the nature within them. Our local chapter's staff & board work from our Yellowknife office on conservation projects across the Northwest Territories.

**DONATE  
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Or visit [www.cpawsnwt.org](http://www.cpawsnwt.org)  
for more information!

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## COMINGS & GOINGS ...

2019 saw a bit of change at CPAWS-NWT as we thanked **Jessie Olson** for her time volunteering as a board member, she accepted a vet-tech position which took her to the Galapagos Islands last April. In July we welcomed our new **Communications and Outreach Coordinator** - **Phil Mercredi**. Phil has extensive professional experience working in the communications field, most recently with the Dene Nation based in Yellowknife. **Amélie Roberto-Charron** joined our chapter board at our September AGM; she is a land bird Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Yellowknife, NT. Her work on boreal birds has permitted her to see many of the territory's parks and protected areas.

## CPAWS-NWT Member/Donation Form

Here is my contribution of:      \$35      \$50      \$75      \$100      \$ other

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- As a member, you will be kept up-to-date on our wilderness work through regular national and chapter newsletters
- All contributions of \$20 or more are fully receipted for tax purposes  
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