



Hon. Johnny Mike  
Minister of Environment  
Government of Nunavut

87-4(3) Tabled Document

*Mar 3/16*

March 2, 2016

Re: Caribou Habitat Protection

Mr. Mike,

It has come to our attention that the Government of Nunavut is discussing caribou protection measures again. I want to make sure the government understands the perspective from Baker Lake on protection of caribou.

Baker Lake and Arviat are the largest caribou hunters in Kivalliq who depend on subsistence hunting to provide for their livelihood. Unlike the other coastal Kivalliq communities, the Arviat and Baker Lake depend on the annual movements of the Qamanirjuaq and Beverly caribou herds. Inuit, especially, the Inland Inuit of Baker Lake, and the Ahiarmiut tribe of Arviat traditionally depended solely on the caribou for their survival and for tools knew that, failing of caribou to show up on their seasonal migration meant devastation of famine and hyperthermia.

Because of this, there are various rules and activities in different seasons, which are traditionally observed that are very important part of protection of the animals. If Inuit did not have strict rules to protect the animals and their seasonal habitats and migration routes, it was matter of life and death for the whole family.

The government needs to understand, there is a very long history in Baker Lake around trying to protect the critical caribou habitat. The reason why the people of Baker Lake took the federal government to court in late 1970s was to put freeze on issuing anymore exploration permits until important caribou migration routes, calving and post calving grounds, and important traditional water-crossings are protected. This is where caribou protection measures (CPM) were created. The Caribou protection measures give seasonal protection to calving and post calving grounds and water crossings

Although, exploration companies are given guidelines and conditions which to abide by during their project operations, the protection measure do not guarantee long-term protection of the environment. Exploration often graduates to other project activities, such as, all-weather roads, increased in noise/human activities, and opening of mines.

The Baker Lake HTO has been trying to protect caribou calving grounds, post calving grounds, and water crossings for a number of years. When NTI did their consultations for their uranium policy in 2007, the HTO asked NTI to include a chapter of areas Baker Lake Hunters do not want uranium mining to take place. The HTO suggested protecting calving and post calving grounds, and the major rivers and water crossings, but nothing came of it.

Things really heated up when Anconia wanted to explore right in the middle of the Qamanirjuaq calving grounds. The Arviat HTO passed a motion, opposing Anconia and mining activity in the calving grounds. Baker Lake HTO supported Arviat HTO's motion not supporting Anconia's exploration activities, also that BL HTO do not want any type of exploration activities in critical caribou calving and post-calving grounds. Further, another motion was made and carried on June 21, 2012 stating that 'exploration activities should be banned in caribou calving and post-calving grounds'.

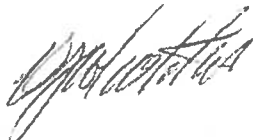
Baker HTO has also written letters to the planning commission, recommending mining and exploration to not take place in calving grounds, post calving grounds, and water crossings. The HTO did a radio show a few years ago, before NPC came for their consultations. Then fall of 2015 the HTO did a small workshop with some elders. The elders were very passionate at the meeting, they really wanted to see calving grounds and water crossings to be protected.

In closing, when we talk about calving grounds, we really have to ask ourselves, would people really support a full-on mine, right in the middle of the calving grounds?

After talking to other hunters, and hearing from our Elders, I am pretty sure the answer is no. Of course everyone wants jobs for our youth, and of course mining can help with that. But people want to see the really important places protected too, and for inland hunters, calving grounds is one of them.

I hope you will share our perspective with the other MLAs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Toolooktook', written in a cursive style.

David Toolooktook  
Vice-Chairperson