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The Yellowknives have used the Bathurst herd as their primary harvesting resource since time immemorial. The herd is not only an important economic and food resource for the Nation, but also a cultural lynch-pin that holds together language, stories and cultural practices. YKDFN knows that this perspective on caribou is shared by aboriginal communities across the North; which is why it is with great solemnity that we support the proposed measure put forward by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The Yellowknives understand the seriousness of the proposed measures first-hand as they have been subject to similar harvesting restrictions since 2010. Since this time, the Yellowknives have abided by a quota/tag system limiting the number of caribou they are able to harvest each year. Recently, we have reached a significant milestone in the Yellowknives' harvest. The number of caribou harvested has been less than the number of tags issued. This year, less than ten Bathurst caribou were harvested by YKDFN members.

In the past year, YKDFN has taken part in two ongoing initiatives aimed at safeguarding the long-term viability of the Bathurst herd: the Bathurst Range Plan Working Group, and the Bathurst Caribou Herd Cooperative Advisory Committee. These initiatives rely on trans-boundary cooperation between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. The Bathurst Herd does not care about arbitrary political borders, and neither should we. In order to protect the future of the herd, all parties in both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories must work together.

YKDFN understands the significance of imposing harvesting restrictions on Nunavut beneficiaries. Harvesting is an integral way of life for aboriginal people across the North. While harvesting is protected under the constitution, its roots go much deeper than that. However, the Yellowknives fear that if collaborative action is not taken the herd may not recover for generations.

Sincerely,

Alex Power
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Yellowknives Dene First Nation