

# Don't celebrate caribou hunt?

From: **Billieveryl Inglansasuk**  
Community: **Tsiigehtchic**

Dear editor,  
A lot of people are asking us if we read this letter to the editor in *News/North*, ("Don't celebrate caribou hunt", Nov. 9) and yes we have.

But you know what, people are always going to have something to say about someone else whether it's bad or good. And as for us we don't care what people say or care about what they want to think about us, we can't control it, it's out of our hands. This little comment is not going to put a bump in our road or dampen our bright spirits.

My husband and I will continue to live our lives and keep raising our daughters the ultimate very best we can to and practice and live a traditional life which they come from, a life my husband and myself both grew up with, as well as our parents and our parents' parents.

This is our tradition and our right as aboriginal people in the NWT and no one has the right to tell us we are in the wrong ... the only comment I have about what Nancy Vail said in this paper is that my daughter shot a Porcupine caribou not a Bathurst, if I am right I think she needs to do her homework and keep her nose and negative thoughts and comments to herself.

## READERS Write

# Sustainable hunt

From: **Eugene Pascal**  
Location: **Inuvik**

Dear editor,  
I am the Chairperson of the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board in Inuvik. Our board's mandate includes caribou management and conservation. We read a Nov. 2 article ("Tsiigehtchic's keen shooter") and a response letter by Nancy Vail in your Nov. 9, ("Don't celebrate caribou hunt") and thank *News/North* for publishing both pieces. We acknowledge and appreciate Ms. Vail's interest and concerns about caribou conservation. We want to clarify that the Porcupine caribou herd from which young Dayle Cole from Tsiigehtchic harvested does not have current conservation concerns. Its most recent survey in 2013 estimated a herd size of 197,000 and is not in decline or at low

numbers, unlike the Bathurst herd and many other caribou herds in the NWT and elsewhere in Canada.

Our board feels Ms. Cole was doing a commendable thing by showing an interest in her traditional practices and compliments her for taking that initiative in learning with her father.

Our board fully supports caribou conservation just as Ms. Vail does, and we feel that the activity being referenced supports this common mission.

While hunting from a herd that can sustain harvesting, it teaches the young harvester how to respect others such as by sharing their harvest and by hunting safely. It teaches how to respect the caribou by taking careful shots to avoiding wounding loss and to not waste and it also teaches how to respect the land by understanding the resource and making mature and wise decisions about its use.



These messages are all supported by our elders and we are trying hard to encourage them in our region.

We all share a common concern for caribou conservation. Let's work together and find ways to achieve this common goal.



Over the weekend of Oct. 18, 10-year-old Dayle Cole took down a caribou on her first hunting trip, which is something her mother, Billieveryl Inglansasuk, says is something she is proud to celebrate.

# Listening to the sounds of silence

Northern News Services

It is a longer freeze-up this year. Temperatures are 10 or more degrees above average and the lake ice is about two weeks behind. Since it was a very cold spring in Reliance, the first week of April was - 35 C, having a warm early winter is not totally unappreciated. The long period of isolation we experience so dramatically at this time of year is drawn out further, but that's not a bad thing. Soon enough will come again the drone of bush planes and helicopters stopping off at the near-by fuel cache to refuel for some unknown-to-us expedition. In the deep quiet of freeze-up, the sounds coming from the Earth as she freezes accompany us through our day. At the beginning, the waves still command all the attention. They have been crashing on the shore since break-up the beginning of June and after so many months of incessant noise, they begin to get on my nerves; I'm ready for the lake to go to sleep for the winter. Still keeping the bedroom window open at night, one morning I wake into consciousness to total silence. No lapping waves. Silence is loud. The quick cold snap changes the lake into another incarnation of the water deity. Beautiful and fragile, the huge ice sheets within Charlton Bay are still easily shattered by any big winds that come in from the west along McLeod Bay, so throughout the following days we watch the wind closely. It will still be a few weeks before we can venture out on to Charlton Bay by snow machine, and a

few more weeks after that before we can cross McLeod Bay.

Yesterday, I was out sweeping off the front deck after a few inches of snow fell when a sudden loud cracking noise in the rocks under the house made me jump. Asking Roger what it could have been, he said it was just the house freezing which I suppose is as good an answer as any.

There are many sounds in the air unique to this time period of freeze-up, the strange harmonies are haunting and it is easy to imagine the sounds coming from instruments played by the winter spirits.

When the ice has just formed in Charlton Bay and there is a very slight wind from the west coming through Maufelly Narrows, the thin ice will begin to vibrate and quietly hum, sounding like an old-fashioned musical saw being played. The pitch changes from high to low as the vibrations move past where I stand, becoming a faint echo in the distance. Though there is no melody, the repeating tune is unforgettable. Accompanying the echoes are loud booming cracks that will shoot miles across the surface and the quiet gravely grinding swish-swish-swish of broken ice churning against the main ice sheet.

Crunching loudly through the squeaky snow on the few - 20 C days we had, it was easy walking. On the frequent warm days the snow becomes very slippery, borderline treacherous. In the bush, it lies heavy and wet on the ground and the tree branches bow low under the weight, sounds muffled by its thick density. There are a few small hills behind us and one beautiful lush step is where the whisky-jacks live. There is a whole colony which have grown accustomed to our nearby bird feeder and compost pile. By the sounds of it, they are thriving; a walk there is accompanied by the grey jays flying around us and chirping, heralding our presence to all.

I am so glad to report that the chick-a-dees with their delicate peep-peeps have come back in good numbers to Reliance after few sightings last winter. We had surprise visitors a few days ago; two red robins. Sitting on the birch tree, their feathers and down puffed up to keep warm, a poem Roger's mom, Jeanne, always recited here in Reliance came to mind: "The North wind doth blow and we shall have snow. What will the robin do then, poor thing?"

I suspect these particular birdies didn't make it through the night. Such are the cruel ways of nature.



## THE SUM OF All Our Parts

Libby Whittall Catling is living her dream. Along with her husband, stepson and three dogs, they are the only full-time residents of Fort Reliance, on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake.

It was also surprising to see a family of three swans feeding down the end of the bay just before the ice made it that far. They must have been starving because they spent most of two days bottoms up, scraping the shallow silty bottom desperately eating I do not know what. The family made an early morning escape just in the nick of time as the grasping clutches of the growing ice encroached upon their meagre feeding grounds.

Our one constant animal companion that seldom leaves Reliance are the ravens. There is a family of youngsters that has claimed our property as home and the daylight hours are often full of their chatter and clicking talons on the roof as they hop around watching us. They tease the dogs, working as a close-knit gang to steal bones. One is tamer than the others from some close interactions we had with him a few years ago. Atlas has become quite demanding as he sits on the birdfeeder looking in through the living room window, tapping out his requests with his beak on the wood. Unfortunately, our kitchen is unable to accommodate him, so he is left with table scraps the dogs leave behind. Yesterday it was spaghetti noodles and the imagined look of disgust I saw on his face when faced with frozen noodles barely tinted with sauce made me laugh! Poking through the pile, he could find no tidbits of meat. But like a good omnivore, he gobbled it all down and then flew off, no doubt to complain to his brothers about the poor service in Reliance these days.