

Arviat HTO Submission for Nunavut Land Use Plan

Caribou Calving Grounds

The Arviat HTO would like all mining and exploration activity banned in caribou calving grounds. We have been trying to protect these areas for decades, and have protested exploration in calving grounds to the NIRB and NPC. Caribou is the mainstay of our community's diet.

The HTO held a community radio call-in show on this topic. There was consensus that calving grounds should be protected in some way, and the overwhelming majority of callers, especially Elders, told us they wanted no mining in calving grounds. We must heed the direction of Elders when we make decisions about the future of our land.

The Elders explained that the calving grounds used today have been used by caribou ever since there were caribou in the Kivalliq. The Elders said they try and teach youth to leave these areas alone during calving season, and to avoid making any permanent changes to the area. We are not to build cabins or leave garbage in the calving grounds, and keep the area clean. One Elder explained that calving grounds are like nurseries for human babies. Just like a nursery for a human baby must be quiet and clean for babies to be healthy, calving grounds must be quiet and clean for caribou calves to grow healthy.

The Elders and hunters complained that helicopters are already disturbing caribou migrations. They said that the smells, noise, and buildings from mining and exploration would disturb caribou during calving, because they are very sensitive during this time. They also complained that with mining and exploration, the impacts are always worse, and the benefits never as good, as the companies promise. They have observed messes left on the land by exploration companies.

The Qamanirjuaq caribou herd is one of the last thriving herds in the world. Everywhere else, the herds are sharply declining, and hunting is being regulated or banned. We do not want to be in a situation like the Inuit of Baffin and Southampton islands, or the Dene and Metis in the Northwest Territories, where hunting quotas and bans are being imposed. It would be detrimental to the well-being of our community.

Caribou Water Crossings

The Arviat HTO would like all mining and exploration activity banned near specific caribou water crossings that are important to our community. We have attached maps that show which water crossings are most important to us. The water crossings at Maguse River and Maguse Lake are especially important to our community's caribou hunt. The other water crossings identified are important to ensure that caribou migrate to our hunting grounds.

The HTO held a community radio call-in show on this topic. The overwhelming majority of callers agreed that there should be no mining or exploration near important water crossings. They suggested that there should be a buffer around these areas, and some suggested it should be as large as 50 miles.

Elders and hunters explained that there are many traditional rules for how to properly respect water crossings, and were concerned that they are not being followed as much as they should. They said that it is tradition to not camp, build permanent structures, or walk near the water crossings. They would like younger hunters to better respect these rules. There is also concern that sports fishing and hunting camps are violating these traditional rules. Caribou may change their migration routes if they see or smell even the slightest disturbance near the crossings, because they are very sensitive in these areas.

Marine Shipping

The Arviat HTO is concerned that, in the future, there might be icebreaking shipping proposed for Hudson's Bay. The Arviat HTO requests that icebreaking shipping be banned near the community. The ice sea and floe edge is very important for our community's hunting of marine mammals and travel during the winter months. It is also very important habitat for polar bears, ringed seals, bearded seals, and walrus. Icebreaking shipping could destroy this mammal habitat, as well as our hunting grounds and travel routes to Churchill, Whale Cove, and Rankin Inlet.

Grandfathering of Existing Mineral Rights

The Arviat HTO is aware that the federal government is proposing that existing mineral claims, land use permits, and prospecting permits be "grandfathered" in the new land use plan. This means, regardless of what protection a new land use plan might give, existing permit holders would be allowed to explore and build mines and roads, in the very areas we want protected. The Arviat HTO is very concerned about this proposal to "grandfather" existing rights in a "cradle to the grave" manner.

Our HTO has been working very hard to create a proposal to protect our most important lands under a new land use plan. We know other HTOs in the Kivalliq region, as well as the Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB), have been working on similar proposals. We are proposing this protection because caribou are very important for the future health and wellbeing of our community.

If all existing mineral rights are grandfathered, all of this work will have been for nothing. This proposal to grandfather mineral rights puts the interests of the mining industry ahead of the health and wellbeing of our community. The Arviat HTO does not support the proposal by the federal government.

Dene Claims in Nunavut

The Arviat HTO is aware that Dene have requested that their claims in Nunavut have no restrictions on land use. Some of these claims are close to the community of Arviat and our land use areas. This is a source of concern to our local hunters. We do not want to see mining or exploration permits issued for these areas without the consent of residents of Arviat and the Arviat HTO.