

MARCH 2024

# THAIDENE NĚNĚ NEWSLETTER



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Thaidene NĚnĚ Xá Dá Yátti
- Ice Monitoring
- Guardian Exchange
- Working with Youth
- New Guardians
- Research Update

With the release of the draft relationship plan for Thaidene NĚnĚ on March 12, engagement has officially begun. We hope to see community members at the open house in Łutsĕl K'ĕ on Tuesday, March 26. The open house will be an opportunity to learn more about the plan that will guide stewardship of Thaidene NĚnĚ over the next ten years and offer your feedback. There will also be open houses in Yellowknife, Fort Resolution, Hay River, and Fort Smith.



This newsletter includes updates on Ni Hat'ni activities (e.g. ice monitoring, muskox survey), a variety of youth programs happening in the community, and a research project about the establishment of Thaidene NĚnĚ.

# THAIDENE NĒNÉ XÁ DÁ YÁŁTI UPDATE

## Relationship Plan Engagement

On March 12, Thaidene Nënë Xá Dá Yáłti, the operational management board for Thaidene Nënë, and shared management partners, including the Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, Northwest Territory Métis Nation, Parks Canada, and the Government of Northwest Territories, released a draft relationship plan for Thaidene Nënë, titled *Thaidene Nënë badı xá*, for public comment. The relationship plan sets out a long-term vision, specific objectives, and strategic direction for the protected area.

Thaidene Nënë Xá Dá Yáłti will host a series of open houses over the next month. Events are currently scheduled in the communities of Łutsël K'é, Yellowknife, Fort Resolution, Hay River, and Fort Smith.

An open house is planned for Łutsël K'é on Tuesday, March 26, from 6-8pm at the Zah Lockhart Hall. Light refreshments will be served. There will also be giveaways and the chance to win a number of prizes. Thaidene Nënë Xá Dá Yáłti and the partners are looking forward to getting your input on the draft relationship plan!

“The foundation of Thaidene Nënë badı xá is nuwé ch'aníe. Nuwé ch'aníe is our Indigenous values and knowledge systems, including our relationships with and responsibilities to care for the land, water, and wildlife. This plan will lay the foundation for the future, ensuring countless generations to come will be able to care for and benefit from Thaidene Nënë.”

**Addie Jonasson, Chairperson  
Thaidene Nënë Xá Dá Yáłti**



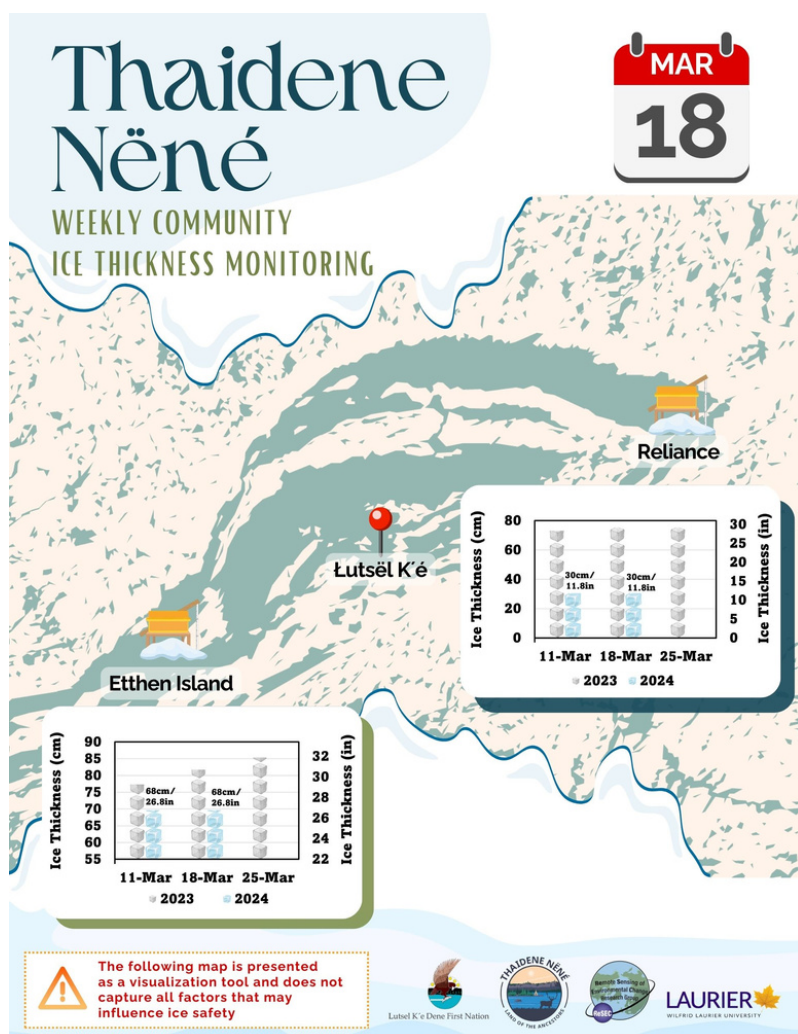
Photo: K.Olesen (Provided by the GNWT)

## Learning About and Supporting Muskox Research in Thaidene Nënë

In January, GNWT biologist Jan Adamczewski gave a presentation to Thaidene Nënë Xá Dá Yáłti about muskox population health in the North Slave region, including Thaidene Nënë. In February, Thaidene Nënë Xá Dá Yáłti approved two proposals for muskox photo surveys documenting composition, abundance, and distribution surveys. The research was approved with conditions related to reporting and ensuring economic opportunities are provided through local involvement in the survey work.

# ICE MONITORING

The ice monitoring project continues. In early February, following a refresher course on SmartIce monitoring and device maintenance, Ni Hat'ni Dene and collaborators from SmartIce and Wilfrid Laurier University travelled by snow machine to Etthën Nu (Etthën Island) and Kaché (Fort Reliance), where they installed the monitoring units in the ice. The devices collect weekly measurements using satellite technology.



## Visualizing Changes

Each week, the Thaidene Nënë Department releases information about the ice thickness for these two locations.

Each update also includes the ice thickness from last year on the same date at the same locations for comparison.

Mahsi to the students at Laurier for helping us to compile, visualize, and share this information.



## MUSKOX SURVEYS

Ni Hat'ni Dene participated in muskox surveys in early March. The Thaidene Nënë Department also assisted with the survey by coordinating additional monitors. The aerial survey involved flying transects over the protected area and documenting the location and number of muskox.



## GUARDIAN EXCHANGE

The Thaidene Nënë Department hosted guardians from Fort Good Hope from February 13-17. Ni Hat'ni Dene took the K'ásho Got'İnę guardians on patrol with them. They travelled by snowmachine from Łutsël K'é to ʔedacho Tłaze (Timber Bay), where they stayed at the LKDFN cabin. Together, they visited the ʔedacho Tłaze village and travelled on the tundra. The Ni Hat'ni Dene and K'ásho Got'İnę guardians enjoyed being out on the land together and sharing knowledge and stories. Ni Hat'ni Dene look forward to visiting K'ásho Got'İnę territory in the future.



## FISH FOR ELDERS

Ni Hat'ni Dene continue to be pull nets and process fish so Elders in Łutsël K'é have fresh fish from the bay.



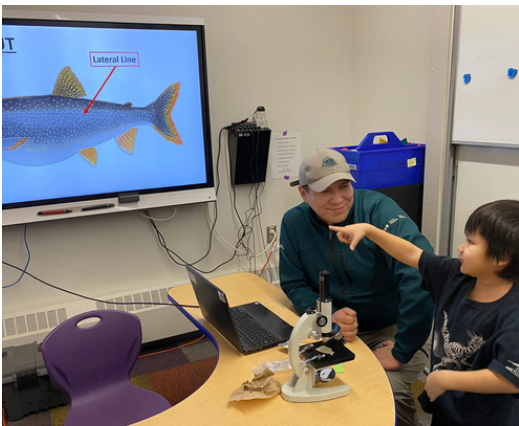
## YOUTH ON THE LAND CAMPS

This winter, the Thaidene Nënë Department and Parks Canada are working together to deliver the Thaidene Nënë Denegothé Youth On the Land Program. Here are some photos from the program on March 8. Elementary students from the Łutsël K'é Dene School travelled by snowmachine out to hide camp. It was a beautiful sunny day. The children had fun climbing snow hills and releasing some energy. After that, they settled down for storytelling with Elder Archie Gahdële. Archie told the students about Hacho and the giant beavers, a story from a long-ago time when giant animals roamed the earth. The students wrapped up their afternoon at hide camp cooking bannock on a stick with Sandra Lockhart.



## THAIDENE NĒNÉ IN THE CLASSROOM

Parks Canada staff, including Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation members Dacho Poole and Tyson Marlowe, have been visiting the Łutsël K'é Dene School monthly to present about work in the national park reserve part of Thaidene Nënë. During their January visit, Parks staff brought in trout and whitefish caught by local harvesters. They dissected the fish with JK to grade 5 students and talked about how fish health is monitored. They looked at fish anatomy, recorded length and weight, examined stomach contents, determined the sex type, and estimated the age of the fish by extracting ear bones and looking at them under a microscope. This was a great hands-on presentation where everyone got involved and had fun. It was also a good learning experience for the students, teachers, and presenters.



# NI HAT'NI DENE PATROLS

Ni Hat'ni Dene have done a number of patrols this winter throughout the protected area. One of the things the guardians have noticed is that hunters using the cabin at ʔedacho Tłaze (Timber Bay) have not always been good guests. We would like to remind hunters to pack out all of your garbage and leftover food. The same goes for the other Ni Hat'ni cabins.

LKDFN'S Thaidene Nënë Department  
respectfully requests that you

**DO NOT  
LEAVE  
ANY FOOD  
BEHIND.**



LKDFN'S Thaidene Nënë Department  
respectfully requests that you

**TAKE  
YOUR  
GARBAGE  
WITH YOU.**

**DO NOT LEAVE ANYTHING BEHIND.**



## TRAINING

Members of the Thaidene Nënë Department did some training in February. Some of the guardians re-certified their first aid. The Thaidene Nënë manager participated in the Supporting Wellbeing training at the B. Dene Adventures camp near Dettah. During the five-day session, which was co-hosted by the Northern Indigenous Stewardship Circle (NISC), Supporting Wellbeing facilitators provided tools and resources to prepare participants to mitigate and respond to mental health challenges before, during, and after on the land programs using a trauma-informed and culturally-affirming approach.





# NEW GUARDIANS



## **Adrian Nataway**

Adrian Nataway wanted to be a Ni Hat'ni Dene guardian because, in his words, “the land, the water, the animals, they mean everything.” “It is important,” Adrian says, “that we are watching, that we are paying attention to how the land, the water, and the animals are doing, that we are noticing any changes.”



## **Aileen Drybones**

Aileen Drybones and her sister, Marlene, were raised on the land by their grandparents, Madeline and Noel Drybones. “I love being on the land,” Aileen explains. “The outdoors is home, it’s my happy place. I applied for this job because it allows me to be outside. I also like jobs that are physically demanding.”



## **Arthur Rabesca**

Arthur joined the department as a Ni Hat'ni Dene guardian in July 2023. The best part of being a guardian has been providing for his home community of Łutsël K'é. “Seeing the faces of the Elders when you hand them the goodies, seeing the smiles on their faces, that’s the highlight of my day.”



## **Tanner Catholique**

Tanner likes the fact that being a guardian allows him to stay active and learn. “I’ve been learning things like basic maintenance of quads and skidoos, how to site a gun, how to skin different animals,” he says. As he works alongside the older guardians, as well as Elders and knowledge keepers, Tanner is also being exposed to and absorbing critical Łutsël K'é Dene knowledge.

## RESEARCH UPDATE: “PROTECTING THAIDENE NĒNÉ WITH OUR WORDS”

“Protecting Thaidene Nënë with our words” is a research project with Lauren King and the University of Waterloo. It is part of Lauren’s PhD studies. The research project focuses on the establishment of the Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected Area as an expression of Łutsël K’é Dënesųłíné self-determination. It’s a story that involves decades of resistance to the imposition of a national park and years of negotiating with Canada and the GNWT to protect Thaidene Nënë, the Land of the Ancestors.

This research has a number of benefits for the community, including the creation of an oral and written record of the establishment of the Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected Area. These stories can help guide how Łutsël K’é protects the Land. Łutsël K’é can also share this knowledge and expertise with other Nations and governments.

In December 2023, Lauren and Marcel Basil, who was hired as a research assistant, conducted 14 interviews with community members including Elders, adults, and youth in Łutsël K’é. Mahsi cho to all the Knowledge Holders that shared their knowledge, stories, teachings, and thoughts with us. The next step is to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews. Everyone that was interviewed will receive a copy of their transcript and, with their permission, a copy of their transcript will also be sent to the Wildlife, Lands, and Environment Department to be uploaded into the Łutsël K’é Dënesųłíné Knowledge Archive. A workshop will be held in Łutsël K’é to piece together the story of “protecting Thaidene Nënë with our words: using the interview transcripts.

This research project proceeded with consent from the Advisory Committee and Chief and Council through the signing of a research agreement as well as ethics approval from the University of Waterloo and an NWT Research Licence from ECE. If you have any questions about this research project, please don’t hesitate to email Lauren at [ljking@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ljking@uwaterloo.ca) or message her on Facebook.

