

RC 28

My name is Angela Vermillion. I am a tribal member of the Athabascan Tribe, Gulkana Village Council. We are one of the 8 villages in the Ahtna Region. I was raised in Gulkana Village and continue to live there and raise my two children. I want to thank the Board of Game for hearing our request to hold your meeting here in the Ahtna Region. I want to testify on the Community Hunt Permit.

When the Community Hunt was first established in Unit 13, it was a great benefit to the Ahtna people. We had many of our young Native people harvesting moose and caribou. Prior to this, many of us testified, regarding the deficiencies with the Tier II program. We testified on how the Ahtna people have been practicing their way of life which matches the 8 criteria for the customary and traditional use pattern for the game in Unit 11, 12 and 13. It was a stringent process testifying for the Ahtna people to establish a community harvest hunt area because the Tier II process denied our younger people the ability to get a permit.

I was talking this week with a local resident who lives near my village and moved here in the 70s. She said it is a blessing for your people to wake up in the land that your ancestors lived in for thousands of years and not many people groups throughout the world can say that. Our people share a rich culture and continue to pass on our culture to our children.

Sharing is a key element in our culture. When our family obtains a moose or caribou, many of our family members work on putting away the meat. We split the moose between at least 10 households in our extended family and then we also put away for the elders of our village. The younger family members go around and give the meat to the elders to make sure they are cared for. We also cook the heart, kidney and liver and have soup, soon after the moose is harvested. All the village elders are invited over to share in this first harvest meal of the moose. We also share with my father's family who is from the Kluti-Kaah. We also go beyond that and give a smaller amount to many of our younger families which some are single parents. It's really a busy and strenuous time but we make sure the meat

is shared widely. We also cut up the stomach and moose head for special community or family occasions or special guests. Our family has had moose head soup as our Christmas Dinner for several years. It's our custom to harvest and consume the organs. Unlike other groups who discard much of the organs if not all the organs.

I am very disappointed in that other groups such as the Matsu Slayers, Bicycle Group and others can so easily apply. The current regulations, only vaguely states: "the community group representative must: (D) "make efforts to ensure that the applicable customary and traditional use pattern described by the board ...is observed by subscribers including meat sharing; etc."

The department has not implemented enforcement of other groups to comply with the C&T criteria. Any group of 25 can freely apply which is estimated the highest this year at 88 groups for the 100 any bull moose which was established as the amount needed for subsistence for the 8 Ahtna Villages: Gulkana, Gakona, Tazlina, Chistochina, Chitina, Cantwell, Mentasta and Kluti-Kaah. It was not established for the whole state of Alaska. The department has not provided any means to deny group applicants who do not follow the 8 C&T criteria who may have just moved to Alaska versus our people who have a long established history and culture.

We have historically hunted in the Denali Highway area with our grandparents. My grandfather used to tell me all the time, that this is your country. Almost every hill/mountain, he said that him and grandma walked and hunted it. This past year, we went to camp in the Tangle Lakes area the first week of hunting season. All the campgrounds were full and closed. We barely found a spot in one of the pull-outs. The hunting pressure in our area is not safe. Every year it gets worse. There are so many hunters out there who see the caribou and have no harvest plan and chase them away. We have experienced this time and time again.

I encourage the board to establish ways to deny group applicants based on how their group does not have the 8 criteria for C&T Use. It is extremely disappointing to see so many groups with no experience or C&T use to obtain permits. There must be a way to distinguish between groups who have established C&T use such as Gulkana Village and the groups who have no C&T use.

Thank you.