



# VUNTUT GWITCHIN GOVERNMENT

Government of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

## Media Release

### **Vuntut Gwitchin Government Responds to Trump Administration Move to Initiate Process for Oil and Gas Lease Sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

**(Old Crow, Yukon, Canada – April 20, 2018)** Today the U.S. Department of Interior published in the U.S. Federal Register a Notice of Intent initiating a 60-day public scoping process for an Environmental Impact Statement to study issues, impacts and potential alternatives to selling oil and gas leases throughout the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This is the first regulatory step that is required under U.S. federal law for implementing the oil and gas lease sales that were enabled by attaching controversial amendments through undemocratic methods to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act which was passed into law by U.S. President Trump in late December 2017.

The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine the scope of issues to be addressed and to identify the significant issues related to implementing an oil and gas leasing program within the Coastal Plain, including the likely adverse impacts to the Porcupine caribou herd and those of us who rely on them for our physical, cultural and spiritual survival.

While the Notice of Intent states that the Trump Administration “will identify the management decisions best suited to **local, regional, and national needs and concerns**” the initial public scoping process is open to all Canadians and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government intends to voice the international needs, concerns and transboundary effects raised by potential oil and gas exploration and development in the sacred calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. Vuntut Gwitchin have domestic and international treaty rights in relation to the Porcupine caribou herd that must be respected.

We call upon and encourage all our partners, allies and friends to stand with us, the entire Gwich'in Nation and the Porcupine caribou herd and tell the Bureau of Land Management that drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge cannot be responsibly done and threatens the human rights of Gwich'in. You can submit your comments within 60 days to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management by e-mail at [blm ak coastalplain EIS@blm.gov](mailto:blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov). Throughout the next year a number of further stages and public comment periods will be required before any Environmental Impact Statement can be finalized and any oil and gas leases are put to bid.

#### **Quote:**

“This is the first regulatory step the Trump Administration is taking to try and rush through an impacts assessment and sell oil and gas leases in 2019. Like the Porcupine caribou we do not recognize the US/Canada border imposed on us and we will not be ignored. We are taking all necessary steps and making all necessary preparations to vigorously defend the Porcupine caribou herd and our Gwich'in way of life through all available processes. We will not stop until the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is permanently protected from oil and gas exploration and development.” – Chief Bruce Charlie, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

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