



Vuntut Gwitchin Government

Statement of Chief Tizya-Tramm on Lease Sale of *Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*

(Old Crow, Yukon, Canada – January 19, 2021)

Today, the Trump Administration, on its final day in office, issued leases of *Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*.

It was disheartening to watch the opening and announcing of bids that were received earlier this month and I condemn today's action of issuing leases of more than 400,000 acres of nursery grounds of the Porcupine caribou, sacred lands of the Gwich'in Nation.

Long ago the Gwich'in followed *vadzaih* to see where they went and to learn their ways. They led us to the North East Coastal Plains of what is now called Alaska. It was here that we made treaty, it was here we became one. We did this by the exchange of half of one another's heart. In this way we would always be connected, forever.

The caribou are the sustenance of our very being, mind, body and spirit. Our traditional knowledge tells us that if you develop the nursery grounds of the caribou, the place we call *Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*, you destroy the caribou, and therefore, destroy the Gwich'in.

Since 1988, upon our elders' direction, we have tirelessly advocated and worked to protect these lands; the beating heart of an ancient ecosystem. We shared our knowledge, we voiced our concerns, and we continued to honour our most fundamental relationship with the land and animals.

The Trump Administration has ignored our knowledge, attempted to silence our voices, and have trampled on our rights in pushing forward towards drilling on these lands. Those who sought and secured leases of our sacred lands disregarded this and disregarded the significant reputational, legal and financial risks that exist.

Today, with the issuance of these leases, we are the closest we have ever been to drilling in *Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*. But the fate of these lands is not yet sealed. Tomorrow, a new U.S. Administration, one that has promised to restore protections of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, will be sworn in.

United with our Gwich'in relatives in Alaska and Northwest Territories, we will continue to utilize every legislative, technical, regulatory and legal tool available to us to protect our sacred lands and our culture. We will continue to call on our relations, our allies, our partners and our friends to stand with us. We will continue to share our knowledge and voice our concerns and most importantly we will continue to honour our most fundamental relationship with the land and the animals.

Our work will not stop until *Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* is permanently protected.

Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm

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Background:

On January 19, 2021, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) [announced](#) that it has signed and issued leases on nine tracts of land, totaling 437,804 acres, of the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Leases were issued to Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), Knik Arm Services LLC and Regenerate Alaska Inc.

On January 6, 2021, the BLM opened bids received for leases of the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Complete high bids were received for 11 tracts of land, totalling over 500,000 acres, of the Coastal Plain. Complete high bids totalled just over \$14 million and were placed by Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), Knik Arm Services LLC .and Regenerate Alaska Inc. Incomplete bids were received by another entity.

Bids received averaged at \$26 per acre, just \$1/ acre over the specified minimum, and totaled less than 1 % of the \$1.8 billion in revenue projected by the 2017 *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* which mandated the sale to pay for tax cuts made. Major oil companies stayed away and the biggest bidder wasn't even an oil company but a corporation of the State of Alaska itself (AIDEA).

Before being issued, the leases were required to undergo a process of internal review, conducted by the BLM, and an antitrust review, conducted by the Department of Justice. This process, which is past lease sales has taken many weeks to a couple of months, was completed in less than two weeks from January 6, 2020 to today.

President-elect Joe Biden, to be inaugurated on January 20, 2021, has [stated](#) that he “totally opposes” drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and restoring protections was included in the [2020 Democratic Platform](#).