

Gwiyiinji ILak Hah T'igweedi'yaa Sriinatr'igwihee'aa

“We Will Act With One Mind To Make Things Right”

Gwich'in Nation Accord

This Accord was passed on July 22, 2022

WHEREAS

We, as the Gwich'in, are strongest when our hearts and minds are one.

WHEREAS

Our strength is held in the lands, waters and animals as recognized by the collective wisdom of our ancestors.

WHEREAS

The Gwich'in have had a spiritual and cultural connection to our land and water since time immemorial. We have and, will continue to, uphold our traditional ways and the natural laws of the environment that surround us.

WHEREAS

We have a collective responsibility to educate the world and our partners on what the land is telling us on how to live with it in a good way and advocate for the respect it is owed.

WHEREAS

Our language and presence on the land keeps us strong and our ancestors close to us, and is a path towards healing.

WHEREAS

For thousands of years, we have nutritionally, culturally, and spiritually relied on the caribou and salmon for subsistence.

WHEREAS

The Gwich'in have survived epidemics and the genocide of the Residential and Indian Boarding School System that has resulted in the loss of many of our citizens well before their time. Yet, we are still here displaying the resilience that has made us a strong and proud people; however, the inter-generational trauma that is significantly impacting the health and well-being of our communities and social fabric.

WHEREAS

The Gwich'in stand together united for future generations in guidance of our Elders and our traditional laws. Our connection to the Creator, one another, our lands and water is the gateway to our strength, health, healing and to our very way of being.

1. OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 To uphold and strengthen the relationship that exists among all Gwich'in people, demonstrating ongoing resilience by creating certainty in uncertain times.
- 1.2 To increase the connection between each of the Gwich'in Nation communities.
- 1.3 To exercise our inherent right to govern ourselves and lead the way of our people.
- 1.4 To exercise and promote our traditional laws and culture.
- 1.5 During implementation of this Accord, we will take a collaborative approach that:
 - (i) integrates perspectives from our wise Elders and our Youth; and,
 - (ii) utilizes and provides direction to our two transboundary Gwich'in organizations, the Gwich'in Steering Committee and the Gwich'in Council International; and,
 - (iii) includes communication to the people of the Gwich'in Nation.

2. JOINT PRIORITIES

2.1 Nation Connection

The political division of our lands will not impede our connection to one another. We are committed to increasing connection amongst the various communities with the intention of both advancing joint priorities and strengthening bonds.

The Leadership of the Gwich'in Nation are committed to meeting twice a year. As a start, we will connect on a Caribou Summit in the NWT in October of 2022 that will speak to the respectful harvesting of the Porcupine Caribou Herd in accordance with our Gwich'in knowledge and values.

2.2 Cross-Border Mobility

We strive to remove the barriers that prevent the mobility of our people. We are one people with one homeland and expect free access to our homeland on both sides of the Canada/U.S. border.

2.3 Climate Change

Our Elders have long stated that, “Hard times are coming”, and we believe that Gwich’in knowledge must lead all efforts in our collective response to the changing climate affecting our territory and way of life. Our Nation must prepare the current and future generations for the dramatically changing environment that we find ourselves in now.

2.4 Language Revitalization

We will preserve, revitalize, and evolve our language so that future generations are able to speak the way of our ancestors in a changing world.

A Nation-wide working group will be established consisting of language speakers, Elders and Youth from each community to establish our people’s story from creation so that the Biennial Gwich’in Gathering can work together on the future vision of our Nation in our language.

2.5 Healing

We recognize the drug epidemic; the generational abuse of alcohol among other types of abuse; and, the various forms of gambling are attacking our people and our communities.

To this end, we will instruct the Leadership of the Gwich’in Nation to coordinate a Healing Summit to develop an Action Plan to begin to address these issues.

2.6 Lateral Violence

Lateral violence has increased in all of our communities and this must be stopped. We will work tirelessly to eliminate lateral violence at all levels amongst our people.

2.7 Caribou

The Gwich’in people of every community have reached consensus in our traditional way, and now speak with a single voice on caribou.

2.8 Salmon

The health and abundance of the salmon, and their availability to Gwich’in communities, is threatening our relationship with them and the ecosystem upon which they depend. We are committed to standing united in our efforts to sustain salmon populations and advocate for cultural connection and their stewardship.

NOW THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT:

By the Biennial Gwich’in Gathering approving this Accord, the Gwich’in demonstrate steadfast commitment to advancing these shared priorities.

The Gwich'in Nation, in exercising their right to self-determination as one people, with one homeland at the 2022 Gwich'in Gathering, commit under this Accord to work together in a good way to advance our joint priorities and objectives.