

Gwich'in Niintsyaa 2022

Resolution to Protect the Birthplace and Nursery Grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd

WHEREAS:

For thousands of years, the Gwich'in of northeast Alaska and northwest Canada, have relied on caribou for food, clothing, shelter, tools and life itself, and today the Porcupine (River) Caribou Herd remains essential to meet our nutritional, cultural and spiritual needs; and

WHEREAS:

The Gwich'in have the inherent right to continue our way of life; and that this right is recognized and affirmed by Article 1 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, ratified by the U.S. Senate, and reads in part:

"...In no case may a People be deprived of their own means of subsistence"; and

Article 25 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by the U.S. Government, which reads:

"...Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard"; and

WHEREAS:

The health and productivity of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and their availability to Gwich'in communities, and the very future of the Gwich'in are endangered by proposed oil and gas exploration and development in their calving and post-calving grounds in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; and

WHEREAS:

The entire Gwich'in Nation was called together by our Chiefs in Arctic Village June 5-10, 1988 to carefully address this issue and to seek the advice of our elders; and

WHEREAS:

The Gwich'in at the 2022 Gwich'in Gathering amended and affirmed this position in Old Crow in accordance with developments in International law; and

WHEREAS:

The Gwich'in of every community from Arctic Village, Venetie, Fort Yukon, Beaver, Chalkyitsik, Birch Creek, Stevens Village, Circle, and Eagle Village in Alaska; from Old Crow, Teet'it Zheh (Fort McPherson), Tsiigehtchic, Aklavik, and Inuvik in Canada have reached consensus in our traditional way, and speak with one voice; and

WHEREAS:

The Gwich'in and Chiefs of our communities have met every two years since 1988 to re-affirm our position, guided by the wisdom of our elders; and this summer met in Old Crow, Yukon, and now re-affirm our position.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That the United States President and Congress recognize the rights of the Gwich'in to continue to live our way of life by prohibiting development in the calving and post-calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the 1002 area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge be made Wilderness by the U.S. Government to protect *Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* (The Sacred Place Where Life Begins) for generations to come.

Passed unanimously this 19th day of July, 2022 in Old Crow, Yukon.