

Gwich'in Niintsyaa 2012

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

WHEREAS:

For thousands of years, the Gwich'in People 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 the nutritional, cultural and spiritual needs of our People; and

WHEREAS:

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

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

WHEREAS:

The health and productivity of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and their availability to Gwich'in communities, and the very future of our People 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 People of every community from Arctic Village, Venetie, Fort Yukon, Beaver, Chalkyitsik, Birch Creek, Stevens Village, Circle, and Eagle Village in Alaska; from Old Crow, 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 People 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 Fort McPherson, 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 People 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 to protect the sacred birthplace of the caribou.

Passed unanimously this 27rd Day of July, 2012 in Fort McPherson, NWT.