



Gwich'in Steering Committee

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*"In no case may a people be deprived
of their own means of subsistence."*

International Covenants on Human Rights

November 2010

Sha Lak Nai (All My Relations),

For the past 20 years **the Gwich'in Steering Committee has been successful** in our efforts to keep **The Sacred Place Where Life Begins**, the calving and nursery grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge free from being desecrated and becoming **a huge industrial oil complex**. Until this area is designated as wilderness our work continues. **We need your financial help!** Please ask your friends, relatives and associates to help us, too.

The Arctic Refuge is the flagship of land and cultural protection issues. The Gwich'in Steering Committee is the only organization that has been solely focused on protection of the Arctic Refuge since 1988.

The Sacred Place Where Life Begins is a place of life where **40-50,000 caribou calves** begin their lives before their first journey of one of the longest migrations of any terrestrial mammal. **Birds from all 50 states and 6 continents** migrate there for nesting and staging. It has the most biological diversity of any area in the circumpolar north. **This is a human rights issue** for the people of the Gwich'in Nation – the culture of the Gwich'in people is based on the caribou.

In 1988 the first Gwich'in Gathering in 100 years, Gwich'in Niintsayaa, took place in Arctic Village. At that time **the Gwich'in Nation took a position** to oppose development in the calving and nursery grounds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. **The Gwich'in Steering Committee was authorized by the Gwich'in Nation to work on behalf of the Gwich'in Nation to protect the calving and nursery grounds.** We have established a long record of successful accomplishments and achievements. The calving and nursery grounds remains protected from oil and gas development. We are a very unique organization having been formed by the Gwich'in Nation to speak on behalf of the entire Gwich'in Nation and we answer to and work on behalf of the Gwich'in Nation as a whole.

Sarah James, Arctic Village, Alaska Kay Wallis, Fort Yukon, Alaska Norma Kassi, Old Crow Yukon Territory
Ernest Erick, Venetie, Alaska Peter Solomon, Fort Yukon Alaska

Since 1988, a few of our major accomplishments include;

- Obtaining over **100 resolutions of support** from indigenous tribes, inter-tribal organizations and organizations throughout the United States and Canada, including the **National Congress of American Indians, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, United South and Eastern Tribes, All Indian Pueblo Council, and Affiliated Tribes of Northwestern Indians.**
- In 2002 Jonathan Solomon, Sarah James, & Norma Kassi were awarded the prestigious **Goldman Environmental Prize.**
- The Gwich'in Steering Committee hosted a **5 month long vigil in Washington D.C.** in 2005 to protest drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. 5,000 signatures were collected on a petition calling for protection of the Refuge.
- The Gwich'in Steering Committee and allies released, "**A Moral Choice for the United States.**" The document brought outlined the **Human Rights Implications** of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- **Biennial Gwich'in Gatherings** have continued to be held since 1988 including three emergency Gatherings in 2000, 2005, and 2009. The position of the Gwich'in Nation has been reaffirmed. Gwich'in Steering Committee gives progress reports at the Gatherings. The Gwich'in elders, leaders and members encourage our work that was mandated in 1988.
- This people of the Gwich'in Nation and our supporters gathered on the tundra in the Arctic Refuge and the Porcupine River to form an **aerial art displays** drawing attention to the impending **threat of climate change** and the **gulf oil spill.** The events **drew international media attention.**
- We regularly educate and inform the decision makers, general public and the media providing a **unique human perspective** that would be virtually non-existent or greatly limited in scope.

For this and other critically important work to continue in 2011 and beyond, we depend on **tax deductible contributions.** Please do all you can this year to support the Gwich'in Steering Committee and the work we do to protect the Sacred Place Where Life Begins, the future of the Gwich'in people, the wildlife of the North and the future generations.

Mahsi Choo (big thanks)!

www.gwichinsteeringcommittee.org