



Office of the Premier  
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

November 1, 2017

The Honorable Lisa A. Murkowski  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0203

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-4705

Dear Honorable Lisa A. Murkowski and Honorable Maria Cantwell:

Since the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) was established in 1980, Congress has faced the decision to protect the refuge as wilderness, or to open it to commercial activity. The debate is not new and neither are the positions on either side. This Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is being asked a simple question: to protect a sensitive habitat and the Porcupine Caribou Herd; or vote for a course of action that endangers the Gwitchin people who have relied on the caribou for thousands of years.

The Gwitchin people have long sought the protection of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and their calving grounds on the coastal plains of ANWR. The Government of Yukon strongly supports this position and stands behind the Vuntut Gwitchin Government. In Canada we have already backed our words with action.

Along the Alaska border, agreements between Indigenous peoples, the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada protect nearly 8,000 square miles of the Porcupine Caribou Herd's range as national parks land. But protecting this wilderness wasn't without sacrifice. It has meant forgoing the resource revenues in the resource rich Old Crow Flats now protected as wilderness. Collectively, governments and Indigenous peoples chose to refrain from short lived economic gain to protect a herd which has sustained American and Canadian Indigenous peoples for generations. Today, this Committee can make that same choice.

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Caribou have never respected our borders, which is why the United States and Canada entered into agreement to protect this resource. That commitment was a promise to work together to manage the Porcupine Caribou Herd and to avoid adverse effects to its habitat. But beyond that, the United States and Canada agreed to consult each other on any activities, including oil and gas development, that may impact the caribou.

Development in the sensitive calving grounds risks harming the only healthy caribou herd in North America. The Government of Yukon hopes that the Committee will honour the spirit of the agreement in its deliberations.

Sincerely,  
  
Sandy Silver  
Premier

cc: Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Members