



## NEWS RELEASE

June 15, 2026 (Old Crow, Dawson, Mayo, Yukon / Inuvik, Northwest Territories Canada)

### **First Nations and Inuvialuit Leaders call for protection of Porcupine caribou habitat**

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN), the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dün (FNNND), the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government (TH), the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC), and the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) reaffirm our shared responsibility to protect the Porcupine caribou herd and the full range of its habitat.

Together we represent the governments of the First Nation and Inuvialuit users of the Porcupine caribou herd in what is now known as Canada. The future of the Porcupine caribou herd, and the cultures, food security, and ways of life of our communities that rely on it, depends on the decisions being made today.

According to aerial surveys conducted in July 2025, the Porcupine caribou herd numbers approximately 143,000 animals, down from an estimated 218,000 in 2017. The herd is already under significant pressure from climate change and other environmental stresses, and any further disturbance to its habitat threatens its long-term survival. All areas used by the herd, from calving and post-calving grounds to migration routes and wintering habitats, are critical for its recovery and resilience.

In the herd's range in what is now known as Alaska, the recent oil and gas lease sale in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, along with an anticipated push toward seismic exploration over the coming year, has increased threats to the caribou's critical calving grounds, despite longstanding opposition from our communities. Meanwhile, in the herd's range in what is now known as Canada, growing interest in Arctic mineral development in the name of Arctic security is proceeding under outdated and unacceptable legislation that serves industry interests rather than reflecting current realities, community concerns, or internationally recognized standards to respect Indigenous rights. Together, these developments highlight the ongoing and escalating threat of industrial activity across the caribou herd's range and represent a significant danger to both the herd and the well-being of our communities that depend on it.

Today, we collectively denounce unsustainable industrial development and resource extraction across the Porcupine caribou herd's range. Protecting habitat to sustain a healthy herd is fundamental to safeguarding our harvesting rights and well-being. We call on our management partners to uphold their responsibilities under co-management agreements, respect Indigenous rights and knowledge, and take meaningful action to prevent further development.

Protecting the Porcupine caribou herd requires a precautionary, conservation-based approach that prioritizes habitat protection over short-term industrial interests. We remain committed to working



collectively to ensure the herd is protected for generations to come and call on all partners to do the same.

Signed,

Chief Pauline Frost  
VGFN

Chief Franklin Patterson  
FNNND

Hähkè Darren Taylor  
TH

Grand Chief Frederick Blake Jr.  
GTC

Chair Dean Arey  
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