



**2026 Midyear Convention
Ferndale, Washington**

RESOLUTION # 2026 – 031

**“STANDING WITH TRIBAL NATIONS SUCH AS THE GWICH'IN
PEOPLE TO PROTECT THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
AND THE PORCUPINE CARIBOU HERD FROM OIL AND GAS
DEVELOPMENT”**

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants rights secured under Indian Treaties and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are the representatives and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, the ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and Indian tribal governments in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of ATNI; and

WHEREAS, ATNI's membership includes Alaska Native Tribal Governments whose homelands, subsistence economies, and cultural practices share deep kinship with Indigenous peoples across Arctic Alaska, and ATNI affirms its longstanding commitment to standing in solidarity with all Indigenous peoples whose homelands and ways of life are threatened by extractive industrial development on federal public lands; and

WHEREAS, the tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people, those federally recognized, comprise communities across fifteen villages in what is now Alaska and Canada, and have for generations carried the responsibility to safeguard the Porcupine Caribou Herd, Gwich'in culture, and way of life for future generations; and

WHEREAS, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is vital for tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people — the foundation of their food, culture, identity, and spiritual practice — and the Coastal Plain of the Refuge is the calving and nursery grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, known to the Gwich'in as Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit, the Sacred Place Where Life Begins; and

WHEREAS, the Porcupine Caribou Herd, or vadzaih, whose population has declined from approximately 218,000 in 2017 to roughly 143,000 in 2026, has migrated freely across its ancestral lands and traditional use areas for thousands of years, providing the cultural, spiritual, and physical foundation tribal people, and any industrial disturbance of the Coastal Plain places the herd, tribal people, and a way of life inseparable from both at unacceptable risk; and

WHEREAS, despite more than fifty years of organized opposition led by tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people and their allies, the federal government has repeatedly attempted to open the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain to oil and gas leasing, including through Section 20001 of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and multiple failed lease sales; and

WHEREAS, on January 20, 2025, the President of the United States issued Executive Order 14153, “Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential,” directing federal agencies to advance oil and gas leasing, seismic exploration, and infrastructure development across the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in disregard of tribal sovereignty, the federal trust responsibility, and decades of bipartisan public opposition; and

WHEREAS, the current administration has acted to return suspended Arctic Refuge leases to the State of Alaska, revive legally suspect leasing programs, and advance seismic exploration on the Coastal Plain — actions that threaten the Porcupine Caribou Herd, polar bears, migratory birds, and the cultural survival of Tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people; and

WHEREAS, the United States has a trust responsibility to protect Tribal lands, waters, natural resources, and the health and welfare of Tribal citizens, arising from treaties, statutes, executive orders, and the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Tribal Governments, including obligations under Executive Order 13175 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples to free, prior, and informed consent in matters affecting their lands, territories, and resources, and the federal government's pursuit of oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has proceeded without the consent of the tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people whose homelands and way of life are most directly affected; and

WHEREAS, the tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people have called upon all allies, including Tribal Governments across Indian Country, to use their voices to educate local, state, and national leaders about the urgent need to stop seismic activity, oil exploration, and development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and to stand with the Gwich'in in defense of Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit; and

WHEREAS, ATNI member tribes have consistently affirmed in past resolutions that the protection of intact ecosystems, sacred places, and Indigenous homelands is inseparable from the exercise of Tribal sovereignty, the fulfillment of the federal trust responsibility, and the cultural and physical survival of Indigenous peoples; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI stands in full solidarity with tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people in their fight to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit — the Sacred Place Where Life Begins — from oil and gas leasing, seismic exploration, infrastructure development, and any other industrial activity that threatens the Coastal Plain and the Tribal way of life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI stands in solidarity with the tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people, those federally recognized, in the exercise of their sovereignty; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI affirms the principle of free, prior, and informed consent as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and demands that the federal government honor this principle in all decisions affecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the homelands of the tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI affirms the inherent and federally protected subsistence rights of tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people, including those secured under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), and calls upon all federal agencies to fulfill their statutory obligation to protect subsistence uses, including through full compliance with Section 810 subsistence impact analyses for any proposed action affecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI encourages each of its member tribes to stand with tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people by issuing individual Tribal Government letters of support, communicating with their respective Congressional delegations regarding the importance of permanently protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and participating in advocacy efforts in whatever ways fit each member tribe's priorities and capacity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI calls on the United States Congress to enact permanent legislative protections for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge — including by passing the Arctic Refuge Protection Act — and to repeal the oil and gas leasing mandates of Section 20001 of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI calls on the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and all relevant federal agencies to immediately halt all oil and gas leasing, seismic exploration, infrastructure development, and related activities in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI encourages coordination with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and other regional and national Tribal organizations to advance complementary resolutions and joint advocacy in defense of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the sovereign rights of tribal citizens such as the Gwich'in people; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be transmitted to the Secretary of the Interior, the Alaska and Northwest Congressional delegations, and the National Congress of American Indians; and

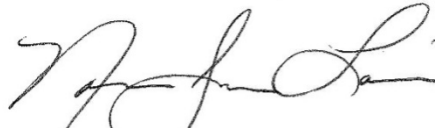
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this will be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution(s).

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing Resolution was adopted at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians 2026 Midyear Convention held at the Silver Reef Casino Resort in Ferndale, Washington, on May 17-21, 2026, with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary