

Gwich'in Steering Committee Statement on AIDEA Lease Cancellation

September 6, 2023

The Gwich'in Steering Committee welcomes the cancellation of AIDEA's leases to develop oil and gas on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – land sacred to the Gwich'in and the birthing grounds to the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

We are grateful to President Biden and Secretary of the Interior Haaland for their decision. Cancellation of these leases is a step to rectify attempted violence against our people, the animals and sacred land. The leases were economically infeasible, threatened the Porcupine Caribou Herd and the Gwich'in way of life, and if developed would have added to the already deteriorating climate in the Arctic and the world over.

Alaska Natives and concerned groups from all over Alaska were excluded from AIDEA's process of making economic and development decisions that affect us all. AIDEA now can focus on its mission to diversify Alaska's economy through transparent and meaningful public engagement with all Alaskans, inclusive of our desire to protect our traditional ways of life for future generations.

AIDEA held the last remaining leases in the Arctic Refuge after [all other bidders](#) walked away from their leases in 2022. We thank the Biden administration and the U.S. Department of the Interior for taking this step towards protecting the coastal plain and the Porcupine Caribou Herd, but we know that our sacred land is only temporarily safe from oil and gas development. Our concern now is the SEIS process and the mandated second lease sale in 2024.

We will always stand strong in unity, in strength and in prayer to protect the Porcupine Caribou Herd, the Arctic Refuge and the Gwich'in way of life.