



**YUKON  
REGION**

A Yukon that Leads

**AFN Yukon Regional Office**  
**Regional Chief Kluane Adamek**

## AFN Yukon Region Celebrates the 2022 Gwich'in Gathering on the Traditional Territories of Vuntut Gwitchin

“On behalf of the Assembly of First Nations – Yukon Region, we raise our hands in gratitude to all those whose hard work has gone into putting on the 2022 Biennial Gwich'in Gathering. I want to acknowledge all Vuntut Gwitchin Elders, Matriarchs, Leaders, staff, youth, and citizens for hosting this special week-long event on their beautiful traditional territories in Old Crow, Yukon.

Thank you to the Gwich'in Steering Committee for their ongoing advocacy and leadership in pressing for the protection of lands and water. Collectively as First Nations across the country, we join the Gwich'in in the protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Gwich'in continue to unite and raise the voices of the Caribou People in all places and spaces.

The Gwich'in Gathering is an event that cultivates important connections that are shared among the Caribou People in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Alaska. After several very challenging years, gatherings such as this have only become more vital as a means of building connections, sharing culture, and celebrating the strength and resiliency of the Gwich'in. The culture, language, traditions, ceremonies, and kinship ties that are shared among the Gwich'in know no boundaries, and the shared connections to the land, the animals, the caribou, and to each other do not begin and end with the arbitrary colonial borders that have been drawn by Canada and the United States. This Gathering is an incredible opportunity to hold up these important connections and to celebrate the countless contributions that the Gwich'in have made.

On a personal note, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and admiration of all the Gwich'in on both sides of the colonial border, including those on the Gwich'in Steering Committee, whose advocacy for the protection of Indigenous rights, title, and lands has recently led to major victories in the protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Protecting the Porcupine Caribou and their calving grounds in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge is a matter of protecting the fundamental human rights of the Gwich'in, and is important to all Indigenous people. For decades the Gwich'in have worked together in order to protect the sacred Coastal Plain, and Elders, leaders and advocates have been unwavering in their fight to protect the sacredness of these lands.

We also hold up Ryan Kay of Vuntut Gwitchin, who is currently part of the Yukon First Nation Climate Fellowship and is hosting a number of Fellows this week in Vuntut Gwitchin territory. Finally, on behalf of

myself and the entire AFN Yukon Region, I raise my hands to honor Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Tizya-Tramm and Council, Elders Lorraine Netro, and Norma Kassi, whose incredible leadership continues to guide the protection of lands, environment, and advancement of climate action regionally and beyond. I thank them for their hard work – and *heart* work – as they blaze the trail towards creating a safe, healthy, and prosperous future for the next seven generations. I have the highest respect for the Vuntut Gwich'in and deeply value the strong relationships we have built over the years. Mahsi Cho for always welcoming me into your beautiful territories and while I am not with you this year, I join you in spirit!

The Gwich'in Nation sets the example for Indigenous people uniting to protect and emulate stewardship of the lands in a way that transcends state and colonial borders and upholds the values and teachings that are held sacred. I am grateful that this important gathering of the Caribou People was able to resume safely this year, and wish you all a wonderful week of connection and celebration.

Mahsi Cho.”



Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, *Aagé*

