



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Sahtu, Gwich'in and Pehdzéh Kí First Nation Working Together to Advance the Mackenzie Valley Highway Project**

YELLOWKNIFE – March 12, 2026: Leaders of the Sahtu Secretariat, Inc (SSI), Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) Indigenous governments, and Pehdzéh Kí First Nation announced today their support in principle for, and commitment to work together to advance, the Mackenzie Valley Highway (MVH), a major year-round dual-use infrastructure project from Wrigley through to Inuvik. These Leaders view this proposed project as demonstrating how:

- *Indigenous and public governments can work together to improve the well-being of their constituents and Canadians as a whole, including reducing living costs for communities throughout the region;*
- *Recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty rights confirmed by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and securing Indigenous free, prior, and informed consent can advance projects in a timely and durable manner; and,*
- *Indigenous governments and communities can work together to support and strengthen Canadian Arctic sovereignty and national defence in the North.*

SSI Chair Charles McNeely, GTC Grand Chief Frederick Blake Jr. and PKFN Chief Jamie Moses announced that their senior officials are completing work on a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will reaffirm their support-in-principle for, and interest in working together to advance this proposed transformative project.

Work by SSI, GTC, and PKFN to advance this proposed project will occur through a codesigned process with the governments of Canada and Northwest Territories and deep engagement with their respective communities to protect the land, water, wildlife, culture and Indigenous ways of life, and secure long-term economic, employment, and training opportunities.

This collaborative effort is a unique and symbolic initiative taken by Sahtu, Gwich'in and PKFN. It is a model for how Indigenous governments can assert agency in defining how the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (“UNDRIP”) requirement for free, prior, and informed consent for major projects in their traditional territories can and must be achieved.



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