

I would like to introduce to the committee and to others Dr. Dexter Perkins. Dr. Perkins is a professor of geology at the University of North Dakota. He is an author of many articles, books, other publications such as a dissertation on ancient rocks. He has also worked for the oil industry in Texas. He has been teaching at the University of North Dakota for the past seven years, and before that time at the University of Chicago. It's a great pleasure for me to introduce Dr. Perkins to this committee.

Dr. PERKINS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CONRAD. Thank you, Senator Burdick. We have been proceeding by allowing three and a half minutes for a statement. So, if you could summarize the statements that you have brought here today. Three and a half minutes—roughly that. And we want you to know that your full statement will be made part of the record. That will preserve time for questions. So, if we can proceed with Mr. Kohm.

#### STATEMENT OF LENNY KOHM, SONOMA, CA

Mr. KOHM. Thank you.

My name is Lenny Kohm, and I'm a professional photographer. And I was fortunate to be able to go up to the refuge this summer. I only spent three days there, but I can tell you, Senator Murkowski, you are very lucky to have it.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I certainly agree.

Mr. KOHM. And basically my concern is with the preservation of the species—my own.

And I was fortunate enough also to go to the Yukon Territory and spend 10 days in Old Crow.

My basic message is these people have been the guardian caretakers of those lands for 30,000 years. That is more time than I can think about. And it would seem to me that if we want to know how to treat that land, and what should happen with that land, these are the people we should listen to because they certainly have the most experience.

My experiences in Old Crow I'll never forget. The friends I made there and the things I learned. I wish I could share them all with you. In three and a half minutes it's kind of hard.

But I would hope that you would bring more people from Old Crow and the surrounding communities, both in Alaska and the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories and Canada, and listen to what they have to say because I think they really know.

That's basically all I have to say. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kohm follows:]

My name is Lenny Kohm. In August of this year, I went to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on a photographic assignment. I spent 3 days photographing the pristine and irreplaceable wonders of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the contrasting ugliness the petroleum industry has created on the Prudhoe Bay side of the north slope.

I have come to Washington to speak to you about the Gwitchin Nation, a 30,000 year old civilization of Native North Americans whose culture would be at risk if the proposed development of the 1002 lands in the Refuge takes place. The area in question is the core calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, the primary source of food for the Gwitchin people. In addition, the proposed development would seriously damage our last protected area on the United States Arctic coastline.

As I previously stated, my original purpose in going to Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was a photographic assignment. In no way did I expect to become passionately involved with a cause. But after spending 10 days in the Gwitchin village of Old Crow, Yukon territory, Canada, (located on the Porcupine River about 150 miles east of Fort Yukon Alaska and 150 miles south of Canada's arctic coast), I learned, indeed experienced, what it might be like to lose the food source of 85% of one's diet, and therefore, see a 30,000 year old culture vanish.

The Gwitchin tradition dictates that all members share the land and the responsibility for it. They share the bounty with the wild life.

Animals are not thought of merely as pieces of meat but as Norman Kassi, Member of the Yukon Territory Legislative Assembly representing Old Crow said, "The caribou are our relatives. We must take care of them. We must take care of the land and everything on it."

The Gwitchin people of Old Crow maintain a subsistence economy based on the availability of an adequate food supply. The diet of the average citizen of Old Crow consists of 85% caribou meat and the balance is made up of other animal meats, fish, berries, and supplies trucked from Whitehorse to Eagle Plains, Yukon Territory, where it is flown in to Old Crow once a week. The effect on these people by just a slight change in the present status of the Porcupine Caribou Herd would cause them great hardships, in addition to the hardships they constantly endure now due to the rigors of living in such a primitive wilderness.

I cannot understand why our government would even consider the possibility of damaging our last protected area on the Arctic coastline, and thus put at risk the caribou herd and the culture of the Gwitchin people. We are once again at an all-too-familiar crossroads. We must decide whether industrial development takes precedence over the rights and needs of a native people. Why are we once again teetering on the brink of making an potentially tragic and irreversible decision? Have we not learned what results when we strip a people of their food, their culture, their entire way of life?

We should take advantage of the wisdom of these people who have



been caretakers of the land for more than 30,000 years and take heed of their opinions about this proposed development. Clearly it is their lives that are at stake.