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## **Native Alaskan and Wilderness Photographer Tell Tale of Arctic Refuge**

**Pittsburgh, PA** — As Big Oil continues to clamor to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, a longtime Arctic photographer and a member of Alaska's Gwich'in tribe told a Pittsburgh crowd today about the Refuge's one-of-a-kind beauty and culture. Photographer Lenny Kohm and Lindy Alexander, a Gwich'in native who calls the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain "the sacred place where life begins," are traveling throughout the Northeast this week to share photographs and stories about one of our nation's last wilderness places.

"The Arctic Refuge in northeastern Alaska is one of the wildest, most pristine places in the United States," said Kohm. "The Coastal Plain, the area proposed for oil exploration, is the most biologically productive part of the Refuge and the heart of its wildlife activity. Home to more than 200 wildlife species, the coastal plain also is the critical birthplace and nursery area for the 130,000 member Porcupine caribou herd and the largest area of on-land denning sites for polar bears. Alaska Native people rely on this wildlife for basic sustenance and as a basis of their cultures."

The Gwich'in Indians have relied on the Porcupine caribou herd in Alaska and Canada for 20,000 years. Every year, this vast herd travels to the coastal plain where females give birth in the spring.

"We have a moral responsibility to save wild places like the Arctic Refuge for future generations," Alexander said. "That's why our country has remained committed to its protection for nearly 50 years. Some places are just too special to drill, and the Arctic Refuge is one of them."

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **Lenny Kohm:**

Lenny Kohm is the campaign director for Appalachian Voices. Lenny worked for 15 years with the Gwich'in Nation of Northwest Canada and Northeast Alaska, traveling the country and presenting his slideshow presentation, "The Last Great Wilderness," in support of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. A passionate advocate for both environmental protection and human rights, Lenny has devoted much of his life protecting the Arctic and an indigenous culture that he has grown to love.

#### **Lindy Alexander:**

Lindy spent most of his youth on his family's trap line north of Fort Yukon with his mother, father and grandfather. After high school, Lindy moved to Fairbanks to work as a heavy equipment operator. After 31 years, he retired and began giving presentations about growing up in Ft. Yukon. Last year Luci Beach of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, whose mother is also from Ft. Yukon, recruited him to do presentations on the importance of the Porcupine Caribou herd to the Gwich'in people.

#### **About Alaska Wilderness League:**

Alaska Wilderness League's mission is to lead the effort to preserve Alaska's wilderness by engaging citizens, sharing resources, collaborating with other organizations, educating the public, and providing a courageous, constant and victorious voice for Alaska in the nation's capital. It is the only organization dedicated solely to the preservation of Alaska's wilderness in the nation's capital. Go to [www.alaskawild.org](http://www.alaskawild.org) to find out more.

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[www.AlaskaWild.org](http://www.AlaskaWild.org)

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