

Name: Bernadette Demientieff

Organization: Gwich'in Steering Committee

Good afternoon. My name is Bernadette Demientieff. The Executive Director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee. I am here on behalf of my Elders and Chiefs of the Gwich'in Nation. I am Gwich'yaa Zhee Gwich'in, raised in Fort Yukon, Alaska. I'm here with our board member Lorraine Netro, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation of Old Crow, YT Canada.

Founded in 1988, GSC is the unified voice of the Gwich'in Nation speaking out to protect our ancestral homelands on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge. We represent fourteen communities in Alaska and Northwestern Canada. I am here to state that the Gwich'in Nation stands united in denouncing today's advance publication of the Department of the Interior Notice of Intent to initiate the process for an oil and gas lease sale on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

I am here to represent the Gwich'in Nation and ask the Permanent Forum to recommend to the United States and the US Department of the Interior to:

- Stop the aggressive advancement of lease sales despite a true understanding of the impacts of drilling on caribou, on the Gwich'in; and to
- Permanently protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain is a violation to our human rights and our way of life. The ancestral homeland of the Gwich'in people follows the migratory route of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which sustains our way of life. We are caribou people. We hope that you will listen to our voice and honor our human rights and not allow oil and gas on the Coastal Plain.

On behalf of the Gwich'in Nation I thank you for your time.