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The Arctic and Energy: Exploration and Exploitation Issues; Indigenous Peoples; Industry

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I was really delighted when Henry asked me to moderate the panel today because I have a real love for the Northern Wilderness areas of the U.S. and Canada.

Last summer, we spent part of summer white water canoeing up on Allagash, which forms the border that is the St. John River of Canada and the U.S.

I have a great story to tell you. We had a guy who was a Maine Guide, formerly a Congregational Minister somewhere in Bar Harbor, and around the camp fire one night I was talking to him.

I said, “How did you manage to make the transition from being a Minister to a Registered Maine Guide?” He said, “Really it was pretty simple. There were two reasons. First, I hated conflict with human beings, it is very messy, and up here, I never had an argument with a moose. Further, I never could say things clearly in such a way that they’d be clearly understood. They always came out somehow misinterpreted.”

He said, “I have an example of both of these things happening. There was this one woman in our congregation; she was the one of the oldest congregants. She was royal pain and every time there was a problem, she’d be the first to express it.”

Therefore, he said, “I was particularly shocked one day when I finished my sermon and she greeted me at the front door. She said, ‘Reverend, that happened to be one of the best sermons I ever heard. I wouldn’t even mind if you were to talk at my funeral.’” He said, “Mrs. Smith, there’s nobody’s funeral I’d rather do than yours.”

Today we are fortunate to have people who can express themselves much more directly and clearly. They have been advocates for environmental conservation in the ANWR area with respect to drilling and exploration activities. In particular, the impact that exploration and drilling might have on the caribou, the Porcupine caribou herd, which knows no borders in that area. They travel each year from Canada to the U.S. and back again. It is a great honor to have both of them with us.

We have Chief Joe Linklater, who is the Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations, as well as Sandra Newman who is a Councilor and got a Degree from the University of Fairbanks in Human Services. They have spoken
widely across the U.S., Canada and elsewhere, and have been quoted widely, as well, in magazines and newspapers on this topic.

I hope you will welcome them warmly. They have had a long trip from Old Crow, Yukon. Old Crow is not only the northernmost town, but it is the only town in the North Yukon, and I asked them today I understood the only means to get in and out of town is by canoe and by air. As they say in the airlines, your drive to the airport is the riskiest and most dangerous of the trip, however, this is particularly true getting out of Old Crow.

I asked them which road through town and they looked at each other, you know, the dirt road. They sort of smiled at each other, and said oh, that road. Therefore, it is not a well-populated area; and we owe particular debt to them to travel all this way to address us today.

ANWR is carved out of North Yukon. To the west of that carve-out on the Ocean is Prudhoe Bay, which is where we currently do drilling; and to the east of that is the ANWR costal plain, which is where the perspective drilling is to take place, and where by chance the Porcupine caribou birth each year.

Chief Linklater and Sandra Newman, please.