

BLM speech

I'm Jewels Gilbert, I'm from here in Arctic Village. I work at the school with elementary K-3.

I've lived here all my life living off our land and eating our traditional foods. I've been hunting providing traditional food since I was a kid with my granddad. Going out hunting for ducks, caribou, etc. and fishing, it's a feeling that no words can describe how beautiful it is. Listening to the loons, birds, making noise they're in connections with us.

That's a huge part of me and I'm grateful to experience that our grandparents passed down to us. Thinking about risking that for this development makes no sense to me.

My partner Brennan and I, we're carrying the traditional knowledge from our forefathers. We refuse to throw that away for this development. Everything around us is a part of us, we're part of our environment. Everything that we have, all the culture all what we do around here living the subsistence lifestyle, its passed down to us from our grandparents many years back. Who fought through the starvation in the rough winters. We refuse to throw that all away for this development. Thinking about the government pushing to drill on our homeland where our food source comes from makes me feel that a part of me will die.

I don't get why our own government wants to take away the birthing place in the coastal plain and take away who we are.

The government might think ANWR 1.8 million acre land is just nothing but a wild life full of nature with wild animals, but it sure runs the whole community!!!!

Our grandparents in the past spoke up for us and that seems no one in the government has heard them. The government keeps pushing for the development and It takes their granddaughter, me, to stand up and speak. We are not going to stop speaking for ourselves and defending our sacred land.

The words that are said out about how the Gwich'in don't live within the boundary of the Arctic national wildlife refuge.

That's just a manmade border and the animals doesn't recognize that. We don't live within the boundary of the Arctic national wildlife refuge, but our food source comes from there. And our ecosystem depends on of the Arctic national wildlife refuge. The development will destroy that ecosystem and we won't be able to maintain the ecosystem once it is destroyed by development. The ecosystem is what sustains our Gwich'in way of life.

-Thank you for your time.