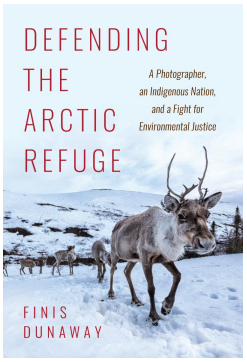
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Defending the Arctic Refuge: A Photographer, an Indigenous Nation, and a Fight for Environmental Justice

Dunaway, Finis



Defending the Arctic Refuge. Book cover.

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Dunaway, Finis. *Defending the Arctic Refuge: A Photographer, an Indigenous Nation, and a Fight for Environmental Justice*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

Tucked away in the northeastern corner of Alaska is one of the most contested landscapes in all of North America: the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Considered sacred by Indigenous peoples in Alaska and Canada and treasured by environmentalists, the refuge provides life-sustaining habitat for caribou, polar bears, migratory birds, and other species. For decades, though, the fossil fuel industry and powerful politicians have sought to turn this unique ecosystem into an oil field. Defending the Arctic Refuge tells the improbable story of how the people fought back. At the center of the story is the unlikely figure of Lenny Kohm (1939–2014), a former jazz drummer and aspiring photographer who passionately committed himself to Arctic Refuge activism. With the aid of a trusty slide show, Kohm and representatives of the Gwich'in Nation traveled across the United States to mobilize grassroots opposition to oil drilling. From Indigenous villages north of

the Arctic Circle to Capitol Hill and many places in between, this book shows how Kohm and Gwich'in leaders and environmental activists helped build a political movement that transformed the debate into a struggle for environmental justice.

In its final weeks, the Trump administration fulfilled a long-sought dream of drilling proponents: leasing much of the Arctic Refuge coastal plain for fossil fuel development. Yet the fight to protect this place is certainly not over. Defending the Artic Refuge traces the history of a movement that is alive today—and that will continue to galvanize diverse groups to safeguard this threatened land. (Source: University of North Carolina Press)

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