

**Remarks by Michael Stickman at the Arctic Council
Ministerial Meeting, Iqaluit 2015**

Arctic Athabaskan Council

Good morning. My name is Michael Stickman. I live in Nulato, a small village on the Yukon river in Alaska. I'm the International Chair of the Arctic Athabaskan Council, which represents Athabaskan peoples in Alaska and northern Canada. With me are William Erasmus, International Vice-Chair of AAC and National Chief of the Dene Nation; Dr. Annette Watson, Technical Advisor; and Jennine Jordon, my special assistant and our business representative on the Arctic Economic Council.

I have only five minutes so I'll go straight into three issues: climate change, economic development and fisheries. I'll end with a few comments on international relations.

The most important achievement of the Council at the end of Canada's chairmanship is the commitment of Arctic states to mitigate climate change by addressing emissions of Black Carbon and Methane. Why do I say this when it is only a framework agreement? Well, this is the first time that Arctic nations have formally agreed to work together to mitigate climate change. David Stone, Canada's former Chair of AMAP, has just published a book on environmental change in the Arctic in which he challenges the Council to do precisely what you have agreed to do. You are sending a hugely important

political message—that climate change mitigation can be organized regionally as well as globally. The United States has a great opportunity and responsibility during its chairmanship to promote effective implementation of the framework agreement.

During its term as Chair, Canada stressed the engagement of northerners in economic development. We congratulate Canada for its leadership in getting the Arctic Economic Council established. But I have to tell you there is confusion about the relationship between the Arctic Council and Arctic Economic Council as a result of the similarity of their mandates and names. The economies of Alaska and northern Canada rely on subsistence as well as wages. If the AEC can improve the access of aboriginal businesses to local construction and infrastructure contracts, the cash generated by these jobs will help our economies and the AEC will be worthwhile.

I said that I live on the Yukon river. I'm a fisherman. The security of our food—particularly salmon—is of huge importance to Athabaskan peoples and to Indigenous peoples throughout the Arctic. This is why we are working with CAFF and our co-leads the Sami Council, RAIPON and AIA to develop a project called "Salmon

Peoples of Arctic Rivers”. It will examine the changes in the food security of Arctic Indigenous peoples who rely on salmon for cash, food and spiritual sustenance. Dr. Annette Watson, whom I introduced earlier, is our key person on this project. We are counting on the Arctic states to support the project.

It is important that we speak openly about the tensions between Russia and the west. I was disappointed that Sergey Lavrov could not join us. Sergey has attended more Arctic Council ministerial meetings than anyone else around this table, and I’ve always found him helpful. But we welcome Sergei Donskoi who joins other environment ministers around this table.

International co-operation in the Arctic is important to those of us who live in the North. Decision-makers in Washington DC, Ottawa and Moscow, and our Asian and European observers, should understand this. We are not naïve, but this Council and its individual members should shield our co-operation from broader political and geopolitical rivalries.

My final word is to offer AAC’s support and encouragement to the USA. Secretary Kerry, you have staked out intriguing strategic possibilities, including a

potential meeting of Heads of Government, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Arctic Council. We are with you all the way.