

Traditional Knowledge

John Cooper –

The best ones we want to learn from are the ones who have been living here for hundreds of years in terms of how far they can trace back their families and the area themselves for at least 1000 years as far as we understand and there is a tradition of knowledge from the parents to the children that passes down and that knowledge is really a valuable resource for scientist who want to learn about these environments and how they change with time. A scientist likes to observe something over a very long period of time, so if you can just come look at it as it is, you see how it is but you don't really understand how it evolved. But if you come to a community that has a memory that goes back hundreds of years under various climate conditions, you learn from them. The knowledge passed down from one generation to the next about how things have been changing, that is a valuable scientific observation.

Richard Glenn –

Then you have people that live here and that have lived here for generations have a hallmark of their traditional knowledge is the knowledge of their environment. And that means the knowledge of a changing environment. Rather than find ourselves falling through thin ice, or suffering from a calamity because of the drama associated with climate change, our job as good Inupiaq citizens is to understand and adjust to the change, that's what we do every year, that's what we do everyday, when we have to survive in this wild and unpredictable environment. And so we only have a few rules to live by and one of them is to know where you are, to know what you're in, to know what changes you're in. Not to just know how it is now, but to know how was it last week and how was it the week before, how was it the year before. And this takes a lot of effort, it's a life long exercise.

Crawford Patkotak – (dark hair, blue collar shirt)

In the case of whaling when the federal government by executive order in 1977 stopped us from whaling and they based their decision partly on politics and science at the time that they understood and they was telling us that there were down to 600-800 whales when in actuality our people were seeing 1000's of whales during the migration. And so although we told them and communicated to them here's what we're seeing and here's traditional knowledge that we're able to show you that there's more then what you're saying there is. There's 1000's of whales that we're seeing. It wasn't good enough, so we invested time, a lot of time and energy and resources to the counting of the whales. Not only just the counting of the whales but also incorporating what our eldest knew as far as the migration of the whale, the reproduction rate of the whale, what they eat and how they can travel under ice and not be seen. And so we deployed a number of ways to show and prove exactly how many whales - not exactly - but a truer count of how many whales there truly was and we were willing to work with our government to continue to our whaling. They in turn came back with strict quota system and usually represent us in the International Whaling Commission and so it's been a real success and we thank God for that and we know it's something that we holds very close to our hearts as far as we as a people and how we want to continue our tradition of whaling.

Harry Brower_- (blue/white stripe collar shirt, sitting in a library)

Because of the different findings within the Arctic of all the different resources that's up here. We had to go through all the learning skills of western science and teachings to elevate our educational skills into what we see today.

Crawford Patkotak –

Our people have been very active in participating in science field here in Barrow with the opening of the N.A.R.L. base. This facility is part of Navy Arctic Research Laboratory that they ran and they've been very instrumental in working with scientists on whatever they came up with to study.

Richard Glenn –

On the south side of this building there is more than 7000 acres set aside by our village corporation specifically for environmental research. And it's set aside because it's been a place of research for many years and so the time series of the data that's been gathered there and can be gathered there in the future years is important for the study of Arctic change.

Crawford Patkotak –

Scientists have worked with the Inupiaq people and they come to realize after studying something for a period of time they go back and look at what the Inupiaq people have been saying was actually true. So it's a lot of traditional knowledge that has for years been taken for granted. But now we're starting to see that western scientists are a little more open to it and being willing to work with our people which is good.