

8th World Wilderness Congress



Alaska Native Science Commission

“Bringing together research and science in partnership with the Alaska Native community.”

www.nativescience.org

SNOWCHANGE 2005

An International Workshop on Indigenous Observations of Ecological and Climate Change

***September 27-30
Anchorage, Alaska***

***WELCOME! TERVETULOA!
QAIMARUTIN!
BURESBOANTIN! ДОБРО
ПОЖАЛОВАТЬ!
WWW.SNOWCHANGE.ORG***



Outcomes of Snowchange 2005

- identifying key climate, environment and health concerns and issues
- setting priorities for addressing the identified concerns and issues
- reviewing current governmental, regional, and local programs and plans involving climate change and its potential or actual impacts
- identifying future plans and projects
- identifying and establishing collaboration opportunities
- discussing indigenous monitoring systems
- identifying available resources for collaboration, indigenous monitoring systems, and possible projects
- demonstrating the need for indigenous communities to work together
- showing the importance of respecting and nurturing traditional knowledge
- discussing adaptation and resilience issues and strategies
- discussing landscape and language issues and strategies
- discussing spirituality and climate change
- issuing a meeting report that may stimulate action by governments, scientists, and indigenous peoples in research and planning around climate change issues

Wilderness?



North Slope Natives



“None of this country is wilderness, nor has it ever been. It has been continuously used and occupied by us and by our ancestors for millennia. Since wilderness is defined as a place without people, we are deeply insulted by those who proclaim any of this country wilderness, as if we were not considered to be real people.”

Wilderness Politics - Divergent Views

- Wilderness designation can unfairly exclude Alaska Natives from their own ancestral land.
- Support for wilderness designation of certain areas as legal tools to protect subsistence way of life.

Wise Stewardship exercised among generations involves understanding of:

- how cultures are sustained in extreme climates
- how/when/where to access subsistence foods
- daily and seasonal weather patterns
- sustainable food harvesting techniques
- wildlife biology and behavior patterns
- how to adapt to climatic changes
- complex natural interrelationships
- abnormal natural phenomena in the context of long time periods
- qualitative historical knowledge and information of the natural world.

SURFACE CULTURE

FOLK CULTURE

- fine arts •
- storytelling • drumming
- subsistence • dancing •
- games • cooking • dress

- weather forecasting • animal behavior •
- navigation skills • observation skills • pattern recognition •
- seasonal changes/cycles • edible plants / medical knowledge •
- star knowledge / constellations • language / terminology/concepts •
- counting / measurement / estimation • clothing design/insulation • tools/
- technology • building design/materials • transportation • genealogy •
- waste disposal • fire/heating/cooking • hunting / fishing / trapping • weapons •

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE . . .

DEEP CULTURE

WHAT IS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE?

- It is practical common sense based on teachings and experiences passed on from generation to generation.
- It is knowing the country. It covers knowledge of the environment - snow, ice, weather, resources - and the relationships between things.
- It is holistic. It cannot be compartmentalized and cannot be separated from the people who hold it. It is rooted in the spiritual health, culture, and language of the people. It is a way of life.

Cont.

- Traditional knowledge is an authority system. It sets out the rules governing the use of resources - respect an obligation to share. It is dynamic, cumulative, and stable. It is truth.
- Traditional knowledge is a way of life -wisdom is using traditional knowledge in good ways. It is using the heart and the head together. It comes from the spirit in order to survive.
- It gives credibility to the people.

Arctic Elder



“We told these visitors we liked the mountains and we liked the sea. We liked to spend as much time in these places as we could, the frozen sea, the snowy mountains, the summer sea, this gorgeous, ever changing, breath-taking country which is our homeland. Nowhere else is all of this possible, a sea full of great whales and seals and fish and polar bear and foxes and birds of every kind, from nearly every land.”



“With mountains just nearby full of white sheep and wolves and wolverine and with great plains in between the mountains and the sea with muskoxen and caribou and river and lake fish and many more birds and a thousand other things, all intermingled with the spirits and memories and stories and legends and graves and old houses of our people. “



“This is the perfect place, the perfect place for us, which is why Creator put us here, these few of us, and made us tough enough to stay.”