

‘Hunger Knows No Laws’

Alaskan Native Perspectives on Climate Change, Sea Ice Retreat, and the Polar Bear

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The Inupiat, native people of Alaska’s North Slope, have a 3,000-year record of successful adaptation to one of the earth’s most inhospitable environments. Many remain active subsistence hunters, dependent on the health of the Arctic ecosystem which their ancestors painstakingly shaped and cared for. Today, that ecosystem is threatened by increasing oil and gas exploration and changes in the sea ice related to global warming. The Inupiat solutions to these problems are proactive, innovative and very different from those proposed by the federal government. Supported by the National Science Foundation’s Office of Polar Programs and the Barrow Arctic Science Consortium, I learned these solutions while spending February 2007 in and around Barrow, Alaska. I will discuss Inupiat perspectives and play some video clips of Inupiat people explaining their position.

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*Inupiat seal hunter driving on the frozen surface of the Arctic Ocean.
Photo by Cameron M. Smith.*