The Arctic Science Summit Week 2013 - abstract

SESSION: Applying Local and Traditional Knowledge to Better Understanding of the Changing Arctic

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Title: Obvious and Disruptive: Native Observations from the Front Lines of Climate Change

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This presentation summarizes four years of research of the Alaskans Sharing Indigenous Knowledge (AKSIK) project. AKSIK is a multi-year scientific and advocacy project that documents what native people in the Bering Sea area of Alaska are witnessing with climate change and communicates their adaptation needs via its website (www.AKSIK.org). We work with two communities in the Bering Strait, Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island and Shaktoolik on the Norton Sound. Through video interviews and a survey of hunters, gatherers, and village leaders between 2009 and 2012 we identify the specific climate change impacts affecting these two villages. Survey results also show which climate change impacts are the most obvious to hunters and gatherers and which are most disruptive to their traditional ways of life. Local and traditional knowledge from these villages corroborates with peer-reviewed findings of climatic changes in the Arctic. Observations that are not as well documented in the peer-review literature, such as the specific impact of these changes on subsistence activities, are identified.