

Sharing Knowledge of Food Life-History and Underground Food Storage Practices in Beringian Communities

Beringia Days 2023

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Cultural Studies Indigenous Studies



Researchers, Partner communities, and Funding Sources in Alaska

Alaskan Partner Communities: *Sivuqaq* (Gambell), *Sivungaq* (Savoonga), *Tikiġaq* (Point Hope), and *Anaqtuuvak* (Anaktuvuk Pass)

Michael Koskey (PI, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Center for Cross-cultural Studies, Indigenous Studies)

Theresa John (UAF, CXCS Indigenous Studies)

Go Iwahana (UAF, International Arctic Research Center)

Kazuyuki Saito (UAF, International Arctic Research Center)

Yoko Kugo (UAF, CXCS Indigenous Studies)



National Science Foundation (Grant Number 2133706)



Study Places

Methods and Goals of the Study

- We use a community-based research approach to gain local perspectives and building research questions from locals' and from researchers' perspectives.
 - Oral history interview,
 - Participant observation,
 - Land survey and monitoring the physical condition of the land
- This project is a partner-project to an already-ongoing project funded by the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN, Kyoto, Japan). This partnership brings together an anthropology-based social science approach, in partnership with climate science and earth science, to
 - 1) investigate the traditional use of underground cache practices in Arctic communities, and
 - 2) to document local concerns of the current harvesting, sharing, and consumption of local foods in response to thawing frozen ground and socio-economic changes, especially since the introduction of refrigeration in the 1960s.



Go Iwahana, *Sivuqaq* research assistants Orin Booshu and Edmond Apassingok, and Kazu “Yuki” Saito in Gambell, May 2023

The Connection between Food Sovereignty and Food Life History

- The role of local, traditional, and Indigenous knowledge is central in any evaluation and understanding of food systems in Alaska's Indigenous communities.
- An integrated understanding of food life history enables resilient community planning that can lead to a self-defined, locally defined, capacity for food sovereignty and security.



Tuugtaq (walrus meatballs) stored in *siqlugaq* (meat cache) in *Sivungaq*, June 2022.



Women cooking traditional food during *Qagruq* (Whale Festival) in *Tikigaq*, June 2022.



Findings (2021, 2022, and 2023)

- Local knowledge holders, cellar owners, and Elders are interested in maintaining or repairing their cellars to store meat.
- Using their Indigenous language is an important part of food-life history (e.g., St. Lawrence Islanders in Sivuqaq and Sivungaq use the Yupik language to explain some traditional foods).



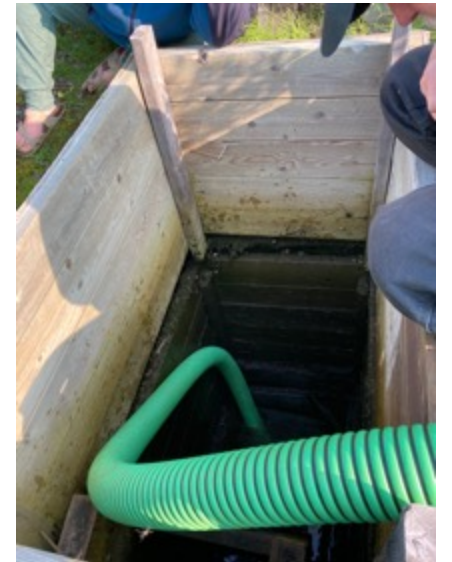
Siqlugaaq, Sivuqaq



Siqlugaaq, Sivungaaq



Sigluat in Old townsite, *Tikiqaq*

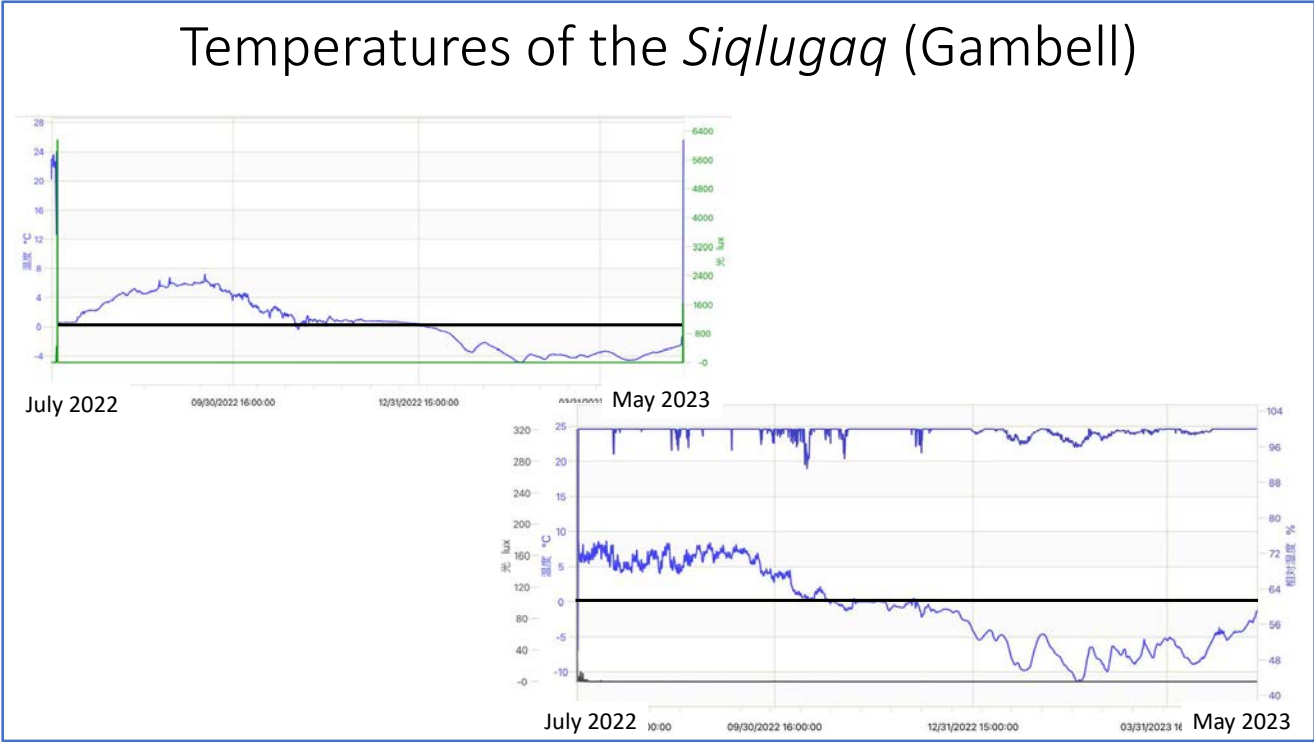


Higluqaq, Anaqtuuvak

Installing loggers to monitor temperature, moisture, and light conditions in the underground food storage (Gambell, Savoonga, and Point Hope)



(Sivuqaq, May 2023)



(Old town *Tikiqaq*, June 2023)

Youth and Elders' Workshop: "Sharing Knowledge of Food Life-History and Underground Food Storage Practices in Beringian Communities"



Workshop Committee:

Christopher Petuwaq Koonooka (Gambell school)

Cheryl Lusares (Savoonga school)

Avruy Miriam Toolie (Savoonga school)

Naniq Joelaine Sue Annogiyuk (Savoonga School)

Theresa Avevgaq John (Elder Advisor, UAF)

Michael Koskey and Yoko Kugo (UAF)

Why? To recognize and acknowledge other cultures and observations of the lands, and share knowledge that cherishes their food lifeways and enables the community to thrive.

How? By inviting Elders as mentors to the workshop for youth and residents to learn through listening to stories and participating in activities.

The goal of our workshop is to document Indigenous Beringian food lifeways in the past and present and publish the findings for future educational and policymaking purposes.

Workshop “Sharing Knowledge of Food Life-History and Underground Food Storage Practices in Beringian Communities” in Gambell in 2024

- Utilize local traditional knowledge to accurately inform our understanding of the local food-cycle and food life-history,
- Provide to each community a comprehensive record of food life-history for those foods stored in underground caches,
- Compare the physical qualities of underground storage caches between communities, their ideal and fundamentally crucial conditions,
- Develop approaches to mitigate or prevent effects of warming in new construction, including modification and maintenance of existing ice cellars.



Serving traditional food mangtak, walrus, seal meat, and green in Sivuqaq, June 2022.