



Arctic Athabaskan Council

Climate Change, Traditional Knowledge and the Well-Being of Arctic
Athabaskan Peoples

Overview

- AAC Overview
- Traditional Knowledge
- Transboundary Issues
- Work of the AAC

The slide features a central yellow rectangular area with a fine, repeating pattern. This yellow area is bordered at the top and bottom by a dark green background. The dark green background contains a repeating pattern of light green, downward-pointing triangles. The text 'AAC Overview' is centered within the yellow area in a dark green, serif font.

AAC Overview

Arctic Athabaskan Council Overview

- International Treaty Organization with member First Nations in Alaska, Yukon and Northwest Territories
- Established in 2000, the AAC currently has over 45,000 members in 76 communities
- Our work focuses mainly on environmental and sustainable development issues important to Athabaskan peoples



International Chair
Chief Michael
Stickman
Nulato, Alaska



International Vice-
Chair
Chief Bill Erasmus
Yellowknife, NWT



CYFN Board
Member Chief
Ruth Massie
Whitehorse,
Yukon



Alaska Chair
Chief Gary
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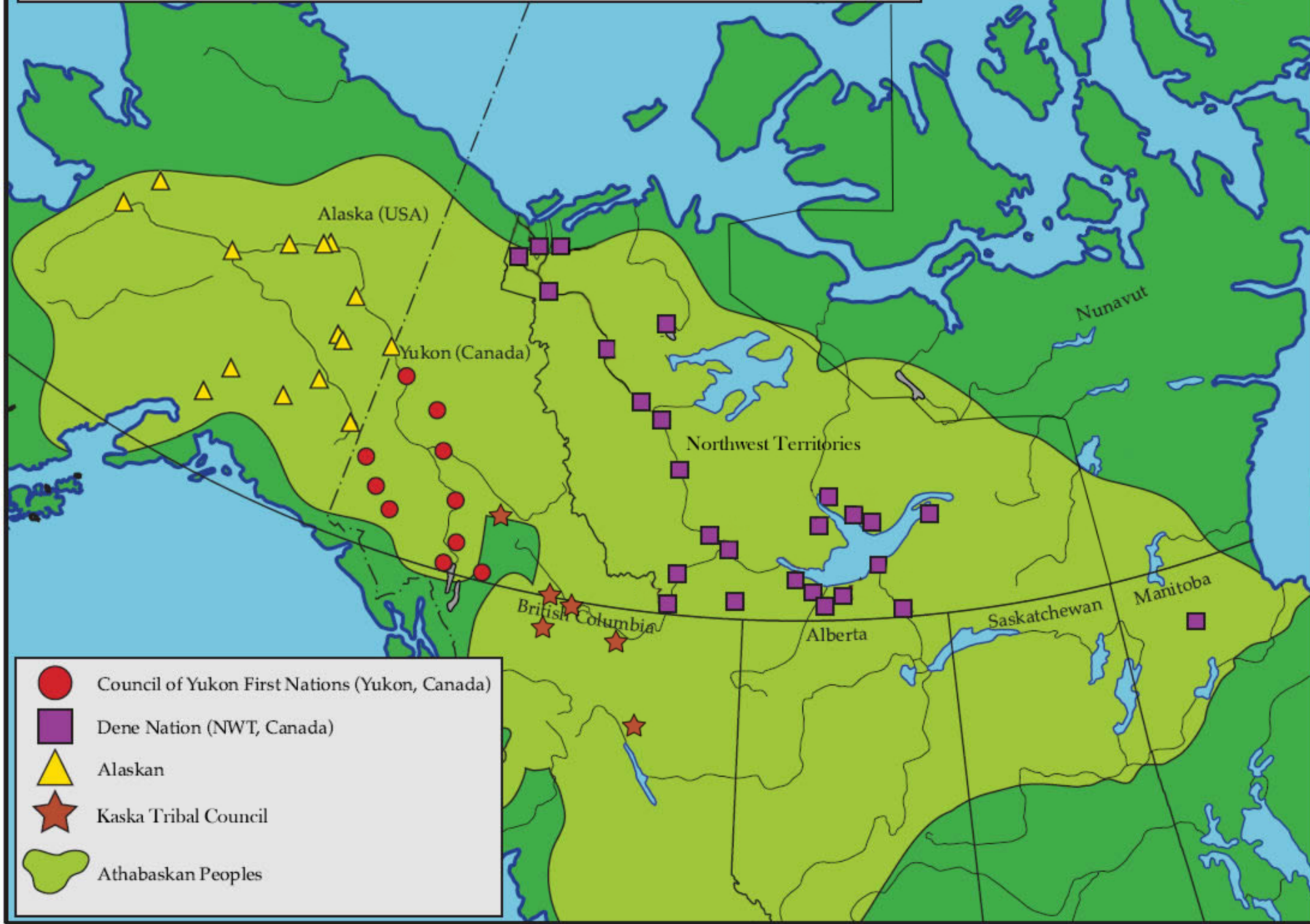


Executive Director
Cindy Dickson
Whitehorse,
Yukon



Project
Coordinator
Colleen Henry
Whitehorse,
Yukon

ATHABASKAN APPLICANT COMMUNITIES



AAC's Areas of Focus

- AAC focuses on
 - Climate Change
 - Biodiversity
 - Traditional Knowledge
 - Capacity Development
 - Community Projects
 - Circumpolar Collaboration



Traditional Knowledge

What is Traditional Knowledge?

- It is undefined by those who have lived it and experienced it throughout their lives
- It encompasses the cultural, linguistic, spiritual, and subsistence ways of First Nations people
- It is transmission of knowledge and a learning process beginning at birth and continues throughout one's lifetime
- It is knowledge of the land, big game animals, game birds, fish, habitat, behaviors, population, spawning patterns, conditions and size
- It includes the awareness of plants and their medicinal uses, weather patterns, changing environmental conditions and understanding the spiritual connections

Traditional Laws

- Harvested animals were to be respected and treated with care in every regard
 - The harvest is extremely important and spiritual
 - Never speak in a derogatory manner about living beings
 - Never interfere with animals (radio collaring)
 - Never harvest more than necessary
- Families hunted in different locations to avoid over harvesting in any one region as a means of self-regulation to ensure sustainability
- People ate only fresh organic foods or foods preserved by drying or smoking methods
- People never dispose of garbage in water
- Survival depended on hard work and abilities to survive on the land
- People treated each other with kindness and shared the best they had

Convergence of Traditional Knowledge and Science

- “No one type of knowledge alone is able to solve all problems and there is a need to combine approaches to increase understanding and decrease uncertainty.”
(Huntington et al., 2004)

Traditional Knowledge and Self-Governance - Yukon

- Together Today for our Children Tomorrow
– by the Yukon Indian People 1977

“The Yukon has always been home to more than 6,000 people of Indian ancestry who, until 75 years ago, always lived off the land in brush camps, by hunting, fishing and trapping in small tribes, who harvested the land carefully, and who kept the waters clear, the air pure and the land clean.”

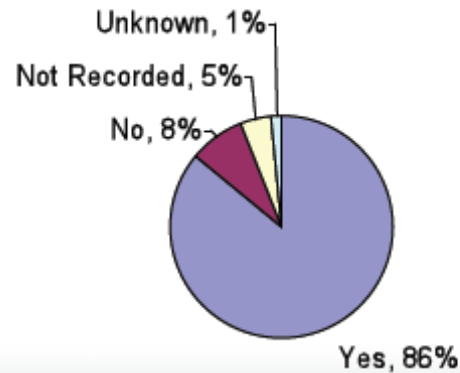
“Without land Indian People have no Soul – no life – no Identity – no Purpose. Control of our own Land is necessary for our Cultural and Economic Survival.”

Community Needs Assessment - Yukon

“I think Traditional Knowledge has an important role [in climate change planning]. So does science. They both address the problem, but in different ways.”

-- Whitehorse survey respondent

Figure 22. Can Traditional/Local Knowledge Play A Role in Finding Solutions For Climate Change?

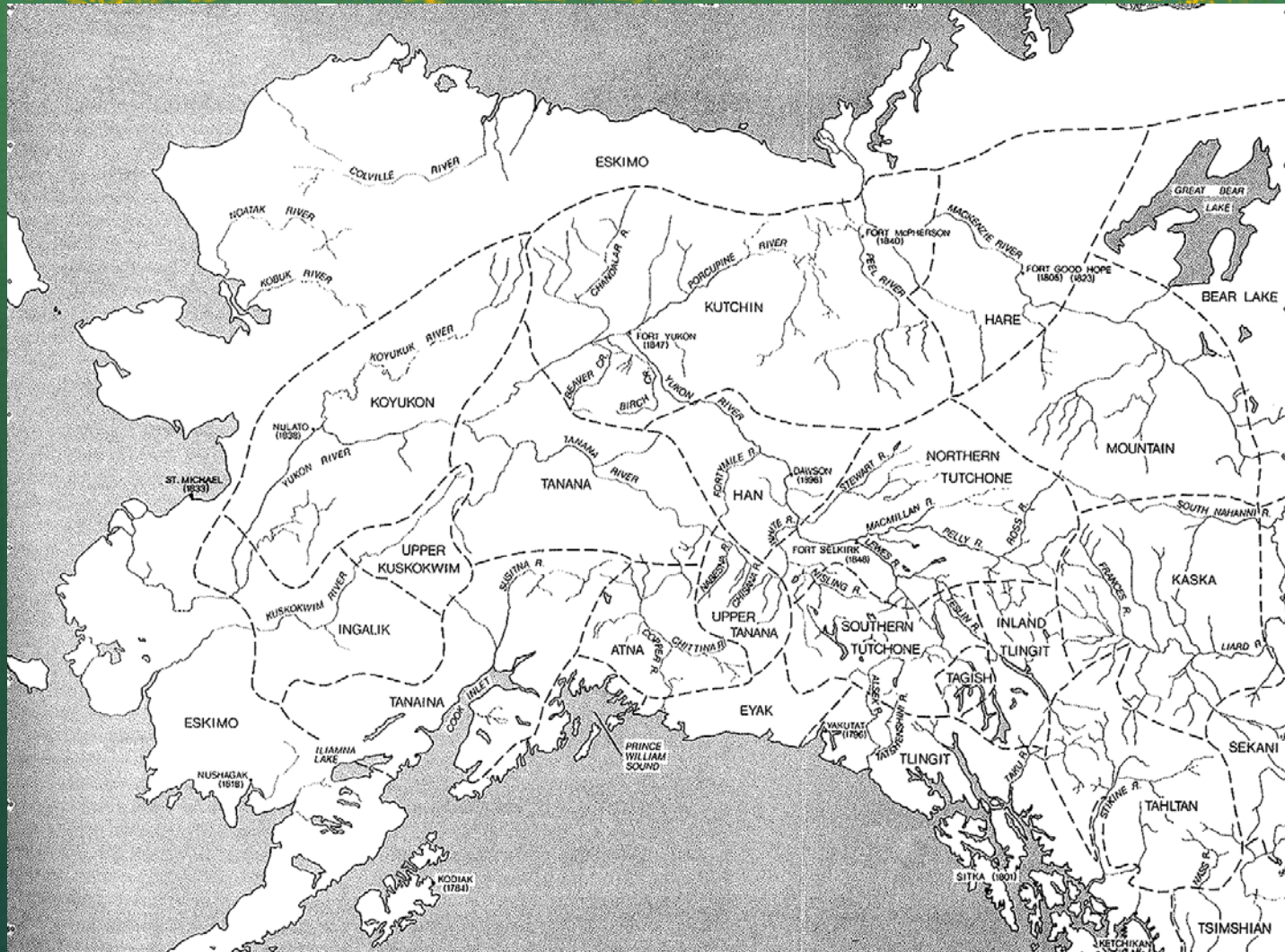


86% think that Traditional or Local knowledge can play a role in finding solutions for climate change



Transboundary Issues

Transboundary Traditional Lands



A Canada/USA Agreement Porcupine Caribou Herd

- This is an example of an ecosystem based approach to management
- Agreement between USA and Canada - 1987
 - Recognizing the importance of conserving the habitat of the PCH, including calving, post-calving, migration, wintering and insect relief habitat
 - Recognizing that the Parties wish to establish co-operative bilateral mechanisms to coordinate their activities for the long- term conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and its habitat

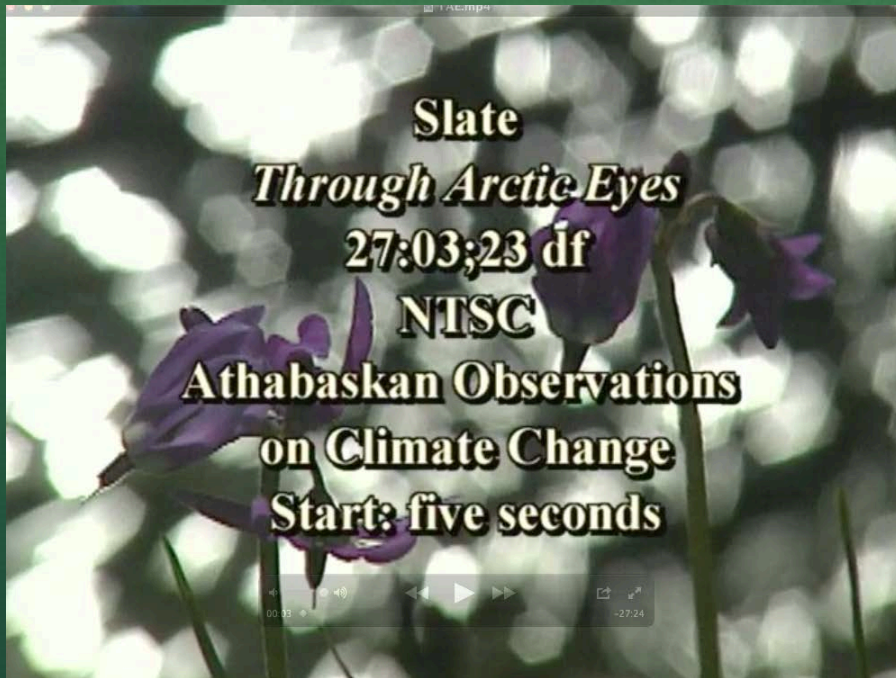
Canada/US Agreement Objectives

- As a result of the agreement The US and CAN owe each other certain duties and obligations.
- To conserve the Porcupine Caribou Herd and its habitat:
 - Requires international co-operation and co-ordination so that the risk of irreversible damage or long-term adverse effects as a result of use of caribou or their habitat is minimized;
 - To ensure opportunities for customary and traditional uses of the Porcupine Caribou herd;
 - To enable users of Porcupine Caribou to participate in the international co-ordination of the conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and its habitat;
 - To encourage co-operation and communication among governments, users of Porcupine Caribou and others to achieve these objectives.

Work of the AAC

The AAC has participated and completed many projects throughout the years. Here is a small sampling of our interesting endeavours.

Through Arctic Eyes



- In 2005, the AAC developed a short film focusing on climate change and impacts to and observations by Athabaskan peoples in Alaska, Yukon and NWT. The observations were based on work AAC contributed to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment
- The film was widely distributed in Canada and Europe.

Arctic Peoples, Culture, Resilience and Caribou

- ACRC was an International Polar Year project developed as a result of partner organizations and community concerns about caribou population variability and change – a cross-cutting theme Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The project goals were to:
 - Learn about the implications of change on community well-being
 - Investigate social networks, traditional knowledge & language, governance & capacity in the face of changing nature
 - Enhance resilience or ability to adapt to climate change to improve community health and well-being
- The result was a series of sub-projects conducted across northern Canada.

Arctic Resilience Report

- The Arctic Resilience Report is a science-based assessment that aims to better understand the integrated impacts of change in the Arctic. Its goals are to:
 - Identify the potential for shocks and large shifts in ecosystems services that affect human well-being in the Arctic.
 - Analyze how different drivers of change interact in ways that affect the ability of ecosystems and human populations to withstand shocks, adapt or transform.
 - Evaluate strategies for governments and communities to adapt.
- The Arctic Athabaskan Council participated by gathering, reviewing and providing traditional knowledge from published and grey literature. AAC's participation was funded by the Stockholm Environment Institute
- The full report will be released in 2015.

Petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

- In April 2013, the AAC, in partnership with Earthjustice, submitted a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to seek relief from violations resulting from accelerated Arctic Warming.
- The petition asked the Commission to declare that Canada is contravening the human rights of Athabaskan peoples guaranteed in the 1948 American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man by inadequately regulating emissions of black carbon which accelerates warming and melting in northern Canada, Athabaskan homelands.
- The next slides show quotes from Athabaskan peoples used in the petition.
- Full petition: <http://earthjustice.org/documents/legal-document/pdf/aac-petition>



I notice the depletion of animals more and more. I also notice we have more trees dying off.

— Grand Chief Ruth Massie of Lake Lebarge,
Yukon

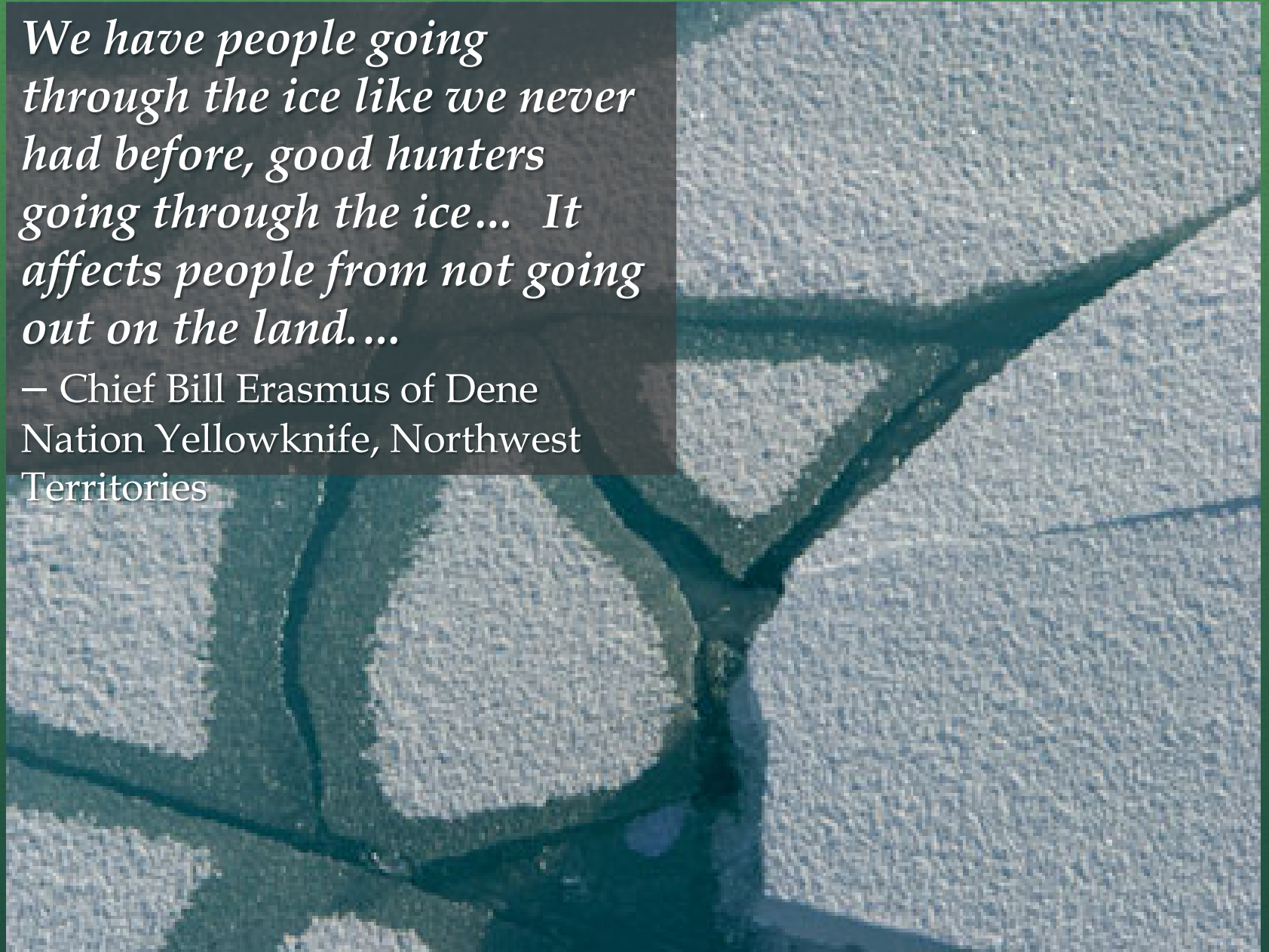
In the northern Yukon, freezing rains in November have meant that animals cannot eat.

– Elders Climate Change Workshop and the Yukon First Nations Climate Change Forum (2009)



We have people going through the ice like we never had before, good hunters going through the ice... It affects people from not going out on the land...

– Chief Bill Erasmus of Dene Nation Yellowknife, Northwest Territories



The weather changes so fast... in the wintertime it can be 50 below one week and 50 above the next. When I was in grade school it used to be 40-60 below for two months straight, no breaks.

– Michael Stickman of Nulato, Alaska, and AAC International Chair

Every summer it's getting hotter. Our winters are not as cold as they used to be. We used to have 65 below and now it's very rarely we get 30, 40 below. Sometimes even in December we get a little rain.

– Mae Andre of Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories



I notice more changes in the landscape, more permafrost melt. Last summer we were walking on the mountain and you could see that a whole area had slid, exposing permafrost melt.

– Cindy Dickson of Old Crow, Yukon; Executive Director of the Arctic Athabaskan Council





Barren-ground and Woodland Caribou, Athabaskan Peoples and Climate Change: Planning for the Future

Future work

- The AAC continues to work on projects and issues that advance the perspectives and agendas of Athabaskan peoples.
- AAC is undergoing restructuring to improve effectiveness and efficiency and to build capacity to continue its efforts on these important issues
- AAC's future work relies heavily on procurement of funding from various sources

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